



# WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## HISTORICAL NOTES

MARCH 2009

### SANDRA “SANDY” JEDLICKA STEEN FIRST WOMAN ELECTED WILTON MANORS MAYOR 2013 PIONEER

by Mary Ulm

Wilton Manors Historical Society

Sandra “Sandy” Jedlicka Steen, the first female to be elected to the office of mayor in Wilton Manors has been selected by the Historical Society as Wilton Manors pioneer for 2013. As such, she will receive special recognition by the Broward County Historical Society and the Wilton Manors City Commission.

Sandy is a native of Cleveland, Ohio and arrived in Fort Lauderdale in 1957 with her parents, John and Lillian Spilar Jedlicka, and her brother, Jan Domin. She had recently graduated from John Adams High School in Cleveland and looked forward to entering the University of Miami. She was 17 years old.

Sandy’s father built a home for the family at 1710 NE 40<sup>th</sup> Ct. At that time there were no buildings along Galt Ocean Mile and the area received such cool breezes that no Air conditioning was required.

Sandy graduated from the University of Miami in 1961 with a B.A. in English. She worked part-time for the Miami Herald while attending university and later worked a year for the Fort Lauderdale News (now the Sun-Sentinel). In 1963 she entered the insurance field and found she greatly enjoyed the work. She spent seven years as an Office Adjuster for the St. Paul Insurance Company.

After her father’s death, Sandy moved in 1969 with her mother, brother, and older sister Jane Holland to the Townhouse Isle residential subdivision located along the Middle River in Wilton Manors. The subdivision was built around ancient cypress trees where wild parrots roosted and served as alarm clocks for many residents. Surrounded by water and on land that had remained undeveloped until the 1960s, the development was also home to thousands of land crabs and numerous raccoons. “I loved to take my cane pole out along the river and fish,” she recalls. “Even though I threw the fish back in, I had fun catching them and there were lots to catch.” She



continues to reside on Townhouse Isle today with her husband of 35 years, Robert L. Steen. The couple has one child, daughter Lauren.

Steen's keen interest in politics led her to actively volunteer for the Republican Party, which unlike today, was the dominant party in Broward County. In 1970 she ran the Broward County campaign for Tom Slade, who was running for State Insurance Commissioner. Having resigned her job with St. Paul Insurance Company to work on Slade's campaign, Sandy was without a job when Slade lost his bid for office. She turned to Bill Markham, then Property Appraiser of Broward County, who had previously offered her a job on his staff. Markham appointed her initially as his Aide and later as Director of Community Services. Steen worked with Markham for 34 years until his untimely death in 2004.

In 1976 Sandy told Markham of her interest in running for a position on the Wilton Manors City Commission. Markham advised her to seek the help and approval of Marcia Stafford, the much loved and longest serving elected official in Wilton Manors. Stafford was the first contact Sandy made and was able to track Steen's progress in her door-to-door campaign by the telephone calls she received about the new candidate. Steen and Stafford remained dear friends until Stafford's death in 2011.

Steen won her bid for office and served on the City Council from 1976 – 1982 and from 1985 – 1990. In 1990 she became the first and only woman to-date elected to the office of mayor. She served as mayor for four years, focusing upon city beautification projects and the Kids in Distress organization, headquartered in Wilton Manors.

Energetic, hard-working, and a staunch advocate for causes she embraces, Sandy has served on the Community Service Council of Broward County, is past President of the South Florida Wildlife Care Center, past President of East Broward Federated Women's Republican Club, former Vice Chair of the Republican Party of Broward County, past President of the Board of Directors of Kids in Distress, former member of the Statewide Human Rights Advocacy Committee, and serves as current President of the Broward Log Cabin Republicans.

She enjoys entering sweepstakes, has earned a purple belt in martial arts, and is a regular volunteer with America's Moms for Soldiers.

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