

SAM D'AMICO/The News Tribune

Andy Hoffman waiting for a ride near the Blueberry Manor Apartments off Plainfield Avenue in Edison's Stelton section.

Stelton a 'bit of everything'

Edison section has tree-lined streets, strip malls, condos

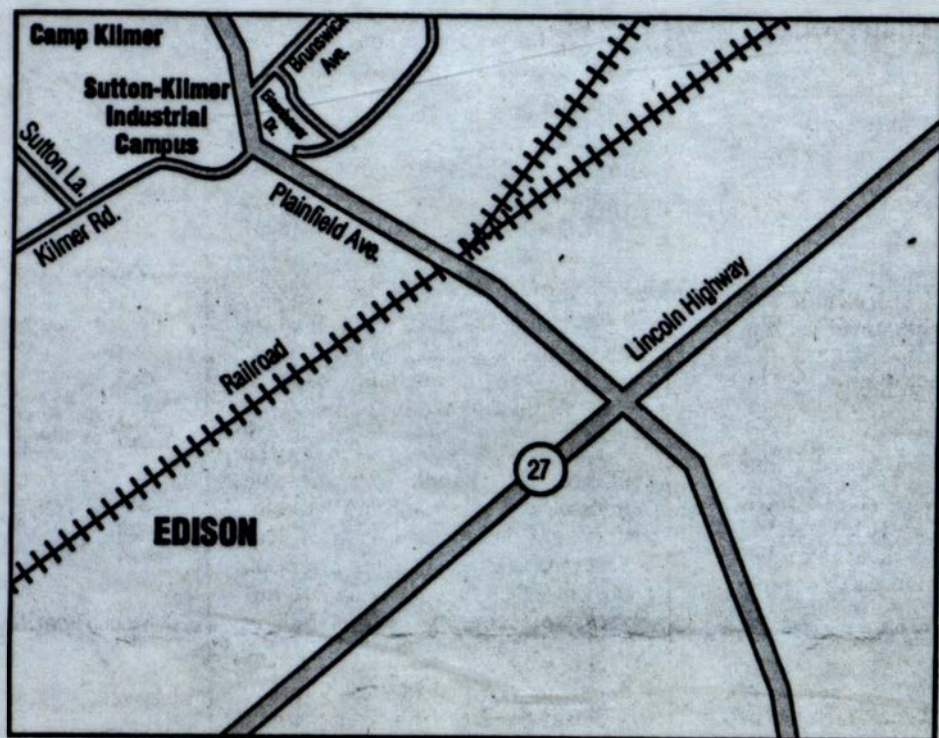
By **ANTHONY A. GALLOTTO**
News Tribune Staff Writer

EDISON "Mixed nuts" is how William Burnstile describes the town's Stelton section.

"It's a little bit of everything, but it's nice to come home to," says the 58-year-old New York native who moved to Stelton in 1987.

Burnstile quibbles over the word "neighborhood." "It's not a neighborhood in the New York sense of the word. . . . Like I said, there's a bit of everything."

The older Stelton section sits north of Route 27 on a series of tree-line streets that branch off Plainfield Road. The Edison train station, off Central Avenue, divides that community from a



JEFFERY COHEN/The News Tribune



distinctly different and more modern one.

South of the train station, one- and two-family homes line quiet streets. North of it, industrial and commercial buildings rise up along Plainfield Road at the Sutton-Kilmer Industrial Campus.

Off Plainfield and Brunswick avenues

are a string of newer town houses, condominiums, and apartment complexes bordered by strip malls.

"It's a strange little area," Eisenhower Drive resident Betty Ryan said. "There's a very quick change, visually, driving up here from Route 27."

"There's this older, typically quaint, residential area, and all of a sudden they disappear from view and you see this . . ." Ryan said as she gestured to the two-story Edison Village condominiums.

"This entire area has undergone a tremendous metamorphosis from the woods I saw here 12 or 15 years ago,"

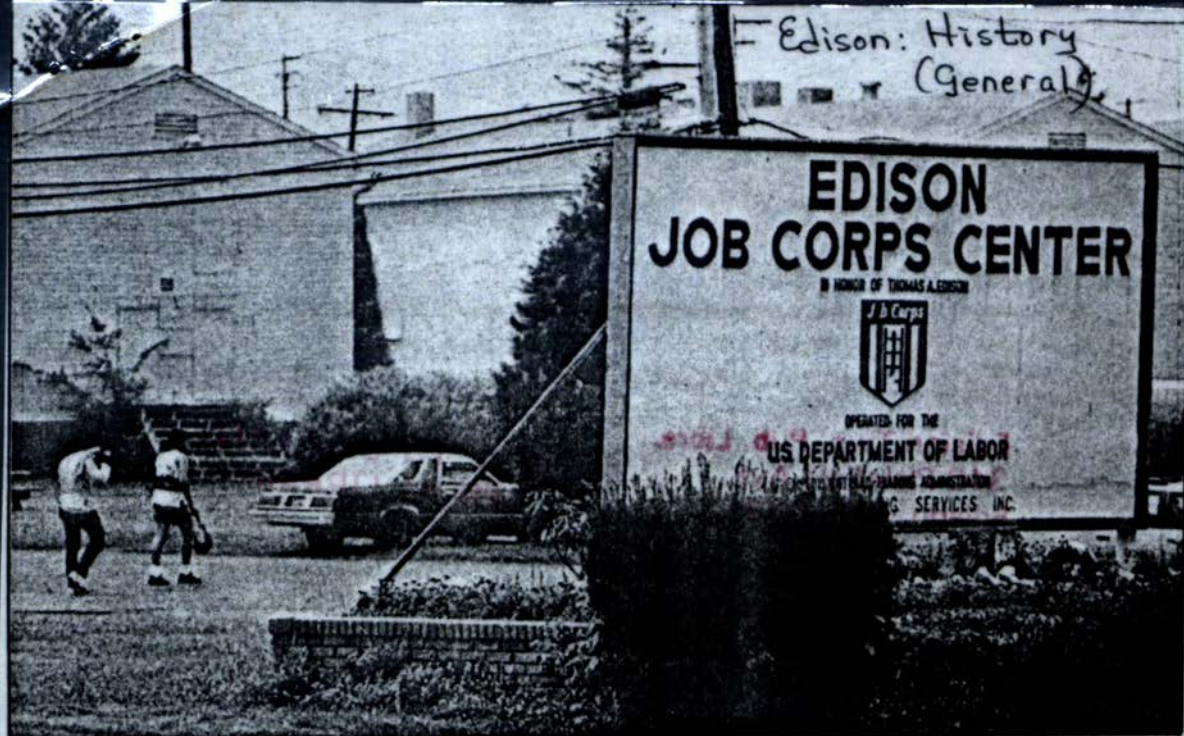
said Jeff Schwartz, the administrator at the 348-patient Edison Estates Rehabilitation and Convalescent Center on Brunswick Avenue.

"The growth has been good for the economy and property values are up. It's nice. . . . The area has developed but not overdeveloped," Schwartz said.

Developers began taking an interest in the wooded areas and the few homes that dotted the area north of the train station in the early 1970s. Growth brought two unwelcomed side effects: traffic and crime.

"Some mornings, it's awful driving

See **STELTON** Page B-2



SAM D'AMICO/The News Tribune

The Job Corps Center off Plainfield Avenue, a fixture in Edison's Stelton section.

Stelton, in Edison, has a character all its own

Continued from Page B-1

out of here to get to work," Elizabeth Hanley, a Blueberry Village resident, said. "The trucks and cars leave this gasoline smell that hangs in the air all day."

Plainfield Avenue is a heavily traveled north-south route from Edison to Piscataway and Somerset County. The light industrial firms at the Kilmer campus and warehouses off Brunswick Avenue near Talmadge Road brought more truck traffic to the busy artery.

Hanley praised local officials for fixing one of the area's worst traffic problems — the intersection of Plainfield Avenue and Route 27.

"It used to be impossible to turn from one [street] onto the other down there," she said. Last year, the signal was reset to allow vehicles through the intersection from one side at a time.

Among the first residential complexes built in Stelton, north of the train station, was the Rivendell Apartment Complex, built in the mid-1970s.

Since then, large condominiums and town houses like Edison Village, Edison Manor, and Blueberry Village have cropped up on Plainfield Avenue.

All are modern developments to a neighborhood that dates from the 17th century.

Stelton was settled by Europeans in 1666, according to David C. Sheehan, president and founder of the Edison Historical Society, and the name of the first settlers — the Stelle family —

soon stuck.

Stelton never was a town in its own right, but originally part of Piscataway. Raritan, later Edison Township, was formed from parts of Woodbridge and Piscataway, and Stelton became a neighborhood in the new town.

Municipal officials attribute recent residential growth in the area, in part, to the proximity to the train station.

"New York is only a train ride away," stock analyst Stephen Woodlow said last week as he waited on the station's platform for his morning train. "For me, that's the appeal. I like to leave the cement jungle behind at night."

Woodlow lives in Blueberry Village. "It's a quiet development for the most part," he said. "But it's got its problems."

Like more than a dozen other development dwellers, homeowners, and merchants in the Stelton area, Woodlow said wandering groups of teen-agers often disturb the peace he likes to come home to at night.

"Summer is the worst," a Central Avenue homeowner said. "At night, kids roam all over, and in the morning there are broken beer and soda bottles on the sidewalks and trash left on the lawns."

The homeowner, who asked not to be identified, said the problem "is not our neighborhood kids, but those Job Corps kids."

The Edison Job Corps, funded through the U.S. Department of Labor, is a training program for

people 16 to 24 years of age who spend between six months and two years living at the facility that was once part of Camp Kilmer.

Dorothy Copeland, a Job Corps spokeswoman, said many of the 458 students who live in barracks near Plainfield Road are inner-city youths from North Jersey who are working to get their high school equivalency diplomas and learn trades.

Whether it is true or not — and there are no statistics that prove it is — the perception that area crime can be traced to the Job Corps is one shared by many neighborhood residents.

Edison Police Chief Richard J. Kermes, who lived in Blueberry Village before moving to Hunterdon County last fall, said, "On a few occasions, I came home from work and found teen-agers, who I presume were from the Job Corps, on the deck outside my condo or milling around outside. It was cause for some concern — for me and my neighbors."

Statistics kept by the police department show that, since January 1989, there have been 533 larcenies, 254 stolen cars, 225 assaults, and 221 burglaries.

"Some of these crimes are connected with youths from Job Corps, of course, others are not..." said police Capt. George Macechok, who oversees the department's records. "There's nothing definitive to say."

Edison: Where a wizard could enjoy good life

By ALLAN HOFFMAN
Home News staff writer

EDISON — Even visionary Thomas Edison might not have foreseen the dramatic changes in the community that is named after him.

Edison, perhaps more than any other Middlesex County town, epitomizes the diversity hidden in the sprawling residential developments of Central New Jersey's suburban communities.

It possesses a major shopping mall, several highways, a public school system with over 10,000 students, and one of the largest business and industrial parks east of the Mississippi. It has a beautiful county park and a train station, with easy access to New York City and a state-of-the-art supermarket.

Situated north of the Raritan River, Edison surrounds Metuchen (once part of the township) and borders a slew of other towns, including Bayville, East Brunswick, New Brunswick, Highland Park, Piscataway, South Plainfield, Scotch Plains, Clark, and Woodbridge.

Once a municipality with distinct neighborhoods, Edison has become more unified in the past 20 years.

Stelton, Oak Tree, Maple Park (where Edison invented the light bulb), and Piscatawaytown have lost much of their identity as development encroaches on old neighborhoods and newcomers begin to outnumber old-timers.

