

John T. "Jack" Rogers
2008 WPHS Alumni Circle of Distinction

When prominent local architect and civic leader Jack Rogers retired as chairman and CEO of Winter Park-based Rogers, Lovelock & Fritz (RLF), his colleagues, friends and family decided to commemorate the occasion and honor Rogers by uniting and raising the money to sponsor a Habitat House in his name. This marks only the second home built by Habitat for Humanity of Winter Park-Maitland that has been sponsored by individuals rather than the typical church, philanthropic foundation, educational institution or business.

After 41 years with RLF, Jack Rogers retired as Chairman/CEO a couple of years ago. The former Navy officer and past president and board member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Orlando chapter was also a board member of Florida Hospital SHARES (a medical missionary program) and Hospice of Central Florida. The community leader has also contributed his time and talents to the Boggy Creek Gang, a year-round camp for children with chronic or life-threatening illnesses. As head of Friends of Casa Feliz, Rogers spearheaded the reclamation and renovation of Casa Feliz, a Winter Park home museum designed by his father, renowned architect James Gamble Rogers II and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which was moved in 2001 to escape demolition.

Rogers, whose noted father, James Gamble Rogers, designed the home, was instrumental in forming the citizens group that saved Casa Feliz from demolition and began its restoration as a public site.

Between father and son, James Gamble Rogers II and Jack Rogers have a combined 102 years of experience practicing architecture in Winter Park. Jack recalls his father telling him as to why he had chosen to move from Daytona Beach and open his business in Winter Park in 1928. Jack's father Gamble founded the RLF architecture firm and began to help craft the architectural design that Winter Park still boasts today by designing historical buildings such as what is now the Casa Feliz Home Museum on Park Avenue.

In 1965, his son Jack joined the firm and the pair began to work together in architectural design until Gamble retired in 1985. Their last project together was the design of the Olin Library at Rollins College. Jack took over his father's firm and later retired in 2006. Father and son received the American Institute of Architects Orlando Chapter's Medal of Honor for their outstanding work in the Central Florida community.

In addition to designing the Olin Library at Rollins College and Casa Feliz, Gamble is responsible

for other historical structures in the city, such as the McAllaster House off Alexander Place, Grenada Court on Park Avenue, and the first home he designed in Winter Park, "Four Winds" on the Isle of Sicily. He is also credited with designing the Florida Supreme Court Building in Tallahassee.

Son Jack Rogers brought his father's business into a new era. Today the firm focuses on institutional projects, including hospitals, higher education buildings, and projects for the national Department of Defense across the country. Before he retired in 2006, Jack and the RLF firm helped design the Walt Disney Memorial Cancer Institute as well as Moral Welfare and Recreation Projects for military bases in Italy.

Rogers says his favorite projects, however, were helping to design churches and worship centers, from the Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe in Lake Buena Vista, to a 20-foot-by-20-foot prayer chapel in Leesburg. He described the process of designing such buildings as a "labor of love."

No matter what the project, Jack took the teaching of his father with him, and he is doing all he can to preserve not only his father's legacy, but also the history of Winter Park. The Friends of Casa Feliz presented the fifth annual James Gamble Rogers II Colloquium on Historic Preservation recently, where Jack spoke to residents about his father's legacy in Winter Park. "The history is in place, the buildings are in place," Jack said. "What we have to do is get together to have a mindset to protect it and preserve it."