



SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2006 | EDITOR: TERESA MEARS tmears@MiamiHerald.com | 305-376-3674 or 954-764-7026 ext. 3674

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Ellin Goetz has made her mark on Naples

Her reputation has soared because of a commitment to preservation and conservation.

Fourth in a series about landscape

BY GEORGIA TASKER

gtasker@MiamiHerald.com In 1984, Ellin Goetz had two choices: move to Naples or end the relationship with the man who would be her hus-

She chose Naples. "I thought, my God, I've moved to the end of the

Fast forward to 2006: The Naples Daily News calls Goetz and her husband, Michael Watkins, the city's "power couple." She is a landscape architect; his family owns the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club.

They were honored this year by International College in Naples with the Humanitarian Award of the Year. Both have been named, on separate

occasions, outstanding citizens of the

Goetz now finds herself at home at the end of the world.

High-energy, high-profile Goetz, 51, does not have a client list of high profile people (aside from the yards of

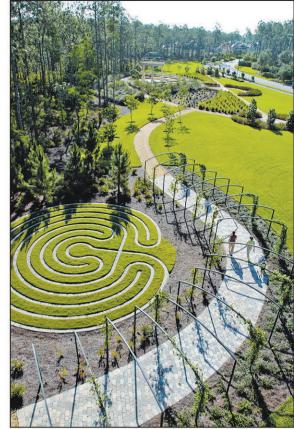
Thomas Edison

and Henry Ford) but her reputation has soared because of her commitment to preservation and conservation. And her distinc-

tive take on Ideas spew out of her. Issues churn.

Action follows. When the Bonita Bay Group built Mediterra, a 1,600-acre community north of Naples, they wanted a series of parks, said Susan Watts, vice president

*TURN TO GOETZ, 8H



CELESTIAL PARK: An aerial view of Parque Celestial in Naples shows a grass labyrinth in the foreground.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT



ROUND AND ROUND: The labyrinth at Parque Celestial is made from a path of grass edged in brick.

Ellin Goetz feels at home at the 'end of the world'

* GOETZ, FROM 1H

of development operations.

'We came up with wild and crazy ideas internally, and knew the only person to do it would be wild and crazy landscape architect Ellin Goetz," Watts said.

Tom Flood, CEO of Collier Enterprises, has hired Goetz to landscape three houses. "She doesn't have a lot of stuff going on," Flood says. "It's native. It doesn't feel cluttered. It looks linear and I like that.'

After Goetz put a small pool in Flood's last garden, he found, "It did everything I wanted." But Flood decided to add a fountain on his own, figuring he knew what he wanted for that, too. "I walk by it every day, and realize I got it wrong. The proportions are wrong."

Goetz's Volkswagen Passat with its fading bumper-sticker "Make a difference - Vote Conservation," its traveling assortment of apparel and life-on-the-go clutter, is a testament

to multitasking. Flood confides, "I've often caught her doing drawings in her car in my driveway. Her creativity explodes at the last minute. She's fun to work

with." President of Goetz & Stropes Landscape Architects, she also owns a 50-acre farm adjacent to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary near Immokalee, where she keeps seven horses. She and her daughters sometimes drive there after school to ride Irish connemara ponies, retired thoroughbreds, or German horses called Trakehners.

It's Goetz's simple design of paired sabal palms that line a block of 12th Avenue South to Naples' pier. Beachgoers walk under native trees.

It is she who is restoring the historic garden of the Thomas Edison/Henry Ford estates in Fort Myers where Ellen Biddle Shipman designed a garden in which guests could contemplate moonlight beneath a pergola.

It is Goetz who was the public force behind passage of the 2002 bond issue in Collier County to pay a quarter-mill of property tax for 10 years to save valuable green. Her conservation work prompted her former boss, J. Roland Lieber, to nominate her for Fellow status in the American Society of Landscape Architects.

A GREAT NEED

Having been on the board and board chairman of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, she worked to preserve the land because "the need was so great."

She is landscape architect for the Naples Botanical Garden, and will coordinate the planning done by other landscape architects at a recent charette.

Goetz's celestial park at Mediterra uses grasses and palms as the main plants to complement the night sky for stargazing. It features a human sundial, and a maze of clipped grass, a American Society of Landscape

visual oxymoron. In 2003, Parque Celestial received an Award of Excellence from the Florida chapter of the Architects. She has a quick mind, a wry sense of humor and a deeply felt respect for the land. Taken together, they allow her to say firmly: "In a yard, you can

ment, you have to say, 'This isn't what I feel is right.' " Born on Staten Island, Goetz's great-grandfather managed an estate for a wealthy family. Her mother, a schoolteacher, had six kids and, after they were sufficiently grown, worked with autistic children. Her father

worked for Bell Labs as an electrical

go native to exotic. But in a develop-

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engineer and took up farming in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania, leading to wholesome summers in nature for his children.