It is in a way the essential suburban community. In what other community would a new ShopRite be called "The Experience"? The store, located on Oak Tree Road in North Edison, opened last November, and has since become an attraction, with residents showing off to visitors the computer directories and exotic foods.

Edison's skateboarders have become adept at adapting their suburban environment — the back of Acme, an abandoned tennis court, anything — for their streetstyle sport.

Yet Edison also includes a sprawling, 2,350-acre business and industrial park, Raritan Center, where thousands of people work in distribution facilities, high-tech companies and

offices. The area, located along the Raritan River, was once a military arsenal, but the government sold it to developers in the 1960s.

Where else, but in Edison, is there a 117-foot, 8-inch tower — a memorial to Edison — topped by a 13-foot, 8-inch incandescent lamp replica?

Other highlights of the township include the Plays-in-the-Park series at Roosevelt Park, Middlesex County College, an expanding library system, two hospitals (John F. Kennedy Medical Center and Roosevelt Hospital), and nearly 40 neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

Progress, however, has meant dealing with the problems accompanying it, chiefly traffic, a subject often brought up at municipal meetings.

Routes 1 and 27 probably rank as the most congested roads, with traffic jams frequent on both in the vicinity of Plainfield Avenue and Menlo Park Mall Shopping Center. Other major roads running through the township include Route 287 and the New Jersey Turnpike.

Edison

Size: 32 square miles

Population: 76,132

Government: Mayor-council

Council: George Spadaro president; George Asprocolas, Henry Gackowski, Dorothy Drwal, Sidney Frankel, John J. Hogan, and Angelo Orlando Jr., all Democrats

Mayor: Anthony M. Yelencsics, Democrat

City Hall: Municipal Boulevard

Total Tax Rate: \$2.48 per \$100 of assessed value

Next Election: November 1987. Four council seats up for election

Edison: History (General)

Edison Twp. Pub. Library
340 Plainfield Ave.
Edison, N. J. 08817



Edison's rich history

**NOT TO BE TAKEN
FROM LIBRARY**

HN 2/14/87

With the explosive increase in the housing development, many Edison residents are unaware of the great history of the township, especially that of the Stelton Neighborhood, one of New Jersey's oldest and most attractive neighborhoods.

Edison Township, known as Raritan until 1954, was first settled in the late 1600s, when it was part of Woodbridge and Piscataway. Most of the first families came from the area of Newburg, Mass. and their descendants are still found in our community. One of the earliest settlements was the Stelton area, which received its name from the Stelle family, who settled here in 1688. Its history is largely linked with the Stelton Baptist Church, which was founded in 1689. The first church building, located on Plainfield Avenue, was erected in 1748.

Through the years disasters struck the church. In 1851, a fire broke out and the church burned to the ground. It was replaced by a building that was again destroyed by fire in 1924. Still, the church has nurtured and trained generations of our forefathers through 298 years of service.

It is the oldest Baptist Church in Middlesex County, the second oldest Baptist Church in the state, and the 10th oldest in the United States.

It is also of interest to understand the history of the mainline

railroad that currently serves Edison. Tracks on the New Jersey Railroad were completed between Jersey City and New Brunswick in 1835. The first steam train passed through Edison at 15 miles per hour in January 1836, signaling the beginning of an active railroad for our area. A bridge across the Raritan River was erected and opened on Jan. 1, 1838.

And, in 1839, when the New Jersey and Camden railroads were connected at New Brunswick, the first through train service between the Hudson River at Jersey City and the Delaware River at Philadelphia was established. This line became what is known today as the Northeast Corridor mainline of the New Jersey Transit Railroad. (Few people living in Edison Township realize that today's electric trains speeding along the main line are directly descended from Thomas Alva Edison's first experimental railroad, invented in Menlo Park, in 1880).

The building of small railroad stations along the New Jersey Railroad in 1870 helped to create villages such as Stelton and Menlo Park.

In 1871, James D. Stelle decided to divide a portion of his large section of the Stelle real estate holdings into small lots. This began to grow into a residential area and the country road that ran between Plainfield and Piscataway was soon transformed into a wide,

tree-lined highway.

In 1875 a combination dwelling-store-post office-depot was built by the side of the railroad tracks and, until the early 1960's, served the community as the Pennsylvania Railroad Station of Stelton.

In a sense, it is the history of the Stelton Neighborhood that has rallied its residents to oppose the plans of the New Jersey Transit to further expand the railroad station parking lot. We have maintained many of the community traditions of the past. We have developed a deep sense of community pride that has fueled our fight to maintain the character and beauty of our neighborhood by resisting all attempts to increase traffic, noise and pollution, not only in the immediate Stelton neighborhood, but throughout the Route 27 and Plainfield Avenue sector.

Our resistance to New Jersey Transit's intentions to encroach upon a residential neighborhood should not be an isolated action taken only by the residents of the Stelton neighborhood. If NJT is successful, the end result will adversely affect a large area of Edison by adding to an existing intolerable traffic situation, it will set a dangerous precedent that allows the state to impose its will upon all citizens.

DENNIS MINKLER
The Stelton Neighborhood
Action Committee
Edison

Clara Barton shouldn't fade from history

HN 10/22/87

EDISON — The mystery: Why was the Clara Barton section of town named after Clara Barton? And just who was she anyway?

"I can give you an answer for every section of Edison except Clara Barton," said Dave Sheehan, president of the Edison Township Historical Society.

"She never came through here, or slept here, nor,"

he added, laughing,

"had dinner with Thomas Edison."

But Sheehan is

far from the only

person who doesn't

know why the Clara

Barton section, nestled between Metuchen and

Woodbridge in Edison's eastern corner, is named

after Clara Barton.

"Clara Barton," someone might say. "Founder of

the Red Cross, right?"

Which doesn't say much about one of this country's most remarkable figures — nor how she

managed to have a community, a school, a first aid

squad and a half dozen businesses and organizations

named after her.

The answer to the original question can be found

on a fading piece of paper kept at the Clara Barton

branch library.

"The name of the school was determined by the

students at the Sand Hills School, who were to enroll

at Clara Barton," according to the anonymously-

written note. "A form of election was held to select

the name. As a result, this particular section of

Edison, then Raritan Township, is known as the

Clara Barton section."

Which meant that a group of schoolchildren got

to name their school — and the neighborhood that

grew around the school took the kids' name as its

own.

Today, Clara Barton, the section, remains a quiet,

middle-class neighborhood, while Clara Barton, the

person, fades quietly from the pages of history.

"There's been a lot of turnover here, and I don't

think a lot of the people or kids care (who Clara

Barton was)," said Gerald Young, former teacher at

Clara Barton School (since closed) and now principal

at the Lincoln School.

"Someone gave this to us 17 years ago," Dot

Gersh, branch supervisor of the Clara Barton library,

said of the anonymous note. "Nobody's ever used it

until now."

Clara Barton was born on Christmas Day, 1821, in

North Oxford, Mass. Inspired by a "deep rooted sense

of integrity and fairness," Clara left the Clinton

Liberal Institute in Clinton, N.Y., to begin teaching,

according to Elizabeth Brown Pryor, author of a

National Park Service booklet on the Clara Barton

National Historical Site and author of the just-

published biography, "Clara Barton: Professional

Angel."

In 1852, Barton founded, in Bordentown, what is

generally recognized as New Jersey's first public

school. Two years later, hurt by being passed over as

the school's first principal, she left for Washington,

D.C., where she became a clerk in the U.S. Patent

Office.

But she soon became filled, according to Pryor,

with "restless discontent." When soldiers from the

Massachusetts Sixth Regiment, many of them her

friends or former pupils, arrived in the nation's

capital two weeks after the bombardment of Fort

Sumter, Clara knew what she destined to do.

She headed for the front.

Clad in a calico skirt, she carried food and

supplies to Union soldiers at the Battle of Cedar

Mountain and the Second Battle of Bull Run. An

army surgeon wrote: "If heaven ever sent out a

homely angel, she must be one."

She braved enemy fire to feed the wounded at

Antietam. "A bullet passed under her arm, through

the sleeve of her dress, and killed the wounded

soldier cradled in her arms," Pryor wrote.

At the Battle of Fredericksburg, Clara was being

helped off a bridge over the Rappahannock River by

an officer when, she related, "a piece of an exploding

shell hissed between us, just below our arms,

carrying away a portion of both the skirts of his coat

and my dress."

"She built fires, extracted bullets with a pocket

knife, made gallons of applesauce, baked pies with

'crinkly edges,' drove teams, and performed last

rites," Pryor said.

She was also responsible for having the

Andersonville prison camp named a National

Cemetery.

In 1866, she went on lecture tours with such

prominent speakers as Ralph Waldo Emerson and

Mark Twain, and, after many letters and personal

appeals, secured the U.S. government's ratification

of the Treaty of Geneva, which deals with the

wartime treatment of wounded soldiers.

In 1881, she and a few friends formed the first

American Association of the Red Cross. She became

its first president, a position she would hold for 23

years.

She directed Red Cross relief efforts at one

disaster after another: the Mississippi River floods in

1882 and 1884, tornadoes in Louisiana and Georgia in

1883, an earthquake in South Carolina in 1886, and,

in the young organization's most celebrated moment,

at the Johnstown Flood in 1889.

She was in Havana when the battleship Maine

was blown up, and helped care for victims of the

Spanish-American War, not just Americans, but

Cubans and Spaniards.

She even sailed for Turkey and Armenia to help

victims of religious wars there. According to Pryor,

Abdul Mamed, the sultan of Turkey, sent this

message to the State Department: If you want to send

further relief to Turkey, please send Clara Barton

and her workers.

Clara Barton died on April 12, 1912, in her Glen

Echo, Md., home, now a National Historic Site.

Her last words: "Let me go, let me go."

Industries, roads contribute to town's growth

For the thousands of people who drive through each day on the network of major highways that crisscross it, Edison is a con-

glomeration of industrial parks, shopping malls and fast-food restaurants.

But for the more than 85,000

people who live in the 35-square-mile township, it is a place of many pleasant neighborhoods that reach from the Raritan River on

the south to the Union County border on the north, from Piscataway and South Plainfield on the west to Woodbridge on the east.

They range from the modest homes on small lots in long-established communities named Lindeneau, Piscatawaytown, Stelton, Bonhamtown, Sand Hills and Clara Barton, to the newer developments of large homes in North Edison to condominiums and townhouses. All together they have made Edison the second most populous municipality in Middlesex County.

Through the 1960s and 1970s, Edison grew rapidly for several reasons, not the least of which are

Edison profile

Founded: Incorporated as Township of Raritan on March 16, 1870; name changed to Township of Edison in 1954.

Population: 85,500 (1988 estimate).

Median family income: \$44,000.

Total current tax rate: \$1.74 for garbage district; \$1.63 for other areas. Rate includes 93 cents, school; 40 cents, county; 30 cents, municipal; and 11 cents, garbage district.

Total assessed valuation: \$7,417,417,200, which includes \$32,709,600 in public utilities.

Best known for: Thomas Alva Edison, who worked there for 10 years. The Edison Memorial Tower stands on the spot where he perfected the incandescent lamp, phonograph and many other inventions. It is open Wednesday through Friday from 12:30 to 4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m., and in the summer also on Tuesday from 12:30 to 4 p.m.

Registered voters: 42,366, which includes 15,366 Democrats, 4,119 Republicans and 22,282 independents.

a growing job market in the township and the surrounding area and the highways and railroads that offer fast commutation to jobs in New York City.

The township's planning consultant, John Chadwick, once described Edison as a series of individual villages that are linked only by their common municipal government.

