If Houses Talked, Art and Carole Schaffer’s Would Have a Lot To Say

by Milford Previtt

Even now it’s hard to envision the 2018 annual Prospect Lefferts Gardens House & Garden Tour without the guiding spirit and charming fussiness of Carole Schaffer.

Though she passed four years ago, the vitality, vigor and vision with which she orchestrated the PLG House Tour for more than 20 years continue in neighbors’ memories for years to come. Not that she pulled it off single-handedly, but she was the conductor whose passion for a successful tour extended into virtually every element and aspect of the event.

Whether it was recruiting homeowners to let strangers roam through their private spaces, or coaxing neighbors to sit house sitters, getting other neighbors to sell tickets, courting merchants and restaurants to offer tour-day specials and discounts, or even fact-checking and proofing the Echo’s house tour coverage, Carole was a whirling dervish of attention.

This year will carry on her gusto for the event and memorialize her love of the neighborhood in an awesome way. Carole’s husband, Art, has put their stunning Midwood I house on this year’s tour, only the third time in the 42 years since they bought it.

The current incarnation of the Schaffer house is light years removed from the forlorn one the Schaffers first saw in 1971. Built in 1918, the four-story brick-and-limestone mansion was a “neglected and abused” rooming house, Art recalls. There were dropped ceilings, much of the original molding and wood trim was missing or damaged, and the basement flooded right after they moved in.

“One contractor gave us an estimate of $80,000 to restore the place,” Art chuckles. “He said he knew the bid was too small to cover the cost of renovation just as he knew that $80,000 was a lot of money in the late ’70s and it was very unrealistic.”

Art and Carole were briefly coworkers at General Foods in White Plains. They met on the job and began a courtship. They married in 1975 and lived in Manhattan, in an apartment on the East Side. “As soon as we began looking for a larger apartment, specifically in Brooklyn Heights,” the couple recall, “we knew that NYU was happening the same day. They were not going to be passive property owners.”

Both became community active. Shortly after moving in, Carole became an LMA board member and also worked on the PLGNA house tour committee. After a couple of years, she became the chairperson of the PLGNA house tour, but when that organization temporarily folded, she continued as house tour chair under the LMA’s sponsorship. Restoration Continues

Meanwhile, restoring the house from its 1970s decline back to its Gilded Age glamour was part and parcel of their commitment to the house. They scrupulously and discerningly found parts to restore the columns, missing doors. (continued on page 2)

Block of Midwood Street Will Be Designated CAROLE SCHAFER WAY

In a few short months, the people of the NE Historic District will have an operating townhouse with its rounded bay front and decorative double-leaf wood-and-glass entry doors is bowed to place. Original detailing and finishes in the building are being restored and re-created by the owners’ extensive and varied collections of visual art and textiles, which are displayed throughout the house.

Neo-Renaissance Revival Townhouse

A meritorious restoration and renovation repovanished this late Renaissance Re-


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Clothing Designers Deploy Their Talents On Lincoln Road Charmer

by Rene Michael-Prewitt

It’s a cliché, but true: Be it the love of your life, a great job or a new home, you have to be in the right place at the right time.

Take what happened to women’s clothing designer Penelope Chan Janssen and her husband, Jimmy Chan. Back in 2005, the house hunting couple was making a fast exit from a messy apartment in Flatbush when something happened to fall on a flyer promoting a home for sale on Lincoln Road in Lefferts Manor.

Jimmy was curious enough to want to take a look when he and Penny, exhausted from looking at homes the past six months, took a pass.

But when Jimmy returned home he was excited about what he had found. The property, built in 1919, needed work, but he knew, as a lawyer and owner of a real estate firm, that most must come to you when you want it, right on time.

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A mish Mafia

by Martin Friedman

On Lincoln Road

Charmer

Five people were living there and they used our initial renovations within three months of moving in. Then we didn’t touch anything for two and a half years, they finally moved in! 

Renee Michael-Prewitt

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