

# French Heritage hits home

FEBRUARY 27, 2025



Cocktails at Club Colette for the French Heritage Society's Annual Palm Beach Gala.

PALM BEACH • BY: LEE FRYD

*Autumn in New York. Winter in Palm Beach. Springtime, of course, in Paris. Summer: the Hamptons.* Hit the French countryside in September. That's French Heritage Society's event schedule. We caught up with them at Club Colette for the Society's Annual Palm Beach Gala.

It's always a sold-out affair. "We think about going someplace larger, French Heritage CEO **Elizabeth Stribling** told me. "Then we think, everybody likes it like this." Their secret sauce? "In Palm Beach, everyone

just wants to go out and have fun. So, we just make it a convivial party. “Old friends. Glam dresses. Short speeches. Good French food — and, of course, wine. “L’esprit de joie,” she pronounced. (Since Stribling sold her eponymous real estate company and started spending more time in France, French phrases pop naturally into her conversation.) “And our fidèle, our faithful, come every year.”

“It’s a way to keep our Palm Beach winter snowbirds and residents thinking about French Heritage. In February, they think, maybe I might go to France in June; maybe I might join your autumn trip, or your spring excursion around Paris. We have a lot of people who travel with us, so these parties are also joyful reunions.” I was in fact, delighted to see new friends from last October’s trip to Avignon. The organization also bonds members with smaller cultural events year round on both sides of the Atlantic: soirees in people’s homes, cocktail parties and luncheons.

This April in Palm Beach, there’ll be a Cinq à Sept Reception at Hindman Palm Beach on the 1st and an April in Paris Luncheon in on the 14th. Paris activities include an annual presentation March 18th, a Corton-Vergennes Wine Dinner on April 29th and Dîner des Mécènes in Paris on May 20th.



Kelly Williams and Elizabeth Stribling.

Then, on May 21-23, there's the annual "Secret Paris" tour. "We show them places you really can't go to without entrée," Stribling told me. French Heritage raises money to help restore historic French architecture. Their connections run through the cultural heart of the country.

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The Society's Annual Palm Beach Gala is always a sold-out affair.

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"Last year, we saw the Cross raised onto the back of the roof of Notre Dame right before our eyes. It was amazing. At the private work area overlooking the church, **Hank Silver**, our American Carpenter, described the process. You can't do that as a tourist." French Heritage donated \$2.7 million to the Notre Dame's restoration. Stribling, Director **Jennifer Herlein** and several donors attended opening festivities.

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Last May, FHS Chairman of the Board Elizabeth Stribling and fellow FHS patrons had the privilege of going to Notre-Dame de Paris and had the rare opportunity to see the progress up close and hear firsthand about its rebirth. The Cathedral reopened to the public on December 8, after five years of restoration work.

“In September, we’re going to Normandy to stay at Château de Canisy, the ancestral home of our French Heritage President Comte **Denis de Kergorlay**, that dates from the 11th Century. And it is drop dead, gorgeous! There are more than 15 bedrooms — all with ensuite baths.” Fancier than the King of England’s Balmoral! “Denis’ wife has decorated

each bed — and bath — in a different period of style. There's an Empire room, Marie Antoinette room and Art Deco room. Living areas include a music room and large dining room.

“We'll visit some of the D-Day beaches, a beautiful museum, a monastery where we made a donation and private châteaux.” A trip to the ancestral home of **Alexis de Tocqueville**, the author of *Democracy in America* will be hosted by his direct descendant, **Comte Jean-Guillaume de Tocqueville**, a childhood friend of Kergolay. He has already introduced **Stephanie de Tocqueville**, who came to dinner at Libba's Paris apartment in December.

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A visit to Chateau de Tocqueville, the ancestral home of Alexis de Tocqueville, is one of the many highlights of the Chairman's Circle Trip to Normandy in September.

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“En route to Normandy, we'll have a reception at the château of famed decorator **Timothy Corrigan**, which is decorated to the nines. He'll talk about his most recent book — on how he decorated it.”

At Club Colette, Libba was in her element sitting between Cultural Counselor of France to the U.S. **Mohamed Bouabdallah** (whom she described to the room as “having won my heart ... not easy to do”) and Consul General of Miami **Raphaël Trapp** (a new acquaintance or he might, too, have been such a winner).

**Liz McDermott Barnes, Suzanne Stoll, and Kelly Williams** were Palm Beach French Heritage Board representatives; Board Members **Jennifer Farrell, Ronald Fleming and Brenda Howard** were also there.



Raphael Trapp and Mohamed Bouabdallah.

Also in the house: **Robb and Sara Allan, Christine and Max Ansbacher, Grace Bender, Friederike Biggs, Laurie Bodor, Sharon Bush and Bob Murray, Harry and Valerie Cooper, Francine Crocker, Tom D’Agostino and Danielle Rollins, Danielle de Benedictis, Ghislain d’Humieres, Scott Diament, Ken and Maria Fishel, Laura Drasner, Anne Fitzpatrick, Sandra Flax, Audrey and Martin Gruss, Maggie Hager, Charles and Kaaren Hale, Mai Hallingby Harrison, Linda Hickox, Linda and Peter Hoffman, Holly and Stuart Holden, Bruce Horten, Lucia Hwong Gordon, Cheri Kaufman, Patricia Kennedy and Joe Ban, Monica and Scott Laurens, Kamie and Richard Lightburn, William Ivey Long, Ursula and Paul Lowerre, Lynn and Robert Mackle, Judy McLaren, Vicky McLoughlin, Jacqui Michel, Angela and Chips Page, Poppy Paulos and Monte**

**Tomerlin, Guy Robinson, Paola and Arnie Rosenshein, William Steele and Chris Drake, Sherri Stephenson, Suzanne Stoll, Missy VanBuren-Brown, Pierre and Suzie Villere.**

The French Cultural Counselor, stationed in New York, arrived from that post in Egypt. “But,” Bouabdallah told the room, “after spending a few days here and with my friend **Ghislain d’Humieres**, the director of the Norton Museum of Art, I’m thinking of moving our headquarters to Palm Beach!”