The current form — a "strong" mayor and seven-member Township Council — was adopted in the early 1960s after a charter study commission recommended that the old commission form be replaced.

The change in government and the ascension of the late Anthony M. Yelencsics to the post of mayor, a position he filled for more than 20 years before his death in April 1989, marked the beginning of Edison's evolution from a sparsely populated township to a hub of business and industry that made it second only to Atlantic City among New Jersey municipalities in terms of tax rates.

The major factor that made Edison as a magnet for business and industry, just as it did for resident commuters, is the confluence of Interstate Route 287, Route 440, Route 1, Route 27 and the New Jersey Turnpike — with the Garden State Parkway, Route 9 and Route 18 only a stone's throw away.

One of the newest facilities to rise near the juncture of Route 287 and the Turnpike is the massive New York Times printing plant on the site of the old Fedders air conditioning plant on Woodbridge Avenue.

And the showpiece of Edison's emergence as an industrial giant is the sprawling Raritan Center that occupies hundreds of acres that once were part of the federal government's Raritan Arsenal, from where munitions and weapons were shipped overseas during World Wars I and II.

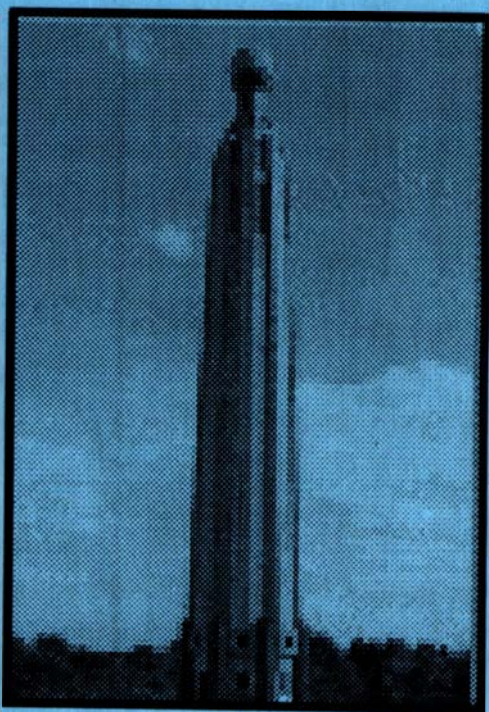
The township provides its residents with a wide range of services that include nearly 200 police officers, more than 100 paid firefighters, a diversified recreational program and a public education system of 17 schools, including two high schools. Edison is also served by three volunteer first aid squads and three branches in the township's library system. It is also the site of Middlesex County College, the largest county college in the state.

Still, the township's dramatic growth has not been without problems. These include traffic congestion, what some critics call a lack of proper planning that has resulted in overdevelopment, the loss of irreplaceable open space and the social problems created by rapid growth.

Edison -
History

*A
Short History
of*

Edison



How Edison Got Its Start...

The first settlers of what is now called Edison Township were members of the Raritan tribe of the Lenni-Lenape. The first European colonists were Dutch. In 1651, a large tract of land extending from the Raritan River to the Passaic River was deeded by the Dutch King to one Augustine Heermans. In the late 1600s, land grants were given to families such as the Dunhams, Martins, Bonhams, Hulls, and FitzRandolphs. Many of these family names survive as place names today.

The area was not known as Edison then. It was a part of Woodbridge and Piscataway Townships until 1870. On March 17, 1870, it was incorporated as *Raritan Township* because of its proximity to the Raritan River and to honor the presence of the Raritan tribe. Other names considered at the time were "Metuchen" and "Washington."

The boundaries of Raritan Township would not remain stable for long, however. In 1900, residents of the Metuchen area, nicknamed the "Brainy Borough," petitioned the State of New Jersey to incorporate as a separate municipality. A variety of reasons for secession have been advanced, including that the Metuchenites wanted a stronger voice in the operation of their public schools. In 1905, Highland Park incorporated as a separate borough, in part because residents felt they were paying too large a share of the cost of the township government.

How Edison Got Its Name...

With the loss of the centers of commercial activity provided by Metuchen and Highland Park, Raritan Township struggled for a sense of identity as a community. Residents did not think of themselves as residents of Raritan Township at all, preferring to say they lived in Bonhamtown, Nixon, Menlo Park, Stelton, or Sand Hills. None of the post offices serving the township used Raritan Township as a postmark. In part, this was because other municipalities in New Jersey also bore the Raritan name (one of them still does). There were local post offices in Menlo Park, Nixon, and Stelton, and many residents were served by post offices in surrounding communities.

In 1954, on the 75th anniversary of the perfection of the incandescent lamp, several citizen activists, led by Mrs. Joanna Wira, organized a petition drive to change the name to Edison Township in honor of Thomas Alva Edison, "The Wizard of Menlo Park." A counter proposal was made to name the township "Nixon" in honor of Lewis Nixon who located in the township in 1913 and developed nitration works here. Nixon also founded the Crescent Shipyard in Elizabeth that built ships for the U.S. Navy, including the first submarine used by the Navy.

The vote was surprisingly close, but the name change to *Edison Township* won in the election of November 2, 1954.

The Struggle for Recognition...

Even with the name change, it took another 14 years for the name "Edison" to gain universal recognition as a township. On October 9, 1968, the Edison Post Office was dedicated--the result of a 10-year struggle by municipal government officials and citizens, including a personal appeal by Mrs. Wira to President Kennedy, to overcome the reluctance of the U.S. Postal Service and the resistance of neighboring towns. Today, Edison is a thriving community of 32-square miles with a resident population of 95,000.

Milestones in Edison's History

- 1651 Land, including what is now Edison Township, deeded to Dutch settler A. Heermans.
- 1689 First school established in Oak Tree section.
- 1689 Stelton Baptist Church formed.
- 1693 "Mary Jones" is buried--oldest marked grave in Middlesex County.
- 1724 St. James Episcopal Church built.
- 1732 Col. John Dunham Estate built.
- 1776-1777 Revolutionary War skirmishes throughout the area.
- 1795 Raritan Bridge (Albany Street Bridge) built.
- 1830 Forman Martin Home built.
- 1849 New Dover United Methodist Church founded.
- 1870 Raritan Township incorporates.
- 1875 Bonhamtown Grace Reformed Church built.
- 1876 Thomas Edison establishes laboratory at Menlo Park.
- 1879 Thomas Edison illuminates his 45-acre laboratory site with incandescent lamps.
- 1881 Clara Barton forms American Red Cross.
- 1887 Yelencsics Homestead built.
- 1900 First trolley line laid.
- 1900 Metuchen incorporates as a separate borough.
- 1905 Highland Park incorporates as a separate borough.
- 1908 Bonhamtown School built.
- 1913 Piscatawaytown School built.
- 1916 Edison Department of Fire formed.
- 1921 Clara Barton School opens. (Closes in 1982.)
- 1923 Stelton Elementary School built (Closes in 1982. Now houses the Stelton Community Center.)

Continued on back...

Milestones (Continued)

- 1923 Edison Police Department formed with four men and one Model T Ford.
- 1924 Raritan Engine Company No. 2 formed.
- 1925 H. K. Fire Company established.
- 1926 Oak Tree Fire Company founded.
- 1927 First public library in township opens with 246 books.
- 1928 Local government changes from Township Committee to Township Commission.
- 1933 Middlesex Junior College opens. (Closes in 1941.)
- 1937 Roosevelt Hospital opens.
- 1935 Raritan Township Safety Council formed (now known as Edison First Aid Squad No. 1)
- 1936 Second First Aid Squad formed (now known as Edison First Aid Squad No. 2).
- 1937 Present concrete Edison Memorial Tower erected.
- 1941 Menlo Park Fire House built.
- 1951 Clara Barton First Aid Squad formed.
- 1954 Township renamed "Edison."
- 1956 Thomas A. Edison High School opens.
- 1956 Change from Township Commission form of local government to Mayor-Council form approved by voters.
- 1964 John P. Stevens High School opens.
- 1965 Raritan Arsenal sold; Raritan Center formed.
- 1966 Middlesex County College opens.
- 1967 John F. Kennedy Medical Center established.
- 1968 Edison Post Office opens.
- 1971 First codification of local ordinances in 100-year history of Edison
- 1979 *Metuchen-Edison Review* begins publication.
- 1981 New Municipal Complex opens.
- 1990 Minnie B. Veal Community Center opens.

To find out more about *Edison of the past*,
contact Marie Vajo of the Metuchen-Edison
Historical Society at

732-985-3127

or visit an Edison Township Public Library to
see a copy of

**"Welcome to Edison: An Enlightened
Community"**

To find out more about *Edison today*,
log on to Edison On-Line at

www.edisonnj.org

Special thanks to The Edison Township
Historical Society for permission to abstract
information from their 1991 book by David
C. Sheehan entitled "Welcome to Edison:
An Enlightened Community."

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76 George Avenue
Edison, New Jersey 08820
Tel. 732-321-0045
Fax 732-549-9117

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October 2000

EDISON

Thursday, March 16, 2000

NOT TO BE TAKEN
FROM LIBRARYEdison Twp. Pub. Library
340 Plainfield, Ave.
Edison, NJ 08817EDITOR'S
NOTEWEDNESDAY
MARCH 1, 2000

You name it, it's happening in Edison on this day and every day. In so many ways, Edison represents the stereotype of suburban New Jersey; but however right the perception, it is just as wrong. Yes, Edison sprawls and it bustles, too much so at times. Yet, like perhaps no other place, Edison's population is richly layered with ethnic culture and diversity, and it is typically American in its prosperity and ambition.

Busy highways cut through the core and industrial spoilage from past remains, but there are environmental sanctuaries, too. Some might say there is too much of everything in Edison. But this is Edison's strength and, since the end of World War II, its purpose. It's suburban New Jersey with everything at hand that is lovable, convenient and welcoming, and maddening. But that's looking at Edison from the outside. One would be wrong to believe the image from roadside.

There is so much strangers navigating heavy traffic on Route 1 would not know about Edison.

On this and every Wednesday evening, the traveler would not know citizens were lining up to meet with the mayor to talk about whatever is on their minds. They would not know about the workshop or the efforts to clean waterways or about Little India.

They would not know about glorious sandwiches at Jack Cooper's Celebrity Deli or the world's largest pickle bar at Harold's New York Deli. They would not know about the workers assembling Ford Rangers. They would not know about the traveling librarian or the astrologer who makes house calls.

Because there is so much about Edison that cannot be seen or known from the thoroughfares, the Home News Tribune sent 20 reporters, eight photographers and one artist into the community March 1 to capture Edison from the inside out. This 16-page section, the 14th in our monthly series on the communities of Central New Jersey, is what they brought back.

— Dick Hughes,
editorJOE McLAUGHLIN
Staff photographer

A CORRIDOR OF CARS, CARS AND MORE CARS



JASON TOWLEN/Staff photographer

12:30 p.m. A steady flow of vehicles makes its way along Route 1, which, in addition to Route 27, are notorious for heavy traffic and very big headaches. Many say when they think of Edison, traffic is often the first thing to come to mind.

MAN IN BROWN

Making his daily rounds

By SHARON WATERS
STAFF WRITER

UPS driver Craig Boschetti delivers banter and boxes to businesses throughout Raritan Center.

10:35 a.m. "How are you, Mike? I've got a few things for you," Boschetti, 33, greets an employee at Garfield & Marks Designs.

Boschetti is dressed in brown except for a white turtle-neck. A gold post earring in his left ear peeks out from beneath his brown wool cap.

As he hands over the packages, he updates Mike about his delays moving into a new

house in Toms River.

