

MACO

C A R I B B E A N L I V I N G





www.johndoak.com

**JOHN
DOAK**

ARCHITECTURE

The Caribbean's most
unique commercial and
residential buildings

DOAK
CAYMAN 1979-2009



VILLA CASUARINA IS THE GRACIOUS HOME OF JOHN AND SHEILA MACKENZIE, FEATURED IN THE MACO CARIBBEAN LIVING MAGAZINE, VOLUME 13 ISSUE 1. TO SUBSCRIBE, CLICK THE COVER ABOVE.

THE ZINIO MAGAZINE DIGITAL APP IS ALSO NOW AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD FOR ONLY US\$3.99. JUST CLICK THE ZINIO LOGO BELOW.



AT VILLA CASUARINA IN CAYMAN,
AN INDOOR GARDEN AND BLENDED DESIGN
CREATE BEAUTY AND TRANQUILLITY

out of doors

WITH THE DESIGN OF THEIR HOUSE CENTRED AROUND AN INDOOR GARDEN ATRIUM, JOHN AND SHEILA MACKENZIE HAVE BROUGHT THE OUTDOORS INTO THE HEART OF THEIR CAYMAN ISLANDS HOME.

"We call it an outside-in house and we love having the plants, greenery and lots of light indoors," says Sheila.

Twelve four-foot-by-four-foot skylights directly above the indoor garden flood the open-plan living and kitchen areas with natural light during the day.

The rear wall consists of a series of French bi-folding and sliding glass doors, allowing the entire house to be literally open to the elements.

"It brings the outside into the inside and we love living with the natural daylight and airflow instead of being in a sealed air-conditioned box," says Sheila. "The open-plan design has lots of space for entertaining family and friends, without being oversized for the two of us."

Sheila was born in Jamaica, where her maternal grandfather, the Rev Robert Young, served as a Presbyterian minister, having initially arrived in Cayman from Campbeltown in Scotland as a missionary in 1908.



THE HOUSE, WHICH HAS THREE BEDROOMS INCLUDING A LOFT,
HAS CATHEDRAL CEILINGS AS HIGH AS 30 FEET UNDER THE SKYLIGHTS,
WHICH CREATES A COOL ENVIRONMENT AND MAXIMIZES THE FEELING OF OPEN SPACE



ABOVE Victorian-styled spiral staircase leads to loft
RIGHT Skylights in living area let potted plants thrive in atrium

Her grandmother, Olga Parsons, came from a family believed to have originated in Ireland and migrated to Cayman via Jamaica, starting with Colonel William Parsons in 1750, and with Olga's father, Edmund Parsons, being the last "Custos" of the Cayman Islands from 1888-1898.

Sheila has lived most of her life in Cayman and works part-time in the financial industry as an office administrator for an investment company, leaving her time for tennis, cooking, volunteer work and gardening.

She has a passion for plants, having served as treasurer of the Garden Club of Grand Cayman for many years, and likes to be surrounded by greenery.

"I love my indoor garden for its beauty and tranquillity not to mention the health benefits provided by indoor plants," she says. "It's easy to maintain because I've put all the plants in decorative pots instead of planting them in the soil as you would outdoors, as well as the plants not having to cope with the outdoor weather and heavy winds. Choosing the right plants for growing indoors takes some practice but with the natural light from the skylights, the plants thrive."

Her collection includes Norfolk Island pines, a Raphis palm and varieties of crotons and ficus, all of which make the MacKenzies' African Grey parrot Peanut feel quite at home.

With a desire to bring the outdoors inside their new house, the couple designed and built the residence in South Sound, Grand Cayman, 12 years ago in a style that they describe as being Caribbean with Australian colonial influences and a touch of modern Bali design.

The house, which has three bedrooms including a loft, has cathedral ceilings as high as 30 feet under the skylights, which creates a cool environment and maximizes the feeling of open space.