Get in line. These days, who isn’t headquartered here?!”

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*L. to r.:* Lee and CeCe Black; Molly Morse Limmer and Elizabeth Marshman.

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*L. to r.:* Barbara and Jim Howard; Ljiljana Cook and Ronald Fleming.





Chris Drake, Lee Black, and William Steele.



*L. to r.:* Anka Palitz and Laura Drazner; Nicole DiCocco and Jennifer Farrell.



Monica Laurans, Scott Laurans, Karen Talwar, and Missy Van Buren.



*L. to r.:* Ken and Maria Fishel; Alberto Mariaca and Mai Hallingby Harrison.



Monte Tomerlin, Jane Ferguson, Poppy Paulos, and Pamela Gates.



Cheri Kaufman and Kamie Lightburn, with a friend.



William Van Ness, Ann Van Ness, Zelma Nichols, and Nick Nichols.



Pierre and Suzie Villere.





*L. to r.:* Paul and Ursula Lowerre; Randy Fishburn and Veronica Whitlock.



Patricia Kennedy and Francine Crocker, with a friend.



*L. to r.:* Jean Shafroff and Jennifer Herlein; Ben Barnes and Liz McDermott Barnes.



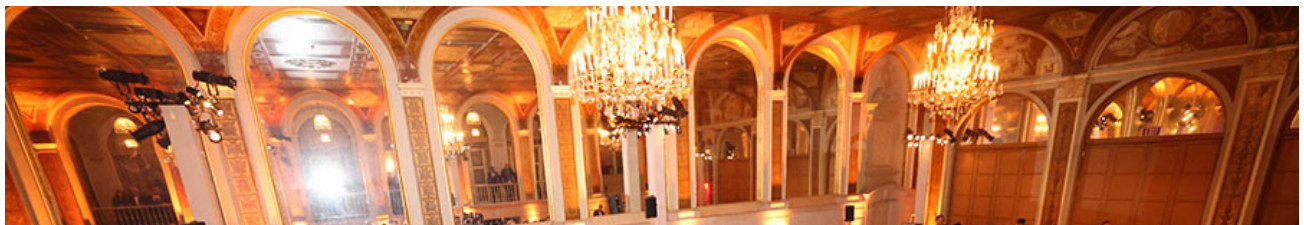
Valerie and Harry Cooper.



*L. to r.:* Mike Cocherell and Sherri Stephenson; Lynn and Pascal Tone.

*Photographs by Andrew Werner and Annie Watt*

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*Feb 27*

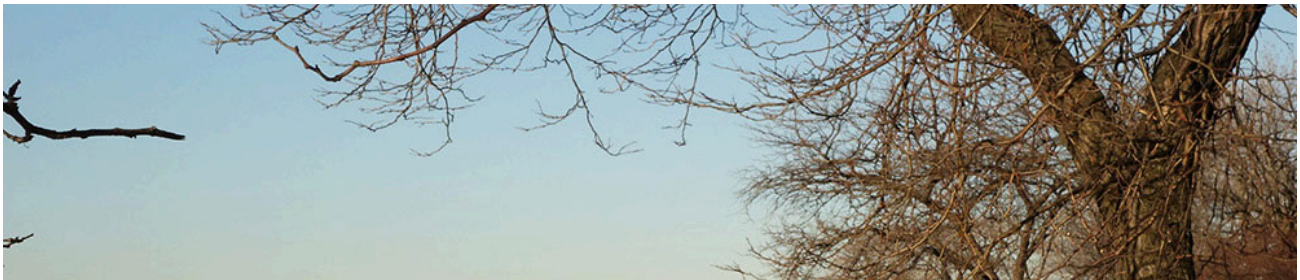
The Trophée des Arts Gala, covered by Jeanne Lawrence, was more than just a glamorous evening for the French Institute Alliance Française; it was a glimpse into the organization's vibrant future and exciting new initiatives. [Read More...](#)



**PARTY PICTURES**

*Feb 21*

New York City Ballet's Annual Luncheon benefit at Lincoln Center celebrated the 100th birthday of NYCB Principal Dancer and American dance legend Maria Tallchief; The New York Philharmonic hosted its annual Lunar New Year Concert & Gala, welcoming the Year of the Snake and honoring NY Phil Board Member and International Advisory Board Co-Chair Angela Chen. [Read More...](#)



**SOCIAL DIARY**

*Feb 21*

A Letter From a Neighbor About Another Neighbor Who Came Before Us. [Read More...](#)



**SOCIAL DIARY**

*Feb 24*

An astounding performance on the piano, a (Society) Dream about performance anxiety, and a big production at Doubles. [Read More...](#)



**ACROSS THE NATION**

*Feb 20*

The Children's Oncology Support Fund's 3rd Annual Aspen Snow Ball Gala titled "Oh The Places You'll Go," raised \$3.5 million for pediatric cancer research. The signature gala marked the end of five days of events known as "Aspen Snow Ball Week." [Read More...](#)



**GUEST DIARY**

*Feb 20*

Karen Klopp and Hilary Dick will join event chair Katherine at the Spoons Across America's inaugural Winter Hat Luncheon at Cafe Boulud Palm Beach, supporting the fight against childhood hunger and the promotion of nutrition education. [Read More...](#)