"The inspector went to the wrong house. We couldn't move in until Monday," says Boschetti before turning to grab another box.

"We don't have any electricity, no TV," he adds as he turns back to Mike.

On an average day, Boschetti will do this 400 times in the morning as he makes deliveries. In the afternoon, he returns to many of the businesses to pick up an average of 400 pieces.

Boschetti works out of the UPS Edison facility, located in Raritan Center since 1972. The facility uses 1,100 employees to handle a total daily delivery volume of about 47,000 packages. Just for Edison, UPS uses

42 drivers to deliver an average of 10,500 pieces each day.

It seems almost mechanical as Boschetti makes each of his 58 stops — hand over package, jump back in the driver's seat, snap on the seat belt, tap the horn before moving into reverse. But, Boschetti's friendly nature makes him much more than a conveyor belt moving along boxes.

He enjoys chatting with his customers, unless one of his favorite Philadelphia sports teams lost the previous night. It's tough being a Flyers fan on a predominantly Devils and Rangers route.

"They're all over you," says Boschetti about his customers'

See UPS, Page F2



JASON TOWLEN/Staff photographer

10:45 a.m. UPS driver Craig Boschetti gets ready to make one of his many morning deliveries on his travels through Raritan Center.

And a (Raritan) river runs through it . . .

By FREDERICK KAIMANN
STAFF WRITER

To borrow from the author Norman McLean, all of Edison is a sprawl, with industry

11:50 a.m. and people everywhere. And a river

runs through it.

Down at the Edison boat launch on the banks of the Rar-

itan, Bob Spiegel looks across the small parking lot, past the two-boat landing and over the open water to marshes and grass-covered hills. He sees a landscape armed with threats.

A fresh, shallow trench has been dug beside the boat landing, running 50 feet up from the water. Spiegel, a co-founder and executive director of the Edison Wetlands Association, doesn't know who carried out

the excavation — whether it was one of the nearby chemical companies, landfill operators, or municipal workers — but he scampers into the muddy ground and discovers three plumes of unusual discharge coming from the ground.

One is a slight trickle oozing a rusty orange liquid. The others are rainbow-colored fluids with metallic sheens that pool in the trench and creep toward

the river.

"That looks like some nasty stuff," Spiegel says.

If only this were rare. He knows the routine, and doesn't take any chances in the shadow of so many toxic-waste dumps, old landfills and Superfund sites. He calls the Middlesex County Hazardous Materials Unit.

Before they arrive, Spiegel surveys the area by scrambling

atop the old Edison Landfill, where a panoramic view unfolds of the Raritan River snaking its way to the ocean.

He can name every set of reeds and unnatural hill because they all contain human wastes, both household and industrial.

"There are no areas along the river that aren't dump sites," Spiegel says. "Between New Brunswick and Wood-

bridge there are 200 toxic-waste sites. There are probably thousands of sites if you go up the creeks and tributaries."

The Kin-Buc, Edgeboro and I.R.L. landfills are just the biggest landmarks in this noxious landscape. Spring will bring new leaves, flowers and a hazardous-waste crew in space suits from the Environmental

See River, Page F2

Keeping house on the 11th floor

By LEIGH BELZ
CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-five housekeepers cram into the basement office shared by Yonon Gerges, director of housekeeping, and Nellie Humes, a housekeeping supervisor. Gerges gives a briefing: "There's new TV Guides and movie books — make sure every

8:05 a.m.

room has them. Don't forget them. Don't forget to sign in." He pauses. "OK, that's it. Have a good day."

It's 8:12 a.m. at the Sheraton Edison Hotel, Raritan Center, and the housekeeping staff heads to the service elevator, where the ladies converse in Spanish. Gloria Mejia, 32, of Perth Amboy is sent to the 11th floor.

Once Mejia grabs her cleaning cart — an extremely heavy Rubbermaid contraption nearly 4 feet wide

— there's no turning back. Sixteen disheveled rooms stand between her and relaxation. Mejia's cart consists of a heavy plastic shelf sandwiched between two garbage cans, several mops, a vacuum, countless towels, toilet paper and freebies like pens and coffee. She uses all her weight to push the cart down the long hallway. She has been doing this every day for almost five years.

See Hotel, Page F2



8:05 a.m.
Manager Tom Healy, center, meets with the housekeeping staff before they disperse to their assigned floors.

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HOTEL

■ From Page F1

Before entering the first room, Mejia gives three quick knocks. "Housekeeping!" No answer. The coast is clear.

Room 1115 is a mess. Tissues and towels are strewn throughout the bathroom. Sneakers and work shoes are tossed on the floor. A toothbrush is hanging over the edge of the sink. A razor is lying face up.

Mejia strips the sheets off the bed and swiftly makes it.

"I feel good when I start with the bed," she says. "I feel like I go faster. But the other ladies have different ways. Everybody does it differently."

She puts the sheets and discarded towels in a huge plastic bag and dusts the end table, cleans and refreshes the ice bucket and wipes the phone. Next is the bathroom, where she cleans and disinfects the sink, bathtub and toilet.

As she washes out the ice buckets, she expertly folds a new set of towels. The stranded toothbrush is rescued, and the razor is returned to its holder. Pausing for a second to scan the bathroom for signs of disorder, she looks down and immediately goes for her mop. The floor is strangely muddy.

"This is nothing," she says. "Some people do more than this."

She folds the loose sheet of toilet paper into a neat triangle and leaves the bathroom. She pulls a vacuum from her cart and gives the bedroom a once-over, her keys lightly jangling. The mirrors are wiped down and carpet is sprayed with one of the many cleaners stored in the cart. The lights are turned off. The room is like new again.

Mejia keeps moving. Three more knocks and a high-pitched "Housekeeping!" The cycle starts again in room 1117.

Mejia's job is much like wiping the slate clean - systematically leaving each room fresh. She sees an average of 16 rooms a day, each with unique clutter, stains and disarray. But in roughly 30 minutes, all the rooms end up looking identical.

"Every day I do the same thing," she says. "I like it because this is my job. But I'm tired already because this is a hard job."

By 9:30, Mejia has been awake for over three hours and has cleaned about three rooms. Her housekeeping job ends at 4:30 p.m., but after picking up her 5-year-old son, Christopher, at the baby sitter's, she must take care of her own home. Her day is long.

"When I first started here, I didn't want to do anything when I get home because I'm so tired. But now it's not so bad. Sometimes when three or more ladies call out they give us 18, 20 rooms, and that's hard."

Four rooms into her routine, Mejia's face has begun to shine with perspiration. The plastic bag of linens and towels is almost full. The fourth room is cluttered with hair-care products and papers. Mejia straightens some stray items on the counter but displaces nothing. Her routine does not involve any closets or drawers.

Nor does her job involve guest interaction. So when Mejia gets thank-you notes, she feels connected with her work.

"Some guests leave a note that says 'Thank you housekeeping' or 'God bless you' or 'Good morning housekeeping' - some people are nice, you know? You feel good when people leave you notes that say thank you or God bless you."

There are no notes like that this morning - but no major disaster areas either. Mejia says the rooms she sees are usually not overly messy. But she sees so many rooms that they all start to look the same.

She heads to the fifth room. She pushes her cart with a sigh and drags the bag of linens. Three knocks. "Housekeeping!" The cycle continues.

11 a.m.

Renowned astrologer Judith Auora Ryan has a full day ahead of her with a drive to Monmouth County to consult with a feng shui client.

MARK R. SULLIVAN
Staff photographer

“I could read cards before I could read books.”

Judith Auora Ryan
ASTROLOGER

Astrologer makes a house call

By BETH ROSENBERG
STAFF WRITER

Before leaving for a feng shui consultation in Freehold, Judith Auora Ryan sits at her kitchen table, eating a sandwich.

Those who practice feng shui believe the home is a loving entity and the positioning of furnishings and decor can have a profound impact on one's health, career, relationships and prosperity, she explains.

Ryan's home is filled with plants, Chinese symbols and other objects believed to bring good luck. No dried flowers in Ryan's house; they are dead and bring bad luck, she says.

As she finishes her sandwich, one of her three cats walks across the table to lick the crumbs off her plate. Another cat gazes out the kitchen window and Apollo, her dog, walks around the kitchen, alternating between nudging the cats with his nose and lying down on his cushion near the side door.

Ryan is an internationally known astrologer and feng shui specialist. She teaches, lectures, does astrological charts and card readings, and writes astrology columns for a local magazine.

"I could read cards before I could read books," she says, adding that her grandmother also had a psychic gift, and she suspects her mother did too, though she didn't talk about it.

Looking at the clock, she realizes it's time to leave for her Freehold appointment.

After taking Apollo on a quick walk and getting him settled for the afternoon, Ryan puts on her coat and fixes her makeup.

"Be good," she instructs her pets as she walks out the door and climbs into her bluish-colored Acura with a license plate that says "SEER."

During the 25-minute drive to her client's office, Ryan explains that she always has had an interest in astrology but never imagined she'd do it for a living. The former accountant says she used to divide her time between a full-time job and reading for clients, eventually leaving the accounting world to concentrate on her primary interest, which has taken her all over the world. Ryan has lectured on cruise ships and delivered seminars in Europe, South America and Australia.

Pulling her car into the driveway of Jason Beck's chiropractic office, she immediately notices the bright red door and red shutters that adorn the beige house.

Red is a color symbolizing good luck and also is a fire color. The beige of the house is an Earth color and fire creates Earth, Ryan explains.

"You can really feel the energy," Ryan says. "It's happier."

Beck invites Ryan into his office, which occupies the bottom floor of his West Main Street home. He points out the changes he has made in the office based on Ryan's suggestions.

A fountain sits in the corner near the front door. Fountains bring in money.

"I've got my octagonal mirror," Beck says. "That's good, right?"

"That's perfect," Ryan replies.

In the office reception area, which is also considered to be the wealth area of the house, a large picture of nine goldfish hangs on one wall. The number nine and goldfish are symbols of wealth and luck.

"It feels really nice in here," Ryan says as she walks around the room.

The one area Ryan isn't happy with is the bathroom, which also is located in the wealth area of the house. Flushing the toilet, she says, is flushing away wealth. She advises Beck to put a small mirror on the ceiling so the water, or wealth, would come back up. Ryan also suggests placing rocks in the bathroom for stability.

Generally though, Ryan is happy with the transformation in the house.

"The whole place feels so good," she says, noting the lightly colored walls, rounded corners on chairs, and crystals hanging in front of windows, all designed to create peaceful surroundings for Beck's patients.

Beck, who opened this new office a few months ago, says it took him two months to renovate the home based on Ryan's suggestions.

"It was the best thing I did for the office," he says. "Feng shui, you have to do it."

Before leaving, Ryan offers Beck a few last-minute suggestions.

"All trash receptacles should have tops on them," she says, also noting that more purple in the reception area and coins taped to the phones would induce wealth.

As Ryan walks out, Beck thanks her for her help and says he'll see her again in a few months.

On the drive home, Ryan says that sometimes she'll drive by a house and have the urge to get out of her car and tell the homeowners that if they changed the door color or did something with the landscaping, their lives could be much better.

"But you can't really do that," she says with a laugh. "Can you?"

RIVER

■ From Page F1

Protection Agency, which will excavate, evacuate and clean up a site with thousands of drums of toxic waste.

Yet the view from up here is beautiful. Flocks of gulls float on the water. A cormorant wings past a stray pair of Canada geese.

And in the muddy soil atop this unnatural hill of human detritus are deer tracks galore. A herd lives in these parts. Some have been spotted swimming across the Raritan.

"This place is teeming with wildlife," Spiegel says. "They've been forced here by the development pressures."

