

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to another
edition of The Break Room. A

weekly conversation about how
the City of St Augustine

works from those who do the
work every day. Hosted by the

City of St Augustine's
Communications Director, Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a
closer look at the different

city departments and provides
updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now
your host, Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Welcome to The Break Room.
Thanks for tuning in. I'm

Melissa Wissel, Communications
Director for the City of St

Augustine. Every year, the City
Commission recognizes individuals and

sometimes organizations for
outstanding service and

contributions to the city by
way of presenting awards. These

awards are the DeAviles Award,
the Adelaide Sanchez Award, and

the Order of La Florida. The
awards were created over many

years and each award carries
with it distinct criteria which

must be met by its recipients.
They are nominated by a City

Commissioner, confirmed by a
unanimous vote, and then the

awards are presented at a time
that coincides with some

special occasion or a mile
stone in the city's history. In

May, coinciding with Historic

Preservation Month, our City

Commission recognized Margo
Pope, presenting her with the

2022 Adelaide Sanchez Award for
Historic Education and

Interpretation. And Margo is in
studio this week with me for

the first time. Margo, welcome
to The Break Room. MARGO: Thank you,

Melissa. MEISSA: I'm so excited to have
you. You're our second

award-winning guest to join us.
Bob and Maria Alvarez came back

in February. They were
recipients of the De Aviles Award

and I'll have to say you have
something in common with them,

and it's it's very sweet. And
it's that not just that you're

both the award winners, but you
as well as the Alvarez's, you

were genuinely surprised by
this nomination and sincerely

humbled and honored by the
recognition. We're so proud of

you. MARGO: Yeah. Blown away is the
word I used. MELISSA: So excited. MARGO: And it

just it's still sinking in. MELISSA:
Well, you've done a lot for

this community. Your, your
legacy continues to go on. And

so share with me how you felt.
Where, you know, this this

Adelaide Sanchez Award comes.
She was big in historic

preservation. And when she
passed away they want, she

wanted a way to continue to
make sure that the city was

recognizing and maintaining
that awareness of historic

preservation. So you are very
involved with that at the Pena

Peck House. MARGO: Right. Right. And I
actually knew Adelaide at, after

she came back, after she retired
from the big career at the

Miami Herald. That was a big
thing for someone from The

Record to go that in that time
frame, in the forties. MELISSA: And a

woman. MARGO: And a woman. And she
stayed 30 years since she was

the associate women's editor. MELISSA: I
think it's funny, too, if you

think about today's world, times
if you will, that that she was

in charge of the women's pages.

It was, you know, the women's

section. MARGO: Right. That's true.

They are even existing anymore.

Most newspapers call them the

feature section. MELISSA; There you go.

Yep. And you know very much

about about journalism. That

was your career. MARGO: Right. Right.

MELISSA: You were in, you started out at

the Jacksonville? MARGO; At the

Florida Times Union in 1970. Before that, I was

an intern at The Record in High

School. And the first time my

name appeared with an article

was when I was eight. And

it was the Bluebird Chapter.

The We Too Machak Bluebird

Chapter of Campfire Girls here.

And you met a weekly

deadline, so that was good

training. MELISSA: What, you think that
was something that is what sort

of intrigued you or started you
on some path? I mean I realized

you're only eight years old, but. MARGO:
Yeah. Well it did, but I also

remember my mother was a
freelance writer for Miss Nina

Hawkins at The Record. And then
she had a column in the Women's

Section. The Society Column
from St Augustine for 10

years. And then I came to
the Times Union about ten later

and the two editors that she
worked for, who were both men

running the women's section,
were still there. One was

Managing Editor and one was

Associate Executive Editor. MELISSA: And

you came down to The Record, you,
did you retire from the Times

Union? Or you just transferred
down here? MARGO: No I I got a call

from our corporate office in
Augusta, Morris Communications.

Richard Allport called and said
we want you to go to St

Augustine. The Record is
looking for Managing Editor and

we've recommended you and we
want you to go. MELISSA: Great. So.

Right in your backyard. Yeah.

And you didn't have to commute anymore. MARGO: I

didn't have to commute anymore.

So that was exciting. But it was

a big culture change, because
the record was a small paper.

And at that time, the Florida
Times Union, seven days a week,

crossing two states. And you
know, was a big operation of six

editions a day. 200,000
circulation. MELISSA: So you come back

down to St Augustine which
we always refer to. You know, I

know you do. You know the
Nation's Oldest City.

You are still, you were covering
some of our boards, which was

that where you kind of got this
historic preservation itch? I

mean, talking about how, we we
have to circle back here to the

Adelaide Sanchez Award. Because
you've been very involved with

Pena Peck House and The Women's
Exchange. MARGO: Well, it started

earlier than that. In the 50's,
archaeologist from FSU, Doctor

Hale Smith and his team were
digging the Powder House Lot on

the South end of Marine Street.
And we always knew it was

history, because our brothers
would dig artifacts down there.

They had tons of arrow points,
arrowheads, all kinds of

things, spears, you know, a bow
and arrow pieces. So, we'd go

down there after school a bunch
of us and watch them. We could

watch but we couldn't touch.
Sure. And all the team were

men. Wow. So today's
archaeologist are women. MELISSA: That's

right. Dr White. Sure.

