

## LESTER COLLINS PANCOAST

1931–2003

In late November 2003 we were shocked to receive the unexpected and very sad news that IPS Board member and staunch supporter of the society, Lester Pancoast, had died on 21 November of cancer.

Lester Collins Pancoast played a most significant role in the development of landscape architecture in the Miami area. Hailing from a well-established Miami family, Lester went to school in Pennsylvania and then obtained his architecture degree from Cornell University. He practised architecture in the Miami area, designing elegant and understated buildings and gardens, ideally suited to the Florida climate and scene.

With his great grandfather, John Collins, being an early pioneer farmer in South Florida, Lester's roots were very definitely in the Miami area. His grandfather was a property developer on Miami Beach and his father a much respected architect. Lester married David Fairchild's grand-daughter, H el ene, and thus his links to Florida gardening were further strengthened. Lester served as a trustee of Fairchild Tropical Garden for many years.

He lived with H el ene on Poinciana Drive in Coconut Grove in an elegant Japanese-influenced house, surrounded by the lush growth of their palm collection, planted thickly but never seeming to be crowded, with wonderful tranquil views through the windows and more palms out over the bay.

Although officially retiring in 1998, Lester continued to practice as a landscape architect up until the time of his death. Indeed a major project remains unfinished – the Japanese Garden on Watson Island near the newly relocated Parrot Jungle. As with all he did, this new garden was designed with meticulous attention to detail and profound knowledge of the requirements of his chosen plants and the potential vagaries of the

south Florida climate. We hope that the Japanese Garden can be completed without compromising Lester's vision.

In recent years, encouraged by H el ene, Lester developed an increasing passion for water colors, producing bold and imaginative canvasses, many of them depicting the play of light on palm leaves. Many of these paintings are of considerable size, adding to their dramatic effect. Over the last ten years a selection of these water colors were used, each year, for a beautifully printed and presented desk diary. A painting of his was also used as a cover for the 40-year index to *Principes* that the IPS published in 1997. Furthermore, it is to Lester that the credit goes for our current PALMS logo. Over the last two or three years he branched out into paintings depicting the play of light in shallow water and some more abstract subjects.

Lester's influence was of great importance. He was an IPS board member for many years, bringing to board meetings an air of professional etiquette and quiet common sense. He and H el ene rarely missed a Biennial and were always the very best of company, enjoying travel, food and other cultures. In 2001 they joined my wife, Soejatmi, and me, with four other friends on a private tour of Madagascar. This was in fact their second trip to the island, the first having been in 1989. We shall treasure our memories of the trip, remembering Lester's respect for local people and their customs, his enthusiasm for plants and landscapes and his sheer good company.

We remember this elegant, civilized and supremely friendly person, and celebrate his love of palms, his legacy of sound advice to the IPS, his wonderful water-colors and his dignified building designs. He is survived by H el ene and two daughters, Katherine and Marian, to whom on behalf of the IPS we send our sympathy.

JOHN DRANSFIELD