He says Fowler toads overwhelm the landscape in season, along with the birds that eat them.

Spiegel reaches down and feels a warm pipe that collects methane from deep in the rotting heap. "I'll bet a lot of birds bed down here for the night," he says.

What's as amazing to Spiegel as the return of wildlife to the Raritan River is the return of people. A putrid sewer not long ago, this is now a place for boaters, anglers and water skiers.

He'd like to see bike paths and scenic hikes along its edges so more people can enjoy the river view, and gain a stake in cleaning up the mess.

"We call it a tarnished treasure because it's got so much potential," Spiegel says.

Patrick Leonard - owner of Beacon Marine on Woodbridge Avenue - shares that hope, but not necessarily in Spiegel's terms.

After whipping around the boat launch parking lot in his pickup, he backs a boat into the river with effortless speed.

Leonard comes here several times a day to test his repairs and fine-tune engines in the water.

Bundled in a heavy work coat, tough boots and grimy gloves, Leonard and service manager Tommy Delemo have their communication down to hand signals and head nods.

They put the boats in, push off and head out.

"This is our test track," he says, gesturing between the New Jersey Turnpike bridge he's just past and the Route 1 bridge upstream. "We can crank up to 70 miles per hour."

Not in this boat. A beat-up 20-foot cubby cabin more than 20 years old, the 80-horse Mercury outboard still runs well. Leonard and Delemo gave the engine a tune-up, rebuilt the carburetor and replaced the water pump. Now they're calibrating the timing.

"The educated boater is bringing his boat in now," Leonard says. "During the season, I'm backed up six weeks."

They get it up to 35 mph. Leonard at the controls and Delemo crouched over the exposed engine shooting a timing light and turning a wrench. The wind forces Leonard to turn his cap backward so it doesn't fly off.

He steers through the channels, forcing flocks of gulls to take off. Spiegel's fields and woods speed by now, streaks on the sidelines of the open water.

"Most people haven't experienced a boat ride in the river,"

Leonard says sadly. "This is their town. This is their river. We have a major waterway in the town. It's direct access to Raritan Bay, the Arthur Kill and the New York Harbor, or the ocean."

During the summer Leonard and Delemo are forced out early in the morning because of all the customers (or potential customers) on the water. Now he's got the liquid highway to himself.

They switch boats to test a second, older, craft for a water leak in the engine.

Once floating, Delemo pulls the floorboards.

"I'm just checking that we're not sinking," he says. "When a boat gets this old, that's the first thing you check."

The hull is dry. Leonard makes the usual rounds around the watery track.

He'd like to see big improvements out here, man-made improvements that might not be to the liking of an environmentalist like Spiegel.

"My vision is to dress up the river," Leonard says. "There are 3,000 acres out here. I'll compromise with him. He can have half natural."

Leonard envisions a giant marina.

"Let's bring it to where people can enjoy it," he says. "Why can't we be the leader of everything that's in New Jersey, especially on the waterfront? We've got so much of it."

Back at the landing, two trucks from Middlesex County HazMat have arrived, the crews poking at the seeping liquids.

They have a wooden stake and smear mud on a white material that indicates volatile organic compounds like oil.

Nothing happens.

"There's no petroleum," says Richard F. Kozub, the HazMat program coordinator. "It's mostly natural decay and iron. You'll find it in a lot of streams that are backed up."

He frequently tests these areas for hydrocarbons where waste oil and other products might have been discarded unsafely. He pulled a drum of waste oil out of a Raritan River site two days earlier and expects to see more when spring rains wash out drums loosened by Hurricane Floyd.

The teams soon leave, all the while watched by some retirees.

"We're just down here to pass the time," says Walter Horetsky. He and Lenny Wehrfritz, both Edison residents, know the regulars by sight if not by name: the bare-chested guy in a dirty sweat suit who talks to himself, the old guy who slowly drives by looking for his son who wanders the area, the environmentalists, the boat guys, the lunch crowd and the anglers.

Without a fish or a word, Jose Collado and Augustin Torres break down their rods and end their lunch break, heading back up the street to their employer, the chemical company Akzo Nobel.

Tom Knemoller recently arrived to fill their place.

"It's just nice to get out of the house," the retired PSE&G man says, reeling in a worm.

Some retirees leave, and others take their place.

All these people will be back here, if not the next day, then the day after that or the day after that. And, the Raritan River will be here too.



DICK COSTELLO/Staff photographer

12:27 p.m. Bob Spiegel shows officials from Middlesex County HazMat - program coordinator Richard F. Kozub and Helene A. Dougan, hazardous materials specialist - three liquids seeping from the ground. Nothing hazardous is detected.

UPS: Driver makes his rounds in Raritan Center

■ From Page F1

taunts. But Boschetti might take a string of Philadelphia losses if it meant he could skip the Christmas season, UPS's busiest time of the year.

"It's just endless - endless amounts of packages and stops," says Boschetti, although he quickly adds that drivers with residential routes have it even worse with the increase in online holiday shopping. Boschetti represents the trend himself - he never shopped by mail until last year when he bought 10 gifts online. (He saved a co-worker a delivery, though, by pick-

ing up his packages at work, Boschetti says.)

The 6-foot-3-inch Boschetti, who grew up in Spotswood, can easily pyramid four boxes from chin to waist, as he does during a 11:52 a.m. stop at Sir Speedy, a printing company. The 225-pound Boschetti also can lift heavy packages, like an 84-pound roll of fabric for Main Attractions, a special events engineering company. But it is sometimes the small packages that cause problems. It can be difficult to get a grip on a small but heavy 80-pound box of nuts and bolts, Boschetti says.

To transport everything, Boschetti uses a 13,000-cubic-foot truck.

Despite its dark brown exterior, the truck lets in lots of light through its nearly-transparent fiberglass roof. The sporty sunroof filters in light on the rows of packages stacked on metal shelves.

The truck lacks amenities like a radio and air conditioning, although UPS does supply a fire extinguisher. Temperature control is not a problem on this mild day as Boschetti drives with both cab doors open.

"You're not cooped up all day," says Boschetti as he lists the job's benefits.

He doesn't even mind bad weather.

"I figure, what else was I going to

do? Sit in my house all day?" Boschetti says.

Boschetti's route covers less than two square miles in Raritan Center. He sometimes will pull away from one loading dock only to reverse and shift over a few feet to a neighboring dock.

"I never leave the center," says Boschetti. "The big joke is I've never gone through a red light."

At 11:19 a.m., Boschetti makes one of the largest deliveries of the morning, 18 packages to Samtack, a computer company. He estimates about half his customers are computer-related companies.

"This is a mini Silicon Valley," he says.

After seven years on the route, Boschetti sometimes gets perks from customers. Some let him buy products at cost, allowing him to score savings on a computer and work station. Others provide candy, pies or stock tips.

Despite lugging boxes all day, Boschetti labors some more after work, immediately lifting weights after returning home.

"It improves my stamina during the day," says Boschetti. "As soon as I get home, I get right to it."

He then showers and eats dinner with his wife, Linda, and 4-year-old son, Taylor. But, his favorite part of the day often involves playing guitar while Taylor pounds on an electronic drum set.

Little India nestled along its own strip of road

Culture thrives on Oak Tree

By KEN SERRANO
STAFF WRITER

Laughing and talking in a burst of Gujarati, two women in overcoats sweep past a man pushing a grocery cart through the parking lot of Sugar Tree Plaza mall to his 1989 Ford Taurus station wagon.

As the women enter the lobby of the Panchvatee Food Mart, they don't pass gumball machines or racks of free brochures ordinarily seen in a supermarket. They walk by a copper statue of the four-armed, elephant-headed Hindu deity Ganesha, the patron god of scribes and the remover of obstacles. Believers

11:15 a.m. say Ganesha brings the very best of luck, especially to those starting new ventures. Coins have spilled from dishes onto other dishes, dropped there in front of the statue by those — including the store owner — who wish to secure the god's favor.

Outside in the parking lot, Atul Kothari of Roselle Park unclashes the tailgate window of his Taurus. As he places the plastic bags holding his groceries in the back of the car, he unties the handle of one to display the contents.

"In American way it is called green beans," he says. "We call them choli."

Kothari, the father of two, explains that his religion, Jainism, forbids him to eat meat. Panchvatee, in fact, is a supermarket without meat racks or a butcher. It caters to many Jains and other vegetarians.

Inside Panchvatee, smoke from burning incense curls within a glass-enclosed cubicle in the corner of the store, scenting the air of the

supermarket. The booth is where Atil Patel wraps what is called "pan" in aluminum foil for a customer. Pan is a concoction of sweets and other-worldly condiments enclosed in a leaf. People eat it as an after-dinner mouth freshener and stomach settler.

Meanwhile, 2-year-old Jay Patel wrestles a cart containing rice flour and vegetables away from his grandfather, Arvind Patel of Piscataway, who quickly catches up with the shopper-in-training.

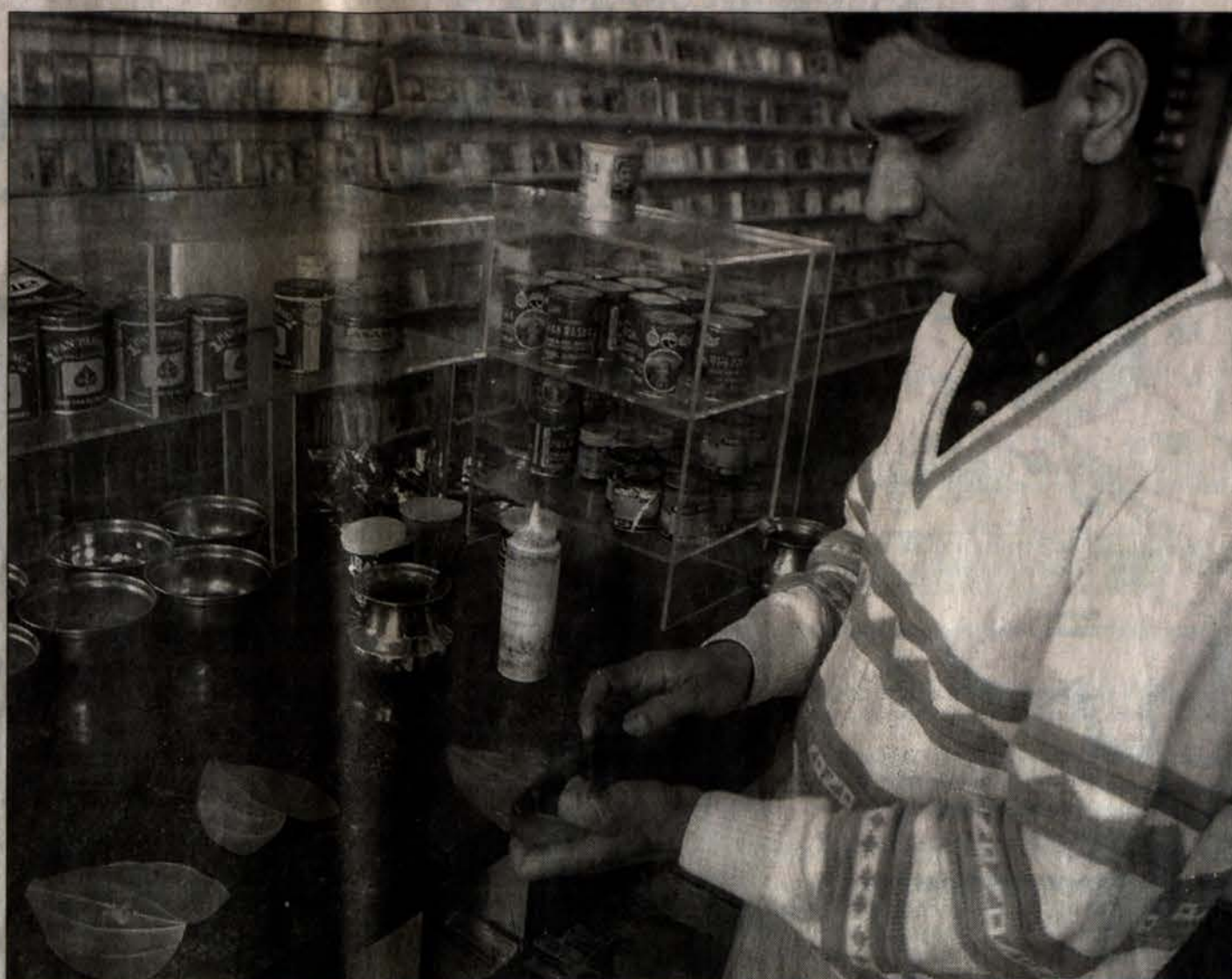
A woman in a sari bends down to check the price of a bag of Krunchees, a pea-shaped snack made of chick-pea flour, and then passes on them. A tall woman crouches over her cart before leaving and talks into a cell phone in English laced with the sing-song accent of India.

