

Turning a 'Museum' Into a Home in Md.

Governor's Mansion Redecorated

By Robert Barnes
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ANNAPOLIS, Aug. 11—Hilda Mae Snoops, Gov. William Donald Schaefer's confidante, longtime companion and now interior designer, broke her silence today on why she wants to redo the governor's mansion from the crabgrass out front to the cupola on top.

"We're trying to make it a showplace for the people of Maryland, a living mansion that reflects that a governor lives here, not an intimidating museum setting," said Snoops, standing amidst construction workers and plaster dust, surrounded by reporters.

Under Snoops' direction, the brightly colored and historically detailed public rooms that were featured in *Architectural Digest* are being replaced with beige paint and silky wallcoverings. The front lawn of the Georgian Revival mansion—including the brick walkway and boxwood hedge—has been scraped away and will be replaced with a garden inspired by Monticello.

The price for the renovation is likely to top \$1 million, not including the landscaping, and will be paid for by taxpayers and private donors. And even leaving aside the fact that the governor doesn't live there—Schaefer still commutes from his West Baltimore row house—Snoops' explanation is unlikely to calm com-



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State hostess Hilda Mae Snoops oversees redecorating.

pletely the controversy that has erupted over her decision to make such extensive changes to the mansion.

The criticism has been fueled by Snoops' previous
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BY GERALD MATTHEAU—THE WASHINGTON POST

A large expanse of lawn in front of the governor's mansion is being torn up for re sodding as part of the redecoration.

Making the Governor's Mansion Homier

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refusal to discuss the project and her apparent rejection of the opinions of those who guided the mansion's decoration before she arrived. Historical preservationists and decorators have questioned her expertise and taste.

And even those friendly to the Schaefer administration have privately questioned the need for the changes she proposes.

During his eight-year tenure, former governor Harry Hughes and his wife Patricia oversaw a sweeping renovation of the public part of the house, raising \$1.4 million in private donations to decorate each of the seven rooms in painstakingly accurate detail of various periods of Maryland history.

One result was a glowing review in *Architectural Digest* that Snoops' critics are quick to remember.

That was made easier because of a Schaefer-administration-sponsored bill approved by the legislature this year. It removed control of the mansion from a committee of the historical society and created the Governor's Mansion Trust, chaired by Department of General Services Secretary Earl Seboda and including Snoops, who represents the governor.

Snoops had already chosen new wall coverings, draperies and rugs when the group held its first meeting.

Although she wants to retain the period idea that Patricia Hughes advocated, she also wants to name each room after a governor. A committee recommended against naming the main hallway, but Snoops said, "I thought we would name that for whoever the current governor is."

No matter the period, walls will

mansion work, both headed by Schaefer's friends. They have raised more than \$500,000 from such events as a crabfest in Chestertown, a \$1,000-a-couple cocktail party and a "family day" at an amusement park in Ocean City. Another fund-raiser is scheduled for September.

The state also is paying for the \$97,000 landscaping project on the front lawn. But the garden concept for the rest of the mansion grounds will cost at least \$200,000, depending upon the cost of a 10-foot Victorian fountain that is planned.

The ultimate question is whether the renovations will be so compelling that Schaefer will want to move in. Said Snoops: "I haven't asked him."

"There are a few pleasures as sweet as that of moving into a house that needs no work," the magazine wrote in November 1986, the month Schaefer was elected. "And whoever succeeds Harry Hughes as governor of Maryland this January should include at least a paragraph of thanks to Patricia Hughes in his inaugural speech."

Actually, the 119-year-old house did need work. A legislative committee said in 1987 that the upstairs, private quarters of the mansion were in desperate need of attention, and referred to some of the furnishings as "Howard Johnson's, circa 1940s." Schaefer has complained about the general condition of the building and the need for repairs.

But the downstairs public rooms are a different story. Even Schaefer praised the work of Patricia Hughes when he took office. Under her direction and that of the Maryland Historical Society, each room reflected a period of Maryland history and contained authentic Maryland decorative and fine arts.

The Empire Room was painted the same bright yellow found in the home of one of the Maryland signers of the Declaration of Independence. The Victorian Parlor was described as "precisely Victorian" by Architectural Digest and the former conservatory was given the brown lacquered walls made popular by Billy Baldwin, the renowned interior designer born in Baltimore.

"The goal of the project was to do historically correct rooms," said Stiles T. Colwill, the former curator of the historical society who oversaw the project.

But Snoops said that redecorating is "up to each governor" and should reflect their individual tastes.

be beige, either painted or covered with expensive Scalandre fabric. Draperies and upholstery will mostly be in shades of blue and gold. "Muted colors, nothing trendy or harsh color or decoration," Snoops said. "In good taste."

Five Waterford crystal chandeliers and a hand-loomed rug with the state seal have been ordered, although Snoops said she didn't know their cost.

"Her finished project will speak for itself," Colwill said when asked if Snoops' plans sound tasteful. But he said they are not historically accurate, and in the historical community, "I would say the general tenor is outrage."

Former governor Hughes said he is "disappointed, sure" in the renovation plans and said those involved in the previous renovation are "very distressed and disappointed because they spent so much time."

And Hughes disputed the claim that the mansion was being made more accessible. "We had over 300 functions there in eight years," he said.

Maryland House Appropriations Committee Chairman Charles J. (Buzz) Ryan (D-Prince George's), a new member of the mansion trust, was philosophical. "The old artsy-craftsy people aren't going to like it," he said. "The new artsy-craftsy crew will think it's wonderful."

But Ryan said he believed the General Assembly will continue to finance the renovations. More than \$400,000 in public money was authorized for the special mansion repairs by the General Assembly, and Snoops said there would be a new request next year.

The rest of the money comes from two private organizations that have been established to aid the