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# Historic preservation group gathers with original founders, benefactors

BY ROBERT HAMILTON

**R**ecently, in the spirit of its 25th anniversary celebration, the board of directors of the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables (HPACG) invited past and present leaders and benefactors in the George Giving Society to share in the memories and stewardship. The by-invitation-only event was at the lovely historic home of HPACG member Bruce Fitzgerald.

HPACG president Karelia Martinez Carbonell welcomed guests as music was played in the background by harpist Katherine Honey. (One can enjoy her harp playing at the Biltmore daily during tea service.) Catered hors d'oeuvres by Sara Sharpe and Sophie Baron Champagne flowed throughout the event. Made-to-order sugar cookies emblazoned with the 25th anniversary logo served as "sweet and special" party favors.

All enjoyed the manicured garden setting right out of a Town & Country spread, the impeccably decorated interior, and the "on top of the world" open-air terrace overlooking the historic Biltmore Hotel.

The Mediterranean-style residence was designed in 1927 by Frank Wyatt Woods, one of the architects chosen by Merrick to realize his dream of creating internationally themed resi-

dential "villages" throughout the City. Woods brought his design skills not only to Fitzgerald's home, but to homes in the Italian Village and many along Alhambra Circle which are extant and restored to their original splendor.

Woods and his business partner, John Tracey, designed more than 33 homes in the city between 1925 and 1927.

"The key to living well in these one-of-a-kind historic homes is recognizing the 'bones' of the building before undertaking renovations, expansions or re-purposing of the original rooms," Fitzgerald said. "Adapting vintage architecture to modern life requires understanding and, above all, patience."

Details of the home contributing to its period authenticity include an asymmetrical facade, casement windows, iron railings, arched windows, cast stone accents, wing walls, barrel tile roofing and a striking example of Renaissance-inspired basket-weave tile flooring in the living room. The property received Local Historic Designation in 2009.

In 1991, nine individuals created the then Historic Homeowners Association of Coral Gables, later to become the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables. The original founders included Roy

Black, John M. Cassel, Janis K. Cheezem, Vincent E. Damian Jr., Edsel Icaza, Martin C. Leake, Albert E. Schrader Jr., Christopher G. Tyson and Michael L. Werner.

Two of the original founders attended the event: Vincent Damian and wife, Carol, and Michael Werner and wife, Sherry.

A group of dedicated preservationists including former Coral Gables Mayor Don Slesnick and his wife, Coral Gables City Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick; Dolly MacIntyre; Sallye Jude; Arva Moore Parks, author of the recently published biography of city founder George Merrick, and HPACG board members and friends gathered at the Coral Gables home.

Other special guests attending included past president Lisa Bennett and husband, Richard; immediate past president Ann Goodman; vice president Jane Maranos and husband, Steve, and new board members Mary Anne Danguillecourt and Barbara Gilbert. Other guests included Dr. Marino E. Carbonell, Jose Valdes-Fauli, Alice Goldhagen, Riscio Gonzalez, Nora and Joe Portuondo, Maria Alicia and Ajit Asrani, Susanne Kayyali, Leslie Rivera, and Eileen and Russell Wilkinson.

For additional information about HPACG or to become a member, visit <[www.historiccoralgables.org](http://www.historiccoralgables.org)>.