Sitar music plays over the loudspeakers.

Panchvatee lies on the edge of Little India, a strip of Oak Tree Road that Edison shares with Ise-lin. The cluster of shops selling saris, Indian fast food and 220-volt electronics that people returning to India cart with them is the most salient sign of Edison's, and New Jersey's, burgeoning population of Asian-Indian immigrants and their American-born children.

Panchvatee's owner, D.J. Patel, a broad-shouldered bearded six-footer, ticks off in a distinct baritone the variety of items in his store that sets it apart from the standard American supermarket: 26 kinds of curry, 28 types of dal (lentils), 45 kinds of rice.

Explaining the philosophy behind his vegetarianism, he picks an



11:20 a.m.

Jagdish Patel of Edison wraps sweet pan, an after-dinner mouth freshener and stomach settler, at Poonam Video & Variety store.

JASON TOWLEN
Staff photographer

almond from a crib of them and holds it up to his eye.

The vegetables he sells that resemble the parts of the body are good for those body parts, he says. He grabs a stiff, foot-long bean with corrugated skin.

"Any kind of back pain problems, 100 percent you're going to solve it," by frying or boiling and then eating the spine-like bean, he says.

An apple-green squash called a dudhi (99 cents a pound) helps with any problems with the muscles of the forearm, Patel explains.

Aside from the lack of meat products, Patel's store carries many items found in a regular supermarket. Cap'n Crunch vies for shelf space with canned cane juice, a green soft drink made fresh on the streets of India from crushed sugar cane. In a flier announcing Panchvatee's second anniversary, the

store offers milk, Hotel Bar butter pulp and 40-pound bags of Super Sadhu Basmati Rice. A free cutlery set goes to those buying \$100 worth of groceries, the flier reads.

The Sugar Tree Plaza strip mall is home to other Indian-run — more specifically Gujarati-run — businesses. Even more specifically, there are at least three businesses run by Patels, a name far more common in Gujarat, a western Indian state, than Smith is in America.

Next door in a bridal boutique named Avasar, P.K. Patel rises from amid the clay figurines, miniature temples, silk flours, Hindu statues, bunting, bridal thrones and other wedding decorations. At noon, he is still awaiting his first customer of the day. Business picks up on weekends, he says.

"Business is very busy in June and July," Patel says.

Six 3-foot-tall mannequins stored in a corner face each other. They are women in bikini-like tops and silk pants, their hands frozen in the same gesture, about to play the conga-like drum strapped around their necks, the dholak. They are placed along the aisle during a wedding, Patel says.

Next door at Patel Appliances, Usha Patel explains the attraction to 220-volt goods, like bug killers, VCRs and portable phones.

"These are things you can't get over there," she says. India prevents not only American goods from filtering in, but also those from everywhere else, she says.

Down the street at Poonam Video Varieties, a half-dozen men stand watching a black-and-white Hindi film shortly after 1 p.m. on a large

television perched in a corner near the ceiling.

This is also the home of the Poonam Pan Center.

A pan maker or "wala," who speaks little English and declines to give his name, grabs a green leaf from a bowl full of water, snips the ends, sprinkles it with lime water — as in limestone — paints it with a rust-colored root paste, spoons on chutney, then reaches into silver bowls. They contain grated coconut, fennel seeds, rainbow-colored jimmies, but not the stimulant that pan contains in India, betel nut, which turns the teeth red. It is illegal in the United States, a customer explains.

The pan wala wraps the leaf up, wraps it again in foil and sells it to a customer for a dollar. The sign outside Poonam Pan Center reads "We Take Party Orders."

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KGP Computer Show and Sale II	March 4-5
Megatech Career Expo	March 7
Northcoast Golf Show and Sale	March 10-12
Greenberg's Great Train, Toy & Dollhouse Show	March 11-12
Home Decorating & Remodeling Show	March 17-19
New Brunswick/Twin Brooks Kennel Club Dog Shows	March 24-26
American Woodworker-Woodworking Show	March 31, April 1-2
Country Folk Art Show	April 7-9
Abilities Expo	April 14-16
Art & Decorative Accessories Show	April 28-30
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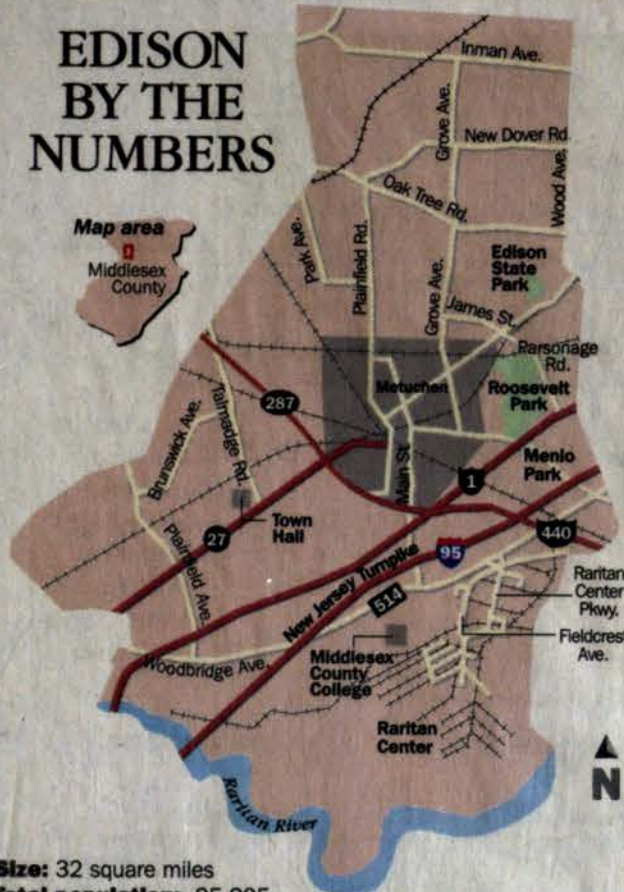
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EDISON
BY THE
NUMBERS



Size: 32 square miles
Total population: 95,905
Density: 2,997 persons per sq. mile
Government: Mayor, 7 council members elected at-large
Voters registered: 49,922; 14,560 Democrats, 5,377 Republicans, 29,985 undeclared.
18th Legislative District; 6th & 7th congressional districts
1999 township tax levy: \$33.8 million
Tax rate: \$.49 cents
1999-00 school tax levy: \$107,643,481
Tax rate: \$1.56 per \$100 of assessed value
1999 county tax levy: \$28,822,574
Tax rate: \$.42 per \$100 of assessed value plus 1-cent open-space tax
Total tax rate (including 1-cent open-space tax for township and county): \$2.49
Tax bill on a home of average value: \$4,096 in a non-garbage district; \$4,293.35 of taxes, plus garbage tax
Percent of tax base that is residential: 58.7%
Average home value: \$179,300
Average assessed value: \$164,496

All numbers from the 1990 census.

Age	Percentage of population
0 to 5 yrs.	6,118 6.9%
5 to 17 yrs.	13,127 14.8%
18 to 20 yrs.	3,098 3.5%
21 to 24 yrs.	5,406 6.1%
25 to 44 yrs.	33,249 37.5%
45 to 54 yrs.	9,959 11.2%
55 to 59 yrs.	4,240 4.8%
60 to 64 yrs.	4,012 4.5%
65 to 74 yrs.	6,048 6.8%
75 to 84 yrs.	2,624 3.0%
85 and over	799 0.9%
Male	43,554 49.1%
Female	45,126 50.9%
White	67,919 76.6%
Black	4,784 5.4%
Hispanic	3,839 4.3%
Asian	11,983 13.5%
Other	155 0.2%

Ancestry
First ancestry, 25 most common

Italian	16,750 18.9%
Irish	14,755 16.6%
German	13,411 15.1%
Polish	11,530 13.0%
Asian-Indian	6,076 6.9%
English	5,334 6.0%
Russian	4,453 5.0%
Hungarian	4,239 4.8%
Slovak	2,912 3.5%
Chinese	2,561 2.9%
American	1,873 2.1%
French	1,663 1.9%
Filipino	1,537 1.7%
Puerto Rican	1,395 1.6%
Scottish	1,322 1.5%
Ukrainian	1,162 1.3%
Korean	1,100 1.2%
Dutch	1,055 1.2%
Austrian	876 1.0%
Greek	864 1.0%
Lithuanian	789 0.9%
Scotch-Irish	774 0.9%
Danish	676 0.8%
Czech	661 0.7%
Swedish	653 0.7%

Income (from 1989 figures)