John, who comes from Australia, has added a number of nautical notes to the design in a nod to his maritime career and seafaring heritage. Originally a marine engineer by profession, with a background in shipbuilding, shipping, towage and offshore oil, he combined his engineering skills with a lifelong interest in architecture to design the property.

He then collaborated with his friend John Doak, a Cayman-based architect, to put his ideas down on paper.



"It took just a single 40-minute meeting to design the house," says John, who is principal of the West Indian Marine Group, companies which provide marine services in Cayman. "I hand-sketched it and asked John Doak to proportion it and balance out the sizes of the rooms."

John (MacKenzie) also took a hands-on approach throughout the rest of the project, from doing his own electrical, structural and plumbing drawings, to designing the roof structure, tongue-in-groove cedar cathedral ceilings and acting as the general contractor.

Together with the high ceilings and the garden atrium, other unique design features include the open loft which doubles as a workspace and guest sleeping area, accessed by a reproduction, Victorian spiral staircase.

Large, deep porches provide shade and cover to the house, allowing the many doors and windows to be left open in all weather.

Additionally, there is an outside dining area, and an outdoor living room on a deck above a large swimming pool.

The deck design has a nautical ambience inspired by John's desire for a "dock on the bay" feeling of living on the water.

It juts out over the pool and the railings are fashioned like those found on a ship, while canvas awnings are made like ships' sails which can be hoisted down when inclement weather threatens.

Other nautical influences around the house include maritime clocks, barometers, compasses, a ship's speed log, chronometer and a two-piece 1850s captain's sea chest.

Whereas in the main area of the house the spaces flow seamlessly into each other, the master bedroom and guest bedroom enjoy privacy at the west end of the residence.

The beds are the central feature in each room with French-style headboards made from cushions suspended on decorative curtain rods.

Each bedroom has an en suite bathroom with attractive Victorian-style fittings and large rain showers, while the master bathroom also has a tub.

The furniture in the house is a mixture of modern pieces, old family favourites and antiques.

There are also items that John had specially made by craftsmen in Australia and took with him when he moved to Cayman to marry Sheila whom he met on a



LEFT Villa looks out always, every nook is footsteps away from gardens

RIGHT Living area flows seamlessly to sheltered porch with canvas awnings



LARGE, DEEP PORCHES PROVIDE SHADE AND COVER TO THE HOUSE, ALLOWING THE MANY DOORS AND WINDOWS TO BE LEFT OPEN IN ALL WEATHER



trip to buy a ship from the island's Kirkconnell family. The antiques include an 1800s ladies writing desk, 19th-century camphor wooden sea chests, centuries-old Grecian urns made into lamps, as well as free-standing Armenian urns and a restored 1850s wrought iron Victorian antique plant stand on the dining porch.

The collection of furniture that John had made by the Australian craftsmen started off with a large wall unit that is placed near the entrance of the house.

He was so pleased with the piece that he soon commissioned additional items, including a partners desk in the loft, a chest of drawers in the master bedroom and a sideboard buffet unit in the dining room.

Other little details, such as the specially-designed interior doors that Sheila hand-stained, and the antique-effect Victorian door knobs and box locks, add finishing touches to this carefully thought-out home.

A three-car garage underneath the "Carriage House," as John and Sheila call their guest cottage, is a feature of the entrance to the estate.

The garden itself is a pleasure to meander round, filled with indigenous plants such as silver thatch, bull thatch, green buttonwood, white mangrove and sea grape.

Hurricane Ivan swept through the area in 2004 causing widespread destruction to many of the neighbouring properties but the MacKenzies were lucky in that only their garden, and not the house, was badly damaged.

Since then they have replanted the ground and now you would never know that the verdant growth is only six years old.

The house is officially called Villa Casuarina, in reference to the many trees of that type which used to be on the property.

John and Sheila don't really refer to it by name, however, simply describing it as their "outside-in" home. M

LEFT Bed with French-style headboard dominates master bedroom
RIGHT Clever hat rack becomes sculptural element

