

Falling for Mr. Wright

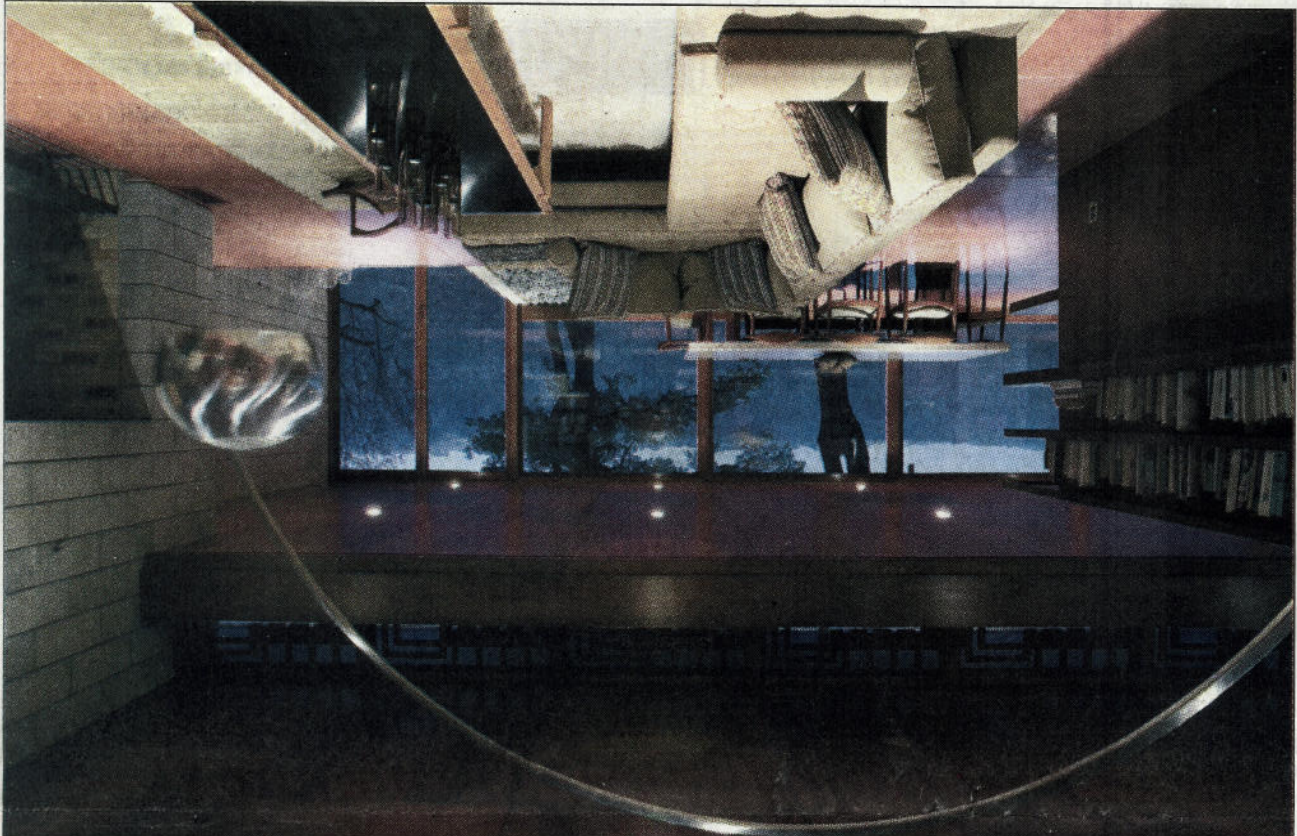
Jim Kinsey Rescued an Architectural Gem, and Eventually Loved It

By ANNIE GROER
Washington Post Staff Writer

"I wanted to have a romantic dinner, co-founder of AOL, "I wouldn't do it in my house, which is ostentatious. I would do it in the Frank Lloyd Wright house."

There would be "a fire, cocktails and music" — as if the house, one of three Wright residences in the Washington area, needed a boost. Jutting from a steep, wooded hillside, the Potomac River below visible through an 80-foot-long wall of windows, the space some-how marries treehouse to sleek yacht. Ceilings and cabinetry are rich mahogany, the concrete floor polished a gleaming red. An expansive sofa is strategically sited in front of the enormous fireplace. Rescuing this neglected architectural jewel in McLean has itself been something of a romantic and philanthropist had already built a 21,000-square-foot mansion on the adjoining property. Gazing down from his master bathroom, he hated seeing the forlorn edifice with five-foot weeds rising from its gravel roof.

Eight years ago, when work started on the big house, Kinsey had no clue that the neighboring structure had been designed by one of America's most celebrated 20th-century architects. He found it an eyesore until an emissary from the owners set him straight: The cinder-block house, finished in 1959, had been commissioned by two devoted Wright admirers, National Geographic writer-photographer Luis Marden and his wife, Ethel.



Jim Kinsey, who bought a Frank Lloyd Wright house in McLean in 2000, spent 18 months and "well over \$1 million" restoring it.

who were living there still. As decades passed, age and infirmity took a toll on the couple and on the house they loved. In 2000, with Luis in a nursing home, Kinsey bought the property for \$2.5 million. The deed barred him from razing the house or substantially altering the exterior and attached garage. It also stipulated that Ethel could live there as long as she liked, when Luis

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Kimsey looks out on the Potomac River from his favorite chair in the Wright house.

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