Median household income: \$50,075

Median family income: \$55,837

Median non-family income: \$32,407

Per capita income: \$20,961

Household income

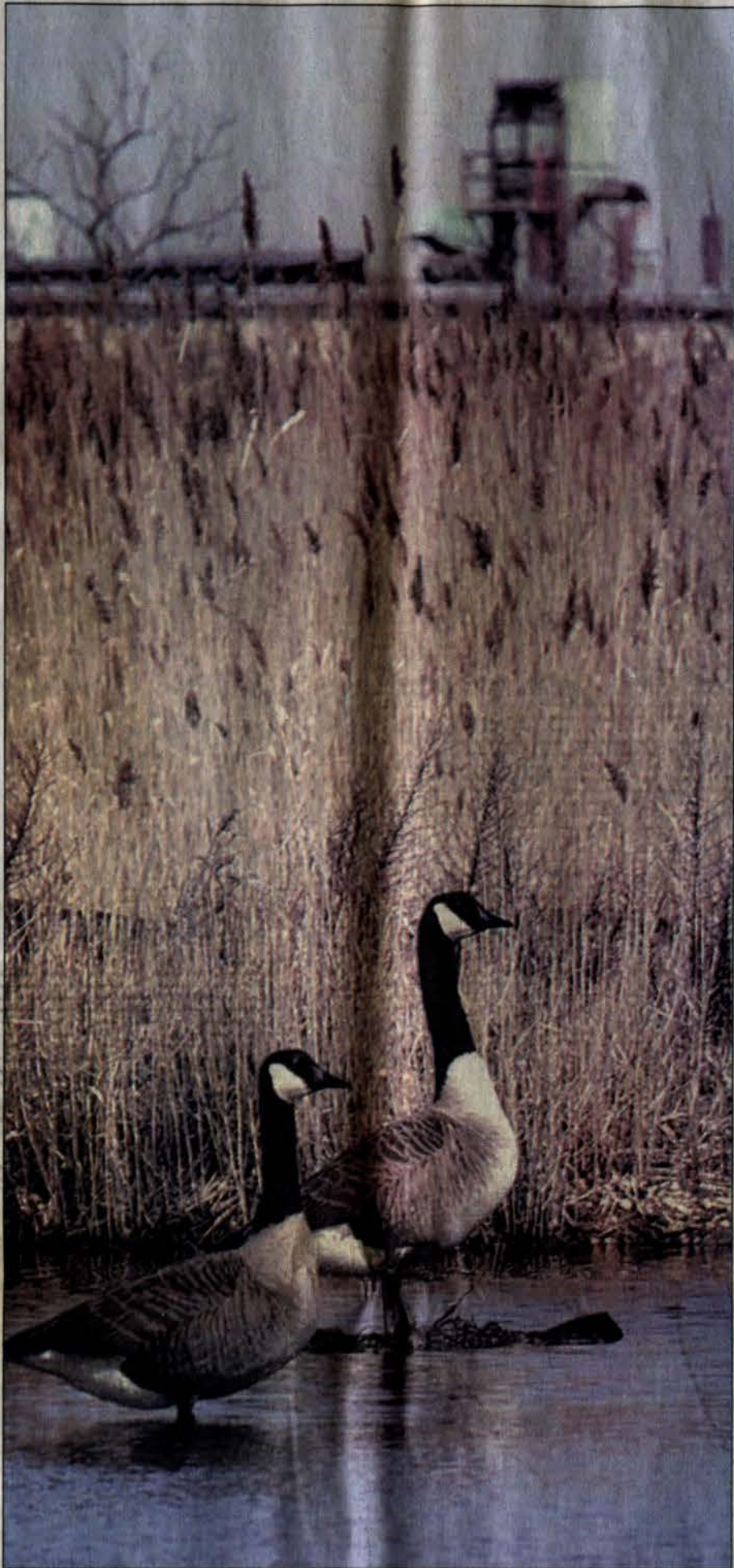
Less than \$5,000	1.9%
\$5,000- 9,999	3.1%
\$10,000- 14,999	2.9%
\$15,000- 24,999	8.8%
\$25,000- 34,999	12.4%
\$35,000- 49,999	20.8%
\$50,000- 74,999	25.2%
\$75,000- 99,999	14.2%
\$100,000- 149,999	8.0%
\$150,000 +	2.7%

Occupation

Executive, administrative and managerial	9,259 18.7%
Professional specialty	8,103 16.4%
Technicians and related support	2,722 5.5%
Sales	6,431 13.0%
Administrative support, including clerical	9,851 19.9%
Private household	67 0.1%
Protective service	964 1.9%
Service, except protective and household	2,876 5.8%
Farming, forestry and fishing	215 0.4%
Precision production, craft and repair	3,980 8.0%
Machine operators, assemblers and inspectors	2,053 4.2%
Transportation and material moving	1,606 3.2%
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers and laborers	1,340 2.7%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Township of Edison

SNAPSHOTS OF EDISON



KEITH MUCCILLI/Staff photographer

10:36 a.m. Two Canada geese wade in the marsh along the Raritan River within sight of a business located in Raritan Center.



MARK R. SULLIVAN/Staff photographer

3:45 p.m. Mike Cartagena of Edison wheelies his bike across one of the ramps at the Vineyard Road Park skateboard park.



7:07 p.m. Cathy Carr, 22, left, and Yulis Garcia, 16, both of Perth Amboy, perform a dance of Spanish origin called 'Sevillans' during a performance at the Edison State Park.

10:40 a.m.

With barely a cloud in the sky, Edison Memorial Tower stands tall in Menlo Park. The tower was erected to commemorate the 10 years that Thomas Edison spent at Menlo Park.



DICK COSTELLO
Staff photographer



6:32 a.m.

A member of the housekeeping staff at the Sheraton Edison Hotel, Raritan Center, starts on her first room of the day.

JIM McLAUGHLIN
Staff photographer



10:46 a.m. UPS driver Craig Bosch drives his truck through the streets of Raritan Center to make deliveries.

HOTS OF EDISON



m. Cathy Carr, 22, left, and Yulis Garcia, 16, both of Perth Amboy, perform a dance of Spanish origin called 'Sevillans' during lessons at European School of Dance.

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With barely a cloud in the sky, Edison Memorial Tower stands tall in Menlo Park. The tower was erected to commemorate the 10 years that Thomas Edison spent at Menlo Park.



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A member of the housekeeping staff at the Sheraton Edison Hotel, Raritan Center, starts on her first room of the day.

J.C. McLAUGHLIN
Staff photographer



10:46 a.m. UPS driver Craig Boschetti steers his massive delivery truck through the streets of Raritan Center to make deliveries.

JASON TOWLEN/Staff photographer

HISTORY OF EDISON

1600s

MID 1600s: Dutch and Swedish settlers lay claim to the land now known as Edison. Upon their arrival, they find the first recorded inhabitants living in settlements on a cliff overlooking the Raritan River: the Lenni-Lenape Indians.

1668: James Stelle and Nicholas Bonham settle in what is now Edison. The Stelton and Bonhamtown sections are named after these settlers. Piscatawaytown, one of the early Edison settlements, is named by New England settlers who ventured south from the banks of the Piscataway River, which forms the boundary for Maine and New Hampshire.

SPRING 1689: Stelton Baptist Church, the second oldest Baptist church in the state and the 10th oldest in the nation, is founded. The church was named First Baptist Church of Piscataway until 1875.

MARCH 1689: The township's first school is established in the Oak Tree section.

1700s

1702: The Lenni-Lenape Indians sell 10,000 acres of land to a group of settlers. An old Indian trail is transformed into a road, and a ferry is established across the Raritan River at the site of the present Albany Street Bridge in what is now Highland Park, and is part of what is now Edison.

1776: British forces loot Piscatawaytown during the Revolutionary War. St. James Episcopal Church building serves as a hospital for wounded British soldiers. Six British soldiers who were killed are buried in the church cemetery.

FEBRUARY 1777: Piscatawaytown is the setting for fierce fighting between 1,000 British forces and 700 colonists.

APRIL 1789: George Washington travels on Old Post Road, the earliest public road in the eastern part of the state, on his way to his inauguration in New York City.

1795: The Raritan Bridge, now known as the Albany Street Bridge, is constructed over the Raritan. The bridge eliminates the need for the ferry.

1800s

JUNE 19, 1835: A tornado destroys a large portion of what is now Edison.

MARCH 17, 1870: Boundary lines separate Raritan Township, as Edison was first known, from Woodbridge and Piscataway, and in April the township is incorporated. The township selects its namesake to honor the Raritan tribe of the Lenni-Lenape Indians, the area's first settlers.

APRIL 16, 1870: The first township elections take place.

1870s: Railroad stations are erected at Menlo Park and Stelton.

1876: Thomas Alva Edison establishes his industrial research laboratory, where he invents over 400 patented items, including the phonograph, electric railway (which ran along the current Middlesex Avenue) and the incandescent lamp. Also this year, the first township subdivision is named Menlo Park, occupied largely by New York City residents who build summer homes there.

1900s



The Edison police force on Memorial Day 1929. The Edison Police Department formed in 1923 with four men and a Model-T Ford.

1900: Residents of the area now known as Metuchen petition the state to allow them to incorporate as a municipality separate from Raritan Township, based on a dispute concerning their voice in the operation of the public schools. The request was approved.

1905: Highland Park residents follow Metuchen's example, claiming they did not have a strong voice in Raritan Township's government.

WORLD WAR I: The township loses land to the federal government, which bought 4 1/2 square miles to create Raritan Arsenal.

MARCH 8, 1937: The first patients are admitted to Roosevelt Hospital.

1937: Edison Memorial Tower is erected to commemorate the 10 years that Thomas Edison spent at Menlo Park. The tower, which is 131 feet tall and constructed of Portland cement, an Edison invention, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



At one time, Edison was more rural, as evidenced by the barren appearance of Route 1 in this undated photo.

WORLD WAR II: The feds again take more township land to establish Camp Kilmer.

1954: Voters select Edison as the township's new name. Because the name "Raritan" had been adopted by several municipalities in the state, a group of citizens proposed a change. Voters are given three options: retain Raritan Township or change to either Edison or Nixon.

1965: Two brothers, Frank and Vincent Visceglia, purchase part of the retired Raritan Arsenal from the federal government, giving birth to Raritan Center, which is touted as one of the largest and most successful industrial parks in the nation.

SEPTEMBER 1966: Middlesex County College, the first of four county colleges to operate in the state, opens at the former Raritan Arsenal. The Army munitions depot and distribution center closed in April 1964. A total of 45 faculty members teach the 728 full-timers and 800 part-timers enrolled in the first-ever semester at the college.

AUG. 7, 1967: The first five patients are accepted at the newly constructed John F. Kennedy Community Hospital.

FEBRUARY 1974: The hospital name is changed to John F. Kennedy Medical Center, a move to recognize its growth.

Sources: Home News Tribune archives and "Welcome to Edison: An Enlightened Community," by David Sheehan.

Pines Manor: Serving the masses



JASON TOWLEN/Staff photographer

3:24 p.m. Alfredo Sievichay prepares prime rib for an upcoming banquet at Pines Manor.

Family-owned business is smooth running operation

By SHARI GARRETSON
CORRESPONDENT

At two hours before dinner time, there's a monastic calmness about the kitchen of Pines Manor, where a handful of sous-chefs are silently going about their business.

Rutilio is chopping zucchini, having already filled a 32-gallon tub with cauliflower.

Noel is transforming a seemingly endless supply of chicken breasts into chicken cutlets, trimming off fat and saving the scraps for chicken stock.

3:20 p.m. William, who usually works the pantry, is cleaning the bank of stainless steel coffee pots, checking the valves and spigots. Alfredo is tying string around the ends of whole prime ribs and stacking them on a multishelfed rolling rack.

The lever on Executive Chef Pablo's scoop provides a ratchety rhythm as he fills a large baking sheet with raw meatballs.

The repetitive tasks are done without conversation, each man at his own large, stainless-steel table, the drone of the ever-running kitchen fan providing the "om" for their culinary meditation. Their serenity belies the impending deadline.

Then again, it is only dinner for 200, and a buffet at that. Not like the Knights of Columbus banquet a couple weeks ago, where they fed 1,700 people in 20 minutes.

And nothing like this past December, when they hosted 17,000 people in 17 days.

Actually, dinner for tonight is al-

ready either done or in progress; the prep work is for the coming weekend.

The only sense of anxiousness around the place is outside the kitchen, from the Men In Suits — in this case, banquet managers Pete and Mo and General Manager Andy — who are strolling, checking, watching and, in Pete and Andy's case, ceaselessly smoking, like old-style expectant fathers.

The men's aura of concern seems to spring, not from insecurity, but from the formidable reputation and family-owned-and-operated pride that is as pervasive in the place as the polished granite and marble that encases the entire building, inside and out.

Every event reflects on that reputation, and is an opportunity to either increase or diminish the flow of business. It's their job to fret, at least a little.

Despite that, no visible noodling is in evidence.

In fact, one is hard-pressed to hear anything resembling an order being given, even by Thomas, the wait captain who is in charge of the six black-and-white clad servers presently readying Banquet Room A (one of 12 in the building).

