



# NEWSLETTER

SPRING

1996

## from the President

Everyone knows that preserving old structures in Key West does not come easy. It takes a lot of planning, coordination and most of all, money.

Our goals to continue helping Key West preserve historic structures with our Small Grants Program and to complete the Master Restoration Plan and the construction of a gift shop to provide future financial security to the Wreckers' Museum/Oldest House could not have been met this year without the following fund raisers and dedicated volunteers.

The House & Garden Tours were the most successful ever! Raising over \$65,000. This major fund raising endeavor could not have been possible without the Head Hosts and Hostesses such as Friday Limbert and Janet Knapp who coordinated all the volunteers for four houses this year as well as Betty Shurtz and Rose Marie Barrett who organized three houses.

Trip Hoffman and Momy Ortiz-Benavides helped chair the events and the selection committee headed up by Lucille Feaker did an excellent job making all of the tours creative and diverse. We wholeheartedly thank every homeowner who graciously opened their homes to OIRF and all of Key West.

I want to thank all of the Benefactors, Sponsors and Patrons who helped make

(Continued on page 3)



Homeowner Graeme Smith and Head Hostess Rose Marie Barrett, at right, entertain their volunteers after a successful tour in Feb.

## 36TH SEASON TOURS A ROUSING SUCCESS

The 36th Annual House and Garden Tours broke records in every way, in numbers of visitors and overall income, raising \$56,000 for the three "season" tours plus \$9100 for the Holiday House Tours.

Many people make these tours and this kind of success possible: homeowners who so generously open their homes to a great many strangers, Paula Newhouse and her cadre of hard working Head Hosts and Hostesses, the 150 (at least) dedicated unpaids who donate their time over and over and whose graciousness as "red shawlers" (that means the men, too) is the tie that binds to the origins of the tours and the many local publications and radios who support our efforts with P.R. (Gerry Tinlin, US 1 Radio, Solares Hill, the Citizen and the Miami Herald, to name a few).

The tours are also supported financially in such a way that all but \$ 850. raised this year will go directly into our preservation account. The Monroe

County TDC awarded OIRF a grant via the County Cultural Umbrella in the amount of \$9,000 for all "hard" promotion costs, the highest it has awarded us to date. Tickets were sponsored by TIB Bank, Barnett Bank, First State Bank and The Little White House Museum.

The Tour Committee decided this year to informally establish who besides our local members and friends attended the tours. A guest register placed in one of the homes during a tour indicated that over half of the visitors were from other than Key West and over a quarter were from outside the Keys. Many of our guests reported that the tours were the reason for their visit to Key West or that they planned their vacations around tour dates.

OIRF is delighted to welcome back old friends and make new ones, to share the distinctive architectural heritage which makes Key West a unique place to live or vacation and to make its visitors' stay a memorable one.

### CONCH SHELL BLOWING CONTEST

March 23, 3:30,

Ocean Key House Pier

### MEMBERS APPRECIATION PARTY

March 27, 6:30,

Wreckers' Museum Garden



## WRECKERS' BENEFIT A BALL



Ball Sponsor Kim Harriss helps distribute raffle tickets for anywhere Gulfstream Airlines flies, donated with the assistance of Regency Travel, with J.C Hennessy and Trip Hoffman.

The Black and White Wreckers' Ball Committee is pleased to announce that they are adding \$12,700 to the Wreckers' Museum Preservation Account to help complete the Master Exterior Restoration Plan and to build the new gift shop and museum entrance. Chairman Lucille Feaker arranged a beautiful evening of dining (with sumptuous fare provided by *Michaels Catering*) under a

canopy of shimmering white palms created by Brian Kowaski, dancing to the fabulous sounds Dick Moody and local favorite musicians and gifts in the forms of an extensive array of silent auction items (arranged by Trip Hoffman and George Cotten). The weather cooperated, our members and friends were extremely generous and a wonderfully successful evening was enjoyed by all!



Enjoying a musical moment are Lucille Feaker, Momy Ortiz-Benavides, Deidre Pierce and Stevan Little. PHOTOS BY TOM NETTING

A big THANK YOU goes out to the homeowners who made possible this year's exceptionally successful House & Garden Tours:

January 26 & 27

532 Grinnell- Michael Pelkey

800 Virginia- Sara Booker/Bob Smith

1218 Varela- Matthew Helmerich

1109 Casa Marina- David & Lynn Kaufelt

1101 Casa Marina- Doug Baetz/Bob Jellen

February 16 & 17

412 Grinnell- Richard Shelden

521 Grinnell- Graeme Smith

1001 Southard- Dan & Pat Murphy

717 Southard- Bill & Beverly Browder

615 Mickens' Lane- Snow Philip

March 1 & 2

409 Frances- Paula & Steve McIlvain

706 Ashe- John & Louise Corbett

1424 Petronia- Robert McBroom

814 Pearl- Annette & Kas Iversen/Eloise & Chuck Pratt

900 Eisenhower- Jim & Leanna Hettinger

And, Head Hostesses/Hosts:

3- Friday Limbert, Janet Knapp;

2- Rose Marie Barrett, Betty Shurtz, Diane Millman;

1- Stevan Little, JC Hennessy, George Cotten, Barbara Anderson

Thank you to Sam & Judy Davis for sharing their home at 408 William St. (brought to Key West from Green Turtle Key in 1847) with all the March Home Tour volunteers

### OIRF NEWSLETTER

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## HARC HISTORY, CONTINUED

In our last Newsletter we sketched some of the difficulties that Old Island Restoration Commission (forerunner of HARC) encountered with an indifferent City Building Department and the City Commission itself in its early years. Although founded by the State in 1969, there simply was not enough local support for its efforts for OIRC to do its job as charged by the State.

