



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

AUGUST 2009

GEORGE RICHARDSON, JR.

OBITUARY

by Paul A. Kuta

Wilton Manors Historical Society

Judge Richardson died peacefully in his sleep on July 31, 2009. This was just eight days after he attended the grand opening of his former home, now known as the Manor House in the Wilton Manors park which bears his name.

Judge Richardson was a well known figure in Wilton Manors and Broward County for more than 70 years. He was born in Rydel, Pennsylvania in 1918. His parents, George, Senior, and Rachel, came to New York from Ireland when they were both in their 20's. George, Sr., became engaged in the construction of golf courses in the northeastern U.S. He initially came to Florida to work on the Fort Lauderdale Country Club (in what is now Plantation) in the 1920's. During the winter, the Richardson family returned to the Fort Lauderdale area, which Richardson, Senior, envisioned as a good place to retire.

In 1936, Wilton Manors, Inc., Edward J. Willingham's surviving company, sold the Richardsons "40 acres more or less" of prime land on the South Fork of the Middle River.

"It was out in the boonies, out beyond Progresso," said George Jr.

George Richardson, Sr. drew plans for a nine-hole course, then went north to complete a project he was working on. George Jr., who was 18 at the time, and his mother, set about building the course to the elder Richardson's specifications. It opened in 1937 and lasted for roughly 20 years. This was the 3rd golf course in Broward County.

George Richardson, Jr. joined the Army early in World War II and served for 3 years. Upon his return to Wilton Manors, he attended the University of Miami Law School. After graduating in 1951 at age 35, he opened his law office in the golf course clubhouse. "I once got off a tractor out on the golf course to draw up a will," he said.

His father died in 1952. In the same year, he met the late Helen Williams of Pompano. They were introduced by Helens's brother Gex and his wife, Betty Williams, who lived in an apartment across from the golf course.

In 1952, he built the house which still stands at 1937 Wilton Drive. In 1953 they were married and had three children, Katherine (Kamie), Gex, and George III (who still lives with his family in Wilton Manors).

Richardson was elected to the Wilton Manors City Council in 1954 and served for 2 years. During the 1950's and 1960's, he practiced law and helped his mother with the golf course.

In January 1968, Richardson was named a Broward County judge by Governor Claude Kirk, and has been known as "Judge" since. Two years later, he was elevated to the Circuit Court, where he served for 16 years.

With his increased judicial responsibilities, Richardson had sold all but six acres of his land by 1971. Most of that land became the Manor Grove Condominiums. In honor of his mother, who died in 1968, Richardson donated a parcel of land on the corner of Andrews Avenue and N.E. 21st Court for use as a public park.

After retiring from the Circuit Court, Judge Richardson served as the Wilton Manors City Attorney from 1986 to 1992.

In 2002, George and Helen Richardson offered to sell their 5.4 acre family estate to the City of Wilton Manors for use as a public park. Their offer was more than generous, and with the help of substantial state and county grants, Wilton Manors was able to purchase the property for \$3.8 million. Helen Richardson died in October 2006, but Judge Richardson, his sons and daughter, and grandchildren were able to be present for the Grand Opening of Richardson Historic Park and Nature Preserve in September 2007.

Aside from his wonderful family, Judge Richardson has left a legacy of distinguished public service. He has also made possible the preservation of the environmentally sensitive land that was his heritage for public use as an oasis in a highly urban area. Wilton Manors will forever be in his debt.

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