Stocky and bald-headed, Thomas strides into A where his staff is setting up chairs and bursts forth with a jovial "Heeeyyy!" with arms extended as if greeting old friends at a party, then quickly retracts into business-only mode as he sees a visitor approach. "Unlimited soda on tables," he says quickly. "What?" asks a young woman with a pile of

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brassy blond curls on her head who couldn't quite navigate the Egyptian accent. Thomas repeats the information, slower, and the crew keeps quietly working.

Chairs, silverware, goblets move into place; no one needs to be told what to do. The boomerang-shaped line of buffet tables already is draped with linen and lace-like layers of petticoats, and on one side a chorus line of gleaming copper chafing dishes stands waiting to be filled.

Although everything is progressing on schedule, Mo, swarthy and slight, stands to the side watching solemnly as his hands work a spare napkin into a rosette — a banquet manager's version of worry beads.

By 4:30 p.m. the room is ready, and the servers gather in the downstairs kitchen to eat their meal, a stew that Pablo has prepared for them.

Then, at 5:15 p.m. — 15 minutes before the buffet is scheduled to start — the magic begins.

Chicken, vegetables, pasta mater-

ialize from out of steamers, pots and roasting pans. Sauces, seasoning and garnishes are added and voila! What minutes before was only food — mere sustenance — has been transformed into Seafood Newburg, Chicken Marsala, Rigatoni with Spinach in Vodka Sauce. A procession of servers carries the dishes in their preheated pans to the ignited and waiting chafing dishes in A.

Other than a few carrot sticks spilled on the way out of the kitchen, the evening proceeds without a hitch.

The software company employees in A will eat, then discuss their new benefits package. A meeting of Republicans across the way ("Water Only") will choose their candidates for the coming local election. Clients will come and go, booking and planning upcoming events. Thomas will finally smile ("Is going smoothly, thank God."). Pete — a tall, white-haired Czech — eventually will take a few minutes to stand and eat a plate of food, alone in the now-deserted kitchen. At the bar in the foyer, John, the bartender, short on customers, will have a chance to tutor a couple of 30-something men (refugees from A) on some techniques from his self-published and well-enough-selling book, "How to Pick Up Beautiful Women" ("Get yourself a puppy ...").

Around 9:45 p.m. Thomas, relaxed and happy on the downhill side of the evening, takes time to teach a middle-aged woman at the bar, who has been talking favorite authors with one of the computer guys, a few favorite napkin-folding designs, including one of his own, an advanced-level creation called "The Artichoke."

Later, as the night's activities draw to a close and one of the unsuccessful Republican would-be nominees continues to stump relentlessly at the bar, the woman stops Thomas on his way out to show him her successful Artichoke. He beams like a figure-skating coach whose protegee has just done her first triple Salchow, and suddenly the smoky alcove is lit by warm Mediterranean sunshine.

"Oooh, fantastic!" He adds a congratulatory thumbs up as he backs toward the door to the parking lot. "You got it!"



MARK R. SULLIVAN/Staff photographer

3:45 p.m. Anthony Roberti of Colonia ollies across a ramp at the Vineyard Road Park skateboard park

Extreme athletes cohabitate with a silent comradery

By MICHAEL SYMONS
STAFF WRITER

It isn't nearly as sunny as the forecasters had promised, and a persistent breeze floats across the empty hardball diamond toward the dormant playground equipment. But the blackbirds don't seem to mind.

A few hundred birds chatter loudly in the large, leafless trees that stand over Vineyard Road Park. Even when it's quiet, it's not quiet here, thanks also to the cars whipping by on nearby Old Post Road and Route 1.

A Honda Accord parks on Estok Road, across Vineyard Road from what served a few years ago as tennis courts. Two teens emerge, opt against securing the steering wheel with The Club, and grab skateboards from the trunk.

They speak few words as they slowly begin skateboarding, aimlessly. There's apparently no goal in mind except recreation. One of the teens, Mike Farris of Woodbridge, doesn't even bother to stamp out his cigarette.

A pattern quickly emerges: Skate for a short distance, then attempt a trick. Here's when the crash of the skaters against the metal or wooden equipment or paved blacktop gets loud like a busy restaurant kitchen.

And the flock of birds flies away as the tricks continue.

There's the ollie, the building block of skateboard tricks, during which the rider crouches down, lifts his body and the board together into a tucked position, then lands, absorbs the impact and — here's the key — rides away.

Or a skater hops a board onto the edge of a fun box, — a wooden platform, little more — and grinds the two together, stays on as long as possible, and watches his feet on the way down.

Or speeds across the blacktop, rides up a quarter pipe and tries to stall at the top. Or uses it — or the bank ramp at the other end of the park, which provides less vert — to gain speed and try contortionist twists, like the rock and roll, on the pyramid at the center of the park.

There's not a lot of continuity to the effort. It generally consists of short bursts of energy, followed by a stunt, followed by the skater being separated from his board.

But Farris and friend Anthony Roberti, who lives in Colonia, aren't training for the X-Games. They're just having fun. They have the "scars" that illustrate their commitment — scuff marks all over their boards, and holes ripped in their sneakers from the friction.

"I don't do it to be really, really good at it. It's fun," Roberti says. "It relaxes me when I get out of school. It's outside, with nature. It's a relief. Some people don't get it. I don't understand why people play racquetball, and they probably don't understand why I skateboard."

Vineyard Road Park, one of 34 parks in Edison, is the only one with a skateboard park. And that will be short-lived, as the donated equipment is being taken down because of parking and safety complaints. It may be put back up near the municipal building.

The term "skateboard park" isn't entirely accurate here. If it has wheels and lacks an electric motor, one can try to pull tricks on it. A bicyclist arrives, along with a roller blader. More skateboards arrive too.

All the cultures get along. There's an unofficial code of conduct: If someone is ready to use a piece of equipment, get out of the way and wait your turn. And when you're done, move away from the equipment.

Mike Cartagena of Edison, the cyclist, rearranges the equipment and attempts one of the day's most eye-catching tricks. He jumps over a blue trash barrel onto a fun box, then does it again on the taller fun box.

It's not getting any warmer out, but the park visitors are getting a workout. Roberti removes his red sweatshirt, revealing a gray T-shirt that better matches his white, gray and black camouflage pants.

Farris removes his blue denim jacket, opting for a white T-shirt that comes with a political statement, of sorts, attributed to early 20th century anarchist Emma Goldman: "It's not my revolution if I can't dance to it."

Kurt Jellets of Edison shows up with no coat over his Vinny Testaverde jersey. He keeps trying some of the fastest, most aggressive tricks in the park — standing at the top of the bank ramp until a path becomes clear, then racing down toward the pyramid.

Jellets and the skateboard elevate, and he twists in the air. He gets back his regular form before landing ... but can't stay on the board, which he promptly picks up and hurls halfway across the park. Then he tries again and can't stick the landing. So he flings the board again.

It was a bad day at Edison High, Jellets says. Nothing a good day of skateboarding — or even a bad day — can't help resolve. The skateboard toss is part of it.

"This clears my frustration," Jellets says. "That is what clears it."

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POLICE
BLOTTER

Police responded to 24 burglar alarms and 12 reported motor-vehicle accidents. They made seven motor-vehicle stops and handled five school crossings. There were also seven ambulance calls on this day.

12:04 a.m.: Request for assistance from Perth Amboy police. Officers searching for a man who jumped out of a car the city officers were pursuing on Route 287. Man not found.

12:28 a.m.: Report of verbal dispute on Route 1 and Wooding Avenue.

1:07 a.m.: Report of dispute between night auditor and customer at the Red Roof Inn.

1:29 a.m.: Report from an Evergreen Road resident who came home to find lights on in her apartment and she's afraid to go inside alone.

2:01 a.m.: Report of a deer with its head stuck under a metal fence at Woodbridge Avenue and Mill Road; police and firefighters lifted the fence and freed the deer, which ran back into the woods.

2:52 a.m.: Report of a disabled vehicle at Wood Avenue and Route 27.

5:20 a.m.: Report of suspicious vehicle in Brunswick Avenue lot.

8:40 a.m.: Report of possible illegal dumping on Clover Place. Claim is unfounded.

8:52 a.m.: Report of vandalism at Old Post Park.

9:05 a.m.: Complaint about garbage from a Whitman Avenue business blowing onto a resident's yard.

9:39 a.m.: Complaint from Village Drive resident about a harassing phone call.

10:47 a.m.: Report of theft from a store in Menlo Park Mall.

11:26 a.m.: Smoke condition on second floor of Edison High School.

11:41 a.m.: Report of substance floating in the Raritan River near the Meadow Road boat ramp.

11:52 a.m.: Report of theft from a Menlo Park Mall store.

11:53 a.m.: Request from an East Brunswick resident to check the welfare of her elderly mother.

1:01 p.m.: Police impound vehicle on Penn and Ovington avenues.

1:10 p.m.: Report of suspicious vehicle on Wood Avenue.

1:18 p.m.: Hang-up 911 call; caller accidentally dialed 911.

1:22 p.m.: Owner of a Grandview Avenue business reports receiving bad checks.

1:31 p.m.: Elderly woman who heard a noise in her Mundy Avenue house requests that police walk through her home.

1:35 p.m.: Officers arrest a person on a Sayreville warrant at a Mayfield Road business.

1:56 p.m.: Report of suspicious woman at the Edison Train Station.

2:47 p.m.: Police assist motorist who locked keys in vehicle in the lot of Macaroni Grill on Route 1 and Parsonage Road.

3:35 p.m.: Report of abandoned vehicle on Ridge Road.

4:37 p.m.: 911 hang-up call.

4:38 p.m.: Report of disabled vehicle on Route 1 north near Forest Haven Boulevard.

4:49 p.m.: Report of a dispute at Park Avenue Sunoco.

5:12 p.m.: Report of 7-year-old child and infant locked in a car in the Target parking lot on Parsonage Road.

5:32 p.m.: Report of a disabled vehicle on Woodbridge Avenue and Grace Street.

5:40 p.m.: Report from parents about a man who exposed himself to two teen-agers at a bus stop earlier this morning.

5:54 p.m.: 911 hang-up; caller dialed in error.

6:41 p.m.: Complaint about tractor-trailer parked on Patch Place and Barlow Road.

7:13 p.m.: Report of vandalism to vehicle parked in deck on Thornall Street.

7:45 p.m.: Report of suspicious vehicle on McKinley Street.

8:19 p.m.: Report of a disabled vehicle on Route 1 near Route 287.

8:52 p.m.: Police impound parked vehicle with expired registration in handicapped spot at Menlo Park Mall.

9:10 p.m.: Complaint from caller who said manager at a public storage facility wouldn't allow the caller out of the gate.

9:18 p.m.: Police assist citizen who was locked out of car.

9:23 p.m.: Vandalism to vehicle at Menlo Park Mall.

9:45 p.m.: Complaint about juveniles asking customers for money in the lot of Amoco on Amboy Avenue.

11 p.m.: Detectives arrest man accused of exposing himself to the teen-agers at the bus stop.

11:08 p.m.: Report of prowler on Strawberry Court.

Firefighters: Ready, willing, able

Extinguishing emergencies, big and small

By PAUL FRANKLIN
STAFF WRITER

The alarm rings at Raritan Engine Company No. 1.

Within seconds two fire trucks pull onto Route 27. Sirens blare as traffic stops to allow the 70,000-pound vehicles to enter the highway. Capt. Ed Koehler, in the business 23 years, follows in car No. 8.

Nearly 20 minutes later, it is over. A municipal building employee, dressed in a purple outfit, smiles and says thank you as she emerges from what was a stuck elevator.

Firemen don't just fight fires. Truth be told, they'd just as soon not.

Earlier this day in the same building, Fire Chief Robert Campbell walks past several of his men in the hallway as they prepare for their