In 1975 the State issued an administrative order to the Florida Keys Area of Critical Concern, which among other things said that a management and enforcement plan and ordinance should be adopted by the City of Key West - establishing an Architectural Review Board, developing guidelines and requiring the City to send this Board notice of all applications for development within the historic district. The City complied with some of the order but resisted adopting guidelines and enforcement of complaints of violations.

Establishing guidelines for the district was undertaken in 1979 by members of OIRC led by Chairman Jim Hansen, a retired civil engineer. While we were working on this, an anonymous donor offered to pay for the publication of a guideline book to pass out to applicants for work in the district then defined as HP-1 and HP-2. Charles Munder, who at the time still owned his printing press in Chicago, volunteered to publish the book in color. It was a beautiful job and helped us immensely in convincing unwilling applicants to follow fairly basic, simple guidelines. Some of the items applicants resisted were: not closing in porches, paint colors, window and door alterations, adding elements that were not original to the house or building, and so on.

Still there were problems of enforcement, of work done without building permits or OIRF permits and of work in violation of what we had established as the right thing to preserve the Old Town look. Our efforts to persuade the City Commission to approve our guidelines continued to be unsuccessful.

This all finally came to a showdown in 1979 in a confrontation between OIRC and Bill Perkins of Keys Title and Abstract Co., the first citizen to challenge OIRC by taking his case on appeal to the

City Commission. Bill won, we lost.

By 1981 times were changing, and the City began to see the value in preserving our historic district. We were finally successful in persuading the Commission to approve our guidelines thus giving them the force of law. Mayor Charles McCoy signed this historic ordinance, April 20, 1981, 11 years after OIRC was created by the State as the result of strong, local support by residences of the old town, led by our courageous assemblyman William Roberts, a Conch of best credentials. The guidelines numbered six single-spaced pages, much expanded from early efforts.

The refinement continued, as we sought to strengthen our position to avoid court battles. In 1983 immediately after taking office, Mayor Richard Heyman urged us to meet with the City Manager and City Planner to avoid future litigation. Now we were to get backup by the City by way of inspections and the cooperation of Code Enforcement.

While we have good cooperation today from City Hall, HARC still has not totally resolved the old conflict between those who want to enforce accepted National and State restoration procedures and those who want every renovation, every new building in the cutesy, gingerbread style of Disney World. Too much overornamentation still sneaks in.

*(Note: In the early 70s, the State did a study of the historic district and through the top preservation official George Percy issued a directive stating that new construction in Old Town should not be a facsimile of 19th Century architecture so as not to confuse the public eye with what was real one hundred years ago with what was built as a copy yesterday. Also the directive argued against allowing fancy gingerbread, brackets, etc. to be put on simple workers' houses.)*

Clay McDaniel (OIRC 1979-1985)

(President from page 1)

the Black and White Wreckers Ball a big success. Together they helped raise over \$12,000. A great time was had by all thanks to our Co-chairs Joan Dalbey and Lucille Feaker. Hats off to Trip

## MUSEUM AWARDED STATE GRANT

OIRF has just received the news that the State Historic Preservation Advisory Council awarded to the Wreckers' Museum a matching grant in the amount of \$6,100 to restore the southeast facade of the museum and to reroute and update of the plumbing in this area. This will constitute the last of the exterior museum work presented in the Master Restoration Plan.

With this grant, the success of the House and Garden Tours and the committed funds raised during the last two Balls, the completion of the Plan appears to be in sight.

A current State grant will complete the stabilization of the Cook House and the handicapped access to the museum including a video experience of the second floor exhibits.

The final phase of the Plan will address construction of a Gift Shop on Duval St. at the North side of the Museum. The Board is working on scheduling this most important project which may see fruition within the year.

The Key West Garden Club has offered assistance in landscaping the new entrance to the ramp which will add tremendously to the visual effect of the rear garden, the restoration of which will complete the Master Restoration Plan begun in 1993.

Hoffman who coordinated the Silent Auction & Raffle which was one of the evening's highlights.

It would take a separate newsletter to list all of the volunteers and chairpersons who have helped make OIRF so successful. Endless hours are spent at the Wreckers' Museum/Oldest House, Hospitality House in Mallory Square, on the Holiday Tours, Hosts at the House & Garden Tours, Wreckers Ball creators, Conch Shell Blowing Contest, Art & Architecture Tour, Membership Drives and the Pelican Path, just to mention a few of the tasks that we all share together as a group. I want to personally thank all of you for making OIRF what it is today and hope that we will all continue this wonderful tradition of helping to preserve Key West.

GJC



*Old Island Restoration Foundation, Inc.*

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

*Tuesday, April 9, 5 PM  
Wreckers' Museum Garden  
322 Duval St., Key West, Florida  
(refreshments to follow)*

*The Nominating Committee's proposed slate of new Board Members  
and Board Officers for the term 1996-7 is posted at  
Hospitality House, Mallory Square.*

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**OLD ISLAND RESTORATION FOUNDATION, INC.**

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