

# Good Morning Madam President!



*Maple Leaf G&CC's 18th green and clubhouse. Photo by Joel Jackson*

An historic event took place this past August when Nancy Miller, CGCS was elected the first woman president of the Florida GCSA at the 2012 Annual Meeting held at the UF/IFAS Plant Science Research and Education Unit in Citra.

There wasn't a lot of fanfare surrounding the event — nor should there have been, given the slow-but-steady increase in female superintendents in the industry — and Miller's record of service at the local, state and national levels put her in the right place at the right time. As Forrest Gump says, "And that's all I'm going to say about that!"

Miller's route to a career as a golf course superintendent, much less the president of the FGCSA, was certainly non-traditional to say the least. Initially, after marrying her hubby Bill, she was a homemaker raising their kids

Alayne and Aric. Once the kids reached school age, she took a clerical job in the school office because the hours were convenient. Once the kids were older and more self-reliant, she took a job



*Miller being filmed doing a video for GCSAA's environmental stewardship program that was shown repeatedly on the Golf Channel. Photo courtesy of the GCSAA.*

as a paralegal in a real estate office in Endicott, NY.

The big employer in town was IBM. When they moved their offices to

Charlotte, NC, taking almost 50 percent of the jobs with them, the real estate market crashed and Nancy was out of a job. She decided she'd like to try something new, so she began exploring her options. Aptitude testing showed she had many common interests with green industry professionals, including golf course superintendents. She played recreational golf with her husband, liked golf and thought she might give turf management a try.

Her closest turf programs were either the State University of New York (SUNY) Delhi or Cornell. The 60-mile one-way commute to SUNY from Endicott was via Interstate highway versus the same distance — or longer — via two-lane roads to Cornell. So she opted for the SUNY program and is glad she did.

Dr. Dominic Morales headed up the Landscape Maintenance and Design program at SUNY Delhi, which included golf course maintenance. Miller says that Morales — now professor and dean of Applied Sciences



*The golf course is the emerald jewel in the heart of the Maple Leaf community. View from the 7th green. Photo by Joel Jackson.*

at SUNY — was aware of the increasing interest and numbers of women in the business, and his proactive awareness helped her development in the discipline.

Morales also coordinated the student internship program and that began a new chapter in Miller's career path. She also became aware of the challenges faced by women attempting a foothold in the traditionally male-dominated field. In 1997, Miller wrote to golf course superintendent Patty Knaggs, who at that time was at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Minnesota, to arrange an internship. Knaggs was on vacation and so Miller tried Mark Kuntz, CGCS at the Oakmont CC and was accepted into their program.

Miller says, "The experience of working at such an historic and iconic club like Oakmont was awesome and interesting to say the least. The course had a vigorous internship program complete with housing. Unfortunately since golf maintenance was traditionally a man's profession there were no coed facilities, so I had to rent my own room for the duration. Fortunately I had been out in the working world and could afford to do that."

Kuntz, who went on to be president of the GCSAA in 2010, was forward-thinking back then and knew women

had a place in the industry. When he moved on to Baltusrol, the first thing he did was make sure coed facilities were part of his internship program.

Following graduation with her AAS in horticulture and fortified with lots of business-related elective courses. Miller began her golf career in Florida as the "Application Foreman" at the TPC@Prestancia for superintendent Stuart Taylor, CGCS. She then took an assistant superintendent position at the Samoset Resort in Maine to be near her mother, who needed some family support. Miller returned to Florida at the Riverwood GC in Port Charlotte as an assistant — once again with Taylor. In 2002 Miller became the superintendent at the Maple Leaf G&CC and hasn't looked back since.

Miller's husband, Bill, logged a 25-year career with the Nabisco Company in Endicott. After she finished her golf operations degree, he took early retirement and they moved to Florida. Not really ready for the rocking chair, Bill took a job on the TPC course where Nancy was second assistant. He was also on her crew at the Samoset GC in Maine. Bill served as the assistant mechanic and equipment operator at Riverwood GC.

After Nancy took the Maple Leaf job, Bill has worked as a picture framer at a local shop and delivered



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## Nancy Miller, CGCS. First Lady of the Florida GCSA.

**Originally from:** Massachusetts  
**Family:** Husband Bill. Children: son, Aric. daughter, Alayne and son-in-law Will. Grandkids: Michael, Zachary and Olivia.

**Education:** AAS Paralegal Studies. AAS Golf Operations, SUNY Delhi, NY

**Employment:** Administrative Assistant in local school office in Endicott, NY; Paralegal for 10 years Endicott, NY; 1997 to 2002: Intern at Oakmont C.C.; Assistant Superintendent at TPC@ Prestancia, Sarasota, The Samoset Resort, Maine and at the A.S. at Riverwood GC Port Charlotte; In 2002 became the Superintendent at the Maple Leaf G&CC, Port Charlotte.

**Professional Affiliations:** Calusa GCSA, all board offices and Chapter Voting Delegate; FGCSA Director and all officer positions including current President of the FGCSA. GCSAA

Member with service on Government Relations, Election and Member Services committees.

**How did you get into the business?** I made a career change after being laid off from my paralegal position at a real estate company. I played golf and had interest in the green industry profession.

**Who are some of the people who influenced your life and career?** Husband Bill; Dr. Dominic Morales, SUNY; Mark Kuhns, CGCS; Roger Taylor; Stuart Taylor, CGCS; John Bradley and the lawyers in Endicott, NY who laid me off which led to my career change.

**Hobbies and Interests:** Former Brownie, Girl Scout and Cub Scout leader; softball coach; High School booster and sports club yearbook editor.

**Favorite meal:** Filet Mignon

**Nobody knows that:** I play the djembe (a tall African drum)



**NANCY MILLER, CGCS**

Photo by Joel Jackson.

**If I could do it over:** I would have chosen this career path sooner

**The words that best describe me:** Quiet, persistent

**My dream foursome:** Hilary Clinton, Annika Sorenstam and Meryl Streep



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chemicals and fertilizer for the Turf Assets Company until it went out of business. He currently works at the local Ace Hardware store. He keeps busy and certainly has insider knowledge of the golf maintenance industry.

Miller is a member of the Calusa GCSA and served in all board offices and as the voting delegate to the GCSAA. She has also served on the GCSAA's Government Relations, Election and Member Services committees. If you have never met our new Madam President, you may have seen her in a GCSAA video on the Golf Channel promoting environmental stewardship.

One thing for sure in this business: there is no one sure-fire path to follow to achieve happiness and success. Miller is living proof that anything is possible if you put in the thought, time and effort.



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