Yeah. MARGO: Yeah and Marsha Chance

the Curatorial Chair of our

Women's Exchange. Yeah. MELISA: And

Doctor Deegan. MARGO: Right. Right.

Right. MELISSA: Tell me a little bit

what, before we go on, and Margo,

we're going to have to be

careful because we could sit

here and talk all afternoon.

If you're tuning in, you're

listening to The Break Room and

I'm speaking with Margo Pope.

She is not only an

award-winning journalist, but

she is the award recipient of

the 2022 Adelaide Sanchez

Award. Tell me about the

Women's Exchange and the Pena

Peck House. MARGO: The Women's

Exchange was founded in 1892 by
the Whatsoever Circle of the

International Order of King's
Daughters and Sons. And this was

a benevolent organization. It
still exist today. It's now

named for the founder Rosalie
James. And it was Mrs. James

who got the idea that in
included in their benevolence

should be a shop that could
help women. And she had learned

of this on a trip into Atlanta
and the other in the Carolinas,

came back, presented it. They
opened in November of 1892 in

the Alcazar Courtyard, room 27,
and it was right next to the

jeweler to Henry Flagler,
Greenleaf and Crosby. So traffic

to the hotels, couldn't miss the
Women's Exchange. MELISSA: And it was a,

you were, we were talking about
your, it's a type of a

consignment idea? MARGO; Right, it's the
high-end fine quality

consignment shop. Today, we refer
to them as artisans. And

but they, the consignment means,
they provide handcrafted,

mostly handcrafted items to the
shop, and the shop sells them,

takes a small percentage, and
they build an income. And today,

it's women and men. Back in the
1890s, it was women of

means who had fallen on hard
times. And exchanges were

founded by women of means who

wanted to help people, women

who had fallen on hard times.

You know, they'd lose their

spouse, they'd lose their

father, who were the

breadwinners, but these women

had beautiful skills.

And gourmet skills too. So they

would sell their wares through

these shops. And the key was, it

was discreet. You never knew

who the seller was. So

that their dignity was, you know,

protected. Of course now, women

want to be consigners and so do

men. MELISSA: And we want people to know

that we made that. Right. MARGO: And

we're very glad to have them in

our store. 143 Saint George

Street. MELISSA: Well and I was going to
say, if you're listening and

you're familiar with the Pena
Peck House or the Women's

Exchange. I will give my own
accolade. I go down there other

times during the year, but
specifically, I always go down

and you are my or the women's
exchange is my go-to shop at

Christmas for ornaments when I
do ornament exchanges with some

of my girlfriends. And there's
beautiful artwork down there,

beautiful crafts and handmade
items. And it's the Pina Peck

House. It's that beautiful, as
you were telling me, Antebellum

style. Home. Southern home.

On the corner of, it's

Saint George and. Treasury. MARGO: And
treasury. And it's, the second

floor was added in 1837 by the
New England family Pecs. It was

built for the Spanish World
Treasurer, who was the number

two person in the colony. And
it was built by King Ferdinand,

the sixth of Spain, by order of
him for the Spanish Royal

Treasurer. So, it was a
single-story Spanish home. And

when the Pecs arrived and
purchased the house in 1837, they added a
second story, which replicates a

New England colonial homestead.

MELISSA: And we can get tours of it? MARGO: And

tours are available. We are
open right now Thursday through

Saturday, from noon to 4:30. MELISSA: Okay. It's a beautiful

garden area. And before we run
out of time, I will say the

Women's Exchange in the past
had done a fundraising brunch.

And from what you and I talked
about, we're hoping to bring

that back at some point, so stay
tuned. MARGO: In some fashion. We

do have fundraising activities
now, dinners and lunches. So

watch the newspaper, watch PenaPeckHouse.com. We're on social

media the Women's Exchange of
St Augustine. MELISSA: Wonderful. Well

Margo, we're so proud of and
congratulations on your award.

MARGO: I am really so honored. I truly
am. MELISSA: Well, I enjoy reading your

column and Margot does continue

to write today for the St

Augustine Record. That's Pope's

View. And you and I were

talking, we may get you back in

here on The Break Room and

do a little bit of then and now

or something. But it's a

pleasure to have you here. MARGO:

Thank you again, Melissa.

MELISSA: Thanks, Margo. If you missed

part of this broadcast and

want to check back and listen

from the beginning, you can

find us online at CityStAugRadio.com. As we up this

edition, we hope we answered

your questions. We want to keep

you informed about what's

happening in and around the

city and that you hear it here

from the people making it

happen every day. Remember that
in order to stay connected, you

need to be connected, so be sure
to follow us on our social

media platforms. You'll find us
on Facebook, Twitter, and

Instagram @CityStAug.

Thanks for tuning in. Until

next time. ANNOUNCER: You've been
listening to The Break Room, a

weekly program addressing
projects and programs offered

by the City of St Augustine.

Join us each week as the city's

Communications Director,
Melissa Wissel, has in-depth

conversations with the people
who make our town work to meet

the needs of our community. The
Break Room is produced by

Communications Specialist for
the City of St. Augustine,

Cindy Walker. See you at this
time next week for another

edition of The Break Room.