



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

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TRACY AND NANCY STAFFORD

2011 WILTON MANOR PIONEERS

by Mary Ulm

Wilton Manors Historical Society

Tracy Stafford and his sister Nancy Stafford have been selected by the Historical Society as Wilton Manors pioneers for 2011. They are the children of the late Leslie and Marcia Stafford, who were as City Pioneers many years ago.

Tracy was born in Fort Lauderdale in 1948 and moved to the Village of Wilton Manors with his parents in 1949. The Village was but two years old. By 1954, when Nancy was born, Wilton Manors had been incorporated as a City for a year. ,

Tracy and Nancy spent their formative years amidst the constant comings-and-goings of Wilton Manors citizens and politicians. Their mother, Marcia Stafford was elected Village Clerk in 1952 and remained in that capacity for the remainder of the decade. While Council meetings were held at the Village Hall, much of the rest of City business was conducted at the Stafford home across the street until the first City Hall with real offices opened in 1957.

As a youngster Tracy liked to ride his bicycle around town, and his parents set limits for him of Andrews Avenue and Oakland Park Blvd. People around town, even people his mother barely knew, would call if they saw Tracy somewhere outside his limits. Everyone looked out for one another's children in those days when the city's population was just a few thousand residents.

While Tracy was in High School, he did well selling AmWay products. Then Wilton Manors resident, Millie Laughlin wanted to reward Tracy for his industrious nature. Tracy asked if Millie's sister, who was a secretary for President Truman, could get Tracy an autograph from President Truman. Tracy received both an autographed picture and a letter signed by Harry Truman.

After graduating from Ft. Lauderdale High School in 1966, Tracy attended the University of Florida where he attained his Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature, and his Juris Doctorate in 1973. Tracy became engaged in the private practice of law in 1974.

Following in his mother's footsteps (Marcia Stafford served on the City Council for 14 years), Tracy was elected to the Wilton Manors City Council, serving from 1975-1981. He left the Council in 1981 to accept the position of City Administrator. In 1986 he won the

first of two terms as Mayor, serving for a total of four years. In 1990 Tracy won the first of five consecutive elections to the Florida House of Representatives. Among his many legislative accomplishments was effectively banning a date-rape drug in Florida with severe penalties for its possession and use. Additionally, he was the first member of the Florida House of Representatives to introduce legislation that would provide domestic partnership benefits to same-sex couples. Due to term limits, Tracy retired from the Florida House of Representatives in 2000.

Nancy Stafford took a different, but no less impressive, career path than her brother, Tracy. Self-described as a gangly, shy, and studious young girl, Nancy recalls that she "lived" at the Wilton Manors Public Library, located directly across from her family home. She graduated Fort Lauderdale High School in 1972. From there, she attended the University of Florida, gaining a degree in Journalism in 1975.

In 1976 she became Miss Florida. After competing in the 1977 Miss America pageant, she began a career in New York City as a top model with the Ford Modeling Agency. She appeared in over 250 commercials before beginning her 25-year acting career. Local audiences will remember her as the spokesperson for City Furniture television ads.

Nancy has become a prolific character actress, speaker and author. She came to prominence as an actress on television in the 1980s as Ben Matlock's (played by Andy Griffith) law partner and friend, Michelle Thomas, on *Matlock*, before she played Judge Bell on *Judging Amy*. She hosted a syndicated TV series called "Main Floor" (1995-2005), a show about fashion and beauty, airing in over 40 countries around the world.

Although she and husband Larry Myers live in Southern California, Nancy visits Wilton Manors several times a year. She has added her "star power" to numerous City events, including serving as a grand marshal for the city's 50th anniversary celebration. In 2009 she was selected among an impressive field of actors as the "perfect match" to narrate *The Stranahan House*, a South Florida Public Television (WPBT2) documentary.

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