A GREEN BELT

Prior to 1964, she says, the only way to Staten Island was by boat. Then the city built the Verranzo-Narrows Bridge and "opened the floodgate to development. My parents were active in saving the green belt in the middle of the island when someone wanted to put a road through it.

We'd ride our ponies through it.' At Vassar College, Goetz studied the history of art and "had no clue what I wanted to be." Merchandizing seemed cool, though, so off she went

to Bloomingdales in Manhattan. After a while, she sensed some-

thing was missing. When she heard a landscape architect discuss historic preservation, "I started looking into it, and the more I looked, the more I realized it combines my two interests: design and

the environment." Graduate school at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, found her living in a basement apartment, keeping two horses and working summers in a landscape architecfirm. ture "We'd draw and draw and draw, and nothing ever got built," she says. "It was very liberating."

In Naples, she spent 14 years working with Lieber, and there met Jerry Stropes, who, in 2001, became the partner Goetz Stropes Landscape Architects.

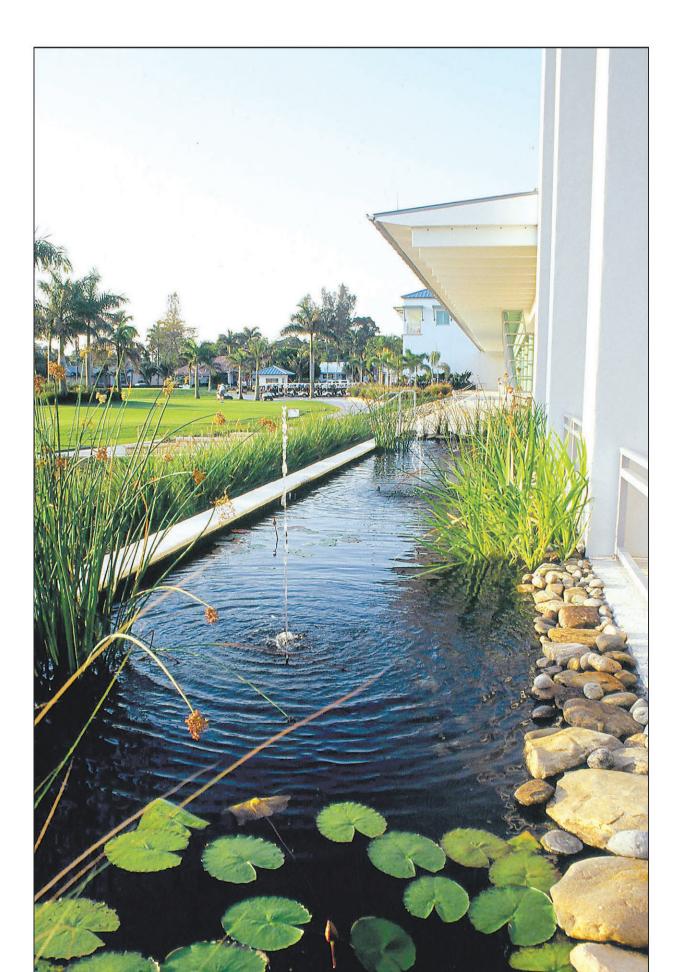
"We have our own projects, but we have a similar philosophy," said Stropes, whose drawing table/desk abutts Goetz's.

"We take more simplistic approach to design." "We're not fussy landscape architects," said Goetz. "We used to joke about tossed salad landscapes.'

In Florida, the plant palette is enormous, but "less is always more," she said. "I try to pare things down to their essence.'

Goetz & Stropes charges clients based on time, but says a final fee ends up being about 10 percent of the cost of the whole landscape project. Referrals are by word of mouth. And they are not immune to turning down clients. One project: Potential clients wanted to develop on a barrier island, said Goetz. "I asked what their vision was, and my vision and theirs clashed and we didn't do it," she said.

"When you're young, you want to do everything," she said. "When you're older, you can say, 'Hey, I can see this isn't going to be a great rela-



WATER GARDEN: This landscape at the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Resort uses imagery of black water wetlands and 'river of grass' plantings to evoke the Everglades.



NATURE TRIP: The stargazing pavilion at Parque Celestial looks as if it had been set down in the wild. The park is designed to experience the effects of time through light and shadow, stars and planets and seasonal changes.



ELLIN GOETZ / GOETZ+STROPES

JOHN VANBEEKUM/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

A BACKYARD PARADISE: Left, a private garden's glass tiled pool with limestone coping leads the eye to a seating area with water wall. Above, open walls, brick pavers and hand-laid rocks at a private Naples home.