



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

OCTOBER 2010

RICK AND SHIRLEY NOLEN

2010 CITY PIONEERS

by Paul A. Kuta

Wilton Manors Historical Society

Rick and Shirley Nolen have been selected by the Historical Society as Wilton Manors Pioneers for 2010. This modest married couple has a long history in Broward County and has made impressive contributions to the Wilton Manors community – especially in their private charitable work on behalf of children. They will be presented with a City Proclamation at the City Commission Meeting on October 12th; and they will represent our Island City at the Broward County Pioneers Day Ceremony in Pembroke Pines on October 23rd.

In 1951, a young Shirley Ann Spateholts accompanied her parents as they moved from upstate New York to Florida. Her parents bought and operated the El Rancho Motel on NE 3rd Street in Ft. Lauderdale. Shirley's early memories of Wilton Manors include accompanying her mother on grocery shopping trips in the late 1950's to the Stevens Market (in what is today the Shoppes of Wilton Manors). She also looked forward to seeing the towers that looked like castles located on each side of Wilton Drive at Five Points. (These towers served as the grand entrance to Wilton Manors in 1925. By the 1960s they had been torn down).

Shirley's lifelong service to others began early in her teens. She regularly played cards and went antiquing with her elderly neighbors. She still found time for bowling on weekends at Manor Lanes on N.E. 26th Street or playing miniature golf at the Putt-Putt Course on N. Federal Highway. She and her friend Carolyn paddled to their destinations in a kayak! Carolyn's brothers provided the kayak after getting tired of chauffeuring the girls by car.

Shirley graduated from Fort Lauderdale High School in 1966. In 1971 she received her Bachelors Degree in Education from Florida Atlantic University and in the same year began her 30-year career as a social worker with the Florida Department of Children and Families. Shirley married Rick Nolen in 1972, and they moved to an apartment on NE 6th Avenue in Wilton Manors.

Richard (Rick) Nolen arrived in Ft. Lauderdale with his parents from Illinois in 1960. In 1961, they moved to a house at NW 22nd Terrace off Broward Boulevard. During his teens, Rick and his friends enjoyed bowling at the Flamingo Lanes and skating at the Fun Fair outdoor rink. His first part-time job in high school was parking cars at Heilman's Restaurant on Sunrise Boulevard. Rick and his best friends were together through junior and senior

high schools. To the present day, Rick and his childhood buddies – and their spouses—meet monthly to go out to dinner—a friendship lasting some 50 years!

Rick graduated from Stranahan High School in 1965. He then served in the U.S. Air Force from 1966 to 1970. After marrying Shirley, Rick attended Broward Community College, receiving his Associate's Degree in Civil Engineering in 1975. He began his career as a water treatment operator in 1976 in Pompano Beach, where he and Shirley bought their first house. Rick subsequently worked at water plants in several Broward cities.

In 1981, the Nolen family expanded to include their son Travis. In 1985, they returned to Wilton Manors to a home on NE 26th Street. They became involved in activities in which their son participated—school PTA, Cub Scouts and Little League Baseball. Ahead of his time, Rick opened a gourmet popcorn store on North Dixie Highway in Wilton Manors; and it closed in 1987.

In 1988, Rick Nolen joined the Wilton Manors Kiwanis Club. He and Shirley soon became involved in Kiwanis fundraising events and the Club's charitable activities oriented towards children – a labor of love for more than 20 years. In 1991, Rick took control of the Kiwanis Club Christmas parties for disadvantaged children and played Santa Claus until 2009. As Kiwanis President in 1995, he initiated the annual “Kids Day” in Wilton Manors – a free outdoor event with food and games for children that still continues.

In 2005, Shirley founded the “Taste of the Island” event, held each fall in Wilton Manors; and she currently serves as President of that non-profit organization. In January 2010, she was elected as a Director of the Wilton Manors Historical Society.

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