

# HOME

FORT LAUDERDALE



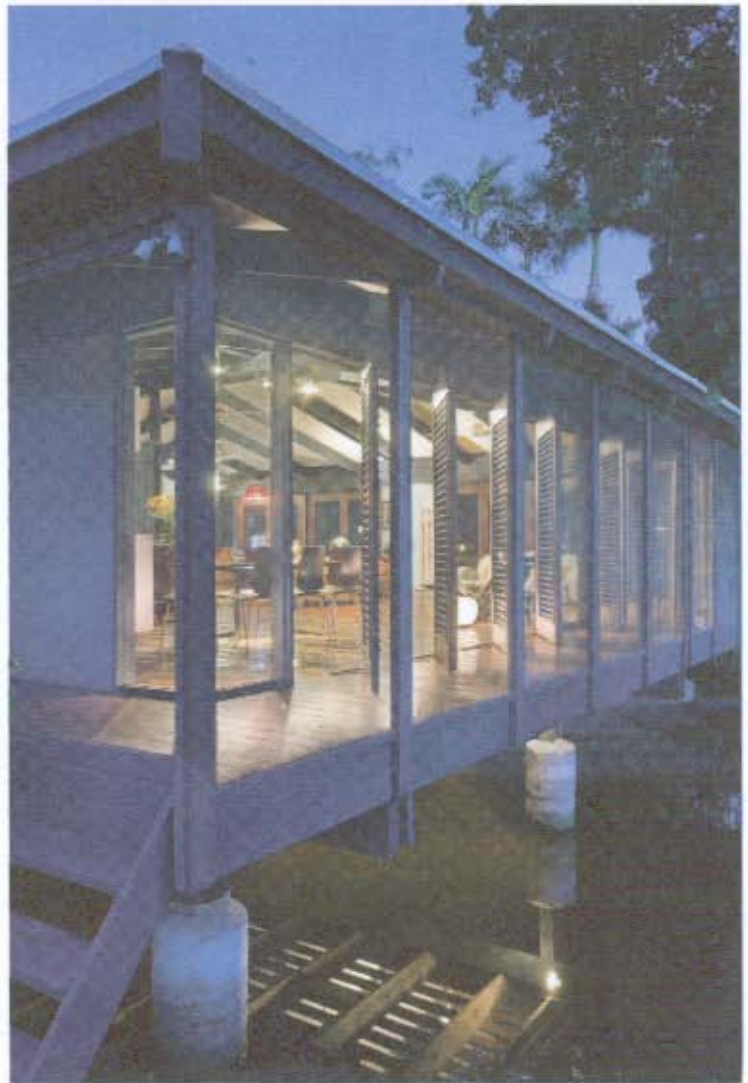




With a four-foot wide, screened lanai that encircles the public rooms of the Nothard's residence, doors can remain open to direct the breeze. Pivot doors with wooden jalousies are original to the house.  
RIGHT: Glow through the glass dining room floor reflects on the water below the house.



# Tree House



TEXT JOHN O'CONNOR PHOTOS RED SQUARE PHOTO









Bigoney's ingenious glass-strip dining room floor. At high tide, fish swim and crabs romp in the water below. Eight-inch glass strip skylights let the sun in from above as well. Cabinetry and built-ins are original to the house.

## Fort Lauderdale architect **Bill Bigoney**, who worked in

Broward County designing over 200 structures during his 30-plus-year career, studied under Walter Gropius at Harvard's Graduate School of Architecture. Gropius, who believed in weaving a regional spirit into many of his buildings, imparted wisdom to Bigoney, who went on to receive a graduate degree in architecture.

Bigoney came to Florida in 1949 and set his sights on creating a domestic architecture which embraced the local environmental conditions. In his single-family homes, his choices were always to work with nature not against it. The home designer Margi Nothard and her husband, Kim, purchased over eight years ago is no exception. It was the architect's own home, and one of his very best. In this house, as in some of his others, coral stone embankments take the place of poured concrete seawalls. The main living areas are surrounded by louvered doors and glass panels that swing open to catch the breeze, not sealed in and air-conditioned. Bigoney was cautious not to disturb the root systems for the cypress trees on the property Nothard says, but instead built around them. Constructing the house in that careful manner preserved the canopy, which to this day helps to cool the house naturally.

None of this was lost on the Nothards when they purchased the house. "Kim came over here when I was in South Africa and took pictures of the house when seeing it with a realtor," says Nothard, "He e-mailed them back to me, and I took one look and said BUY IT!" But Nothard says they had their work cut out for them, as the place had not been cared for in years. Over the years they have

The bedrooms are in a separate pavilion connected by covered roof. Elevated higher than the main house, these rooms are cross-ventilated with jalousie windows.

restored and renovated a bit at a time, but it has been nothing less than a labor of love for the couple who live there with their two children.

Every inch of the house is lived in. Nothard, president of Glavovic Studio Architecture + Urban Design in Fort Lauderdale, said part of the reason for choosing the house was its very “open-plan” quality.

“We don’t have areas that are ‘out-of-bounds’ for the children. You have to clean up after them a bit more, but it’s worth the effort.” For Nothard and her husband, the house was indicative of what Florida living should be. “It was so obvious. I didn’t think it could be anything else. I use it with my students (from Florida Atlantic University) to show them how vernacular Florida can meet modern architecture and also to examine how a home’s design can be driven by its environment.”

This home is not only about the physical building, as Nothard points out to her students, but more about its incredible connection to nature and its amazing site, only a mile from the heart of downtown Fort Lauderdale. The property next door was sold to Broward County to be conservation land and is dense with ground vegetation, wildlife and a high canopy of native trees. On the other side is property being planned as a city park and behind, the house sits on the banks of the New River.

Nothard and her husband have augmented the landscape in a very natural manner, using outcroppings of rock and replacing gravel with heliconia and ginger. There are still orchids growing from Bigoney’s collection from the late 60s and 70s.

