



# WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## HISTORICAL NOTES

JANUARY 2010

### WILLIAM G. MILLER, JR., Attorney A FORMATIVE INFLUENCE IN WILTON MANORS HISTORY

by Mary Ulm and Paul Kuta  
Wilton Manors Historical Society

*Attorney Miller was honored at the January 2010 Historical Society Annual Meeting for his contributions to Wilton Manors.*

William “Bill” Miller was our first City Attorney, serving in that capacity for 30 years—from 1952 to 1982. In that role he had a continuing impact on guiding Wilton Manors as it transitioned from a small village to a full-fledged city.

Bill Miller was born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania in June 1925 and his family moved to Ft. Lauderdale in 1926. He was introduced to Wilton Manors by his boyhood friend Odell Hiaasen, son of attorney Carl Hiaasen. The elder Hiaasen built the first house in Wilton Manors in 1926 at 601 N.E. 21<sup>st</sup> Court. Bill and Odell often fished in the rock pit that became Lazy Lake.

After graduating from Fort Lauderdale High School in 1943, Bill served in World War II from 1943 – 46. Inspired by his father, who served as the Broward County prosecutor from 1932 to 1947 (and later as Attorney for the City of Hallandale), Bill attended University of Florida Law School; and he was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1950.



Bill met Pat Breslin at the University of Florida, and they married in January 1947. Bill and Pat returned to South Florida in 1951 and Bill joined his father’s law firm. Their first home in Wilton Manors was at 57 N.E. 24<sup>th</sup> Street, next door to Robert and Grace Newton.

Mrs. Newton founded the first Girl Scout Troup in Wilton Manors and Pat Miller often helped with the Scouts’ activities. While on an outing in 1955 (a Girl Scout picnic in Perry

Mickel's cow pasture along the South Fork of the Middle River), Pat Miller spotted the perfect location for a new home for her family. Located at what is now 732 N.W. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, the house was designed by Pat's uncle, prominent Ft. Lauderdale Architect Don Macneir, and built by Perry Mickel (second Mayor of Wilton Manors) and his son Bob in 1955. For many years Wilton Manors residents flocked to the Miller home during the holiday season to view the live 18-foot Christmas tree Bill Miller had shipped in for the enjoyment of his family and community.

In March 1952 Miller was persuaded to become the Village Attorney and help usher the rapidly growing Village toward incorporation status as a full-fledged City. Miller drafted a charter to make Wilton Manors a city and Miller's secretary, Alicia Zachman, typed the 55-page Articles of Incorporation on a Smith manual typewriter. Zachman later attended law school, served as Assistant City Attorney for twelve years, and became a partner in Miller's private law firm. Village Council President James Dean carried the Articles of Incorporation to Tallahassee in 1953 with Miller in attendance. They successfully lobbied the state legislature and Wilton Manors transitioned from a "village" to a "city" on June 4, 1953.

Miller guided the new city through the intricacies of securing the first bond issue for sewers, imposing the first ad valorem real estate taxes in 1957, and preparing numerous ordinances and land annexation documents. During his 30 years as City Attorney, Miller witnessed the city's population grow from 1,500 to 12,000.

Community service was a hallmark of Miller's character, demonstrated at age 13 when he became Broward County's first Eagle Scout, along with lifelong friend L. Clayton Nance. Miller went on to preside as President of the following: Wilton Manors Elementary School PTA, Friends of the Wilton Manors Library, Wilton Manors Jaycees, Broward Bar Association, Broward League of Cities, and the Rotary Club of Ft. Lauderdale. He served on the Board of the Broward Historical Commission for over twenty years and was made a lifetime member of the Wilton Manors Historical Society in 1975 for his work on the City Charter.

Bill's role as City Attorney ended in 1982 during a shake-up of city staff by new City Council Members. He went on to practice law full-time as a private attorney in Fort Lauderdale. At age 84, Bill is officially retired, but his law firm lives on under the direction of Alicia Zachman. The legacy of service to community is continued today by the four Miller children: W. Gerry III, Thomas, Bonny, and Sharon (Assistant City Attorney for Fort Lauderdale for over 20 years).