

RECOGNIZING DEDICATION: HONORING FORMER HILLWOOD STAFF

Jason Speck, Head of Archives and Special Collections

Archives and Special Collections (ASC) has embarked on an ongoing project to honor some of the many dedicated professionals who spent so many years at Hillwood. Using an exhibition case in the staff dining room, ASC aims to tell some of the myriad stories of commitment and service exemplified by Hillwood staff.

In 2021, the case was dedicated to head butler Gus Modig, who worked for Marjorie Post from 1948 until her passing in 1973, and for Hillwood until 1992. When Gus was appointed head butler in 1959, Post suggested that he be addressed as "Mr. Gus," a reflection of respect for the man as well as his professional status. He was deeply involved in daily household operations as well as Post's renowned social engagements. Upon retiring in 1992, he was recognized by Hillwood's Board of Trustees as "the embodiment of the transition [of Hillwood] from a beautiful and elegant home...to a museum." His commitment to Marjorie Post and her legacy included placing flowers at her memorial in the rose garden each year on her birthday, a tradition that still stands. Today a plaque honoring his legacy also exists there, a few steps from Post's own monument.



Marjorie Post and Gus Modig, head butler, in the French drawing room

This year the exhibit case honors the work of Nettie Leitch Major, who was hired by Marjorie Post in the late 1950s for her professional research and writing skills. Major performed extensive genealogical research, tracing the Post family all the way back to England in the 17th century. With this information, she worked with Post to apply for an honorary coat of arms from the College of Arms in London, which was granted in 1962. In addition to family research, Major also undertook a biography of Marjorie's father C.W. Post, which was published in 1963. Though she planned a biography of Marjorie Post as well, it never came to fruition. After Marjorie Post's passing in 1973, Major ensured that Post's archival papers were kept safe and preserved for future research. Thanks to her research skills and respect for the historical record, Hillwood continues to benefit greatly from the work Nettie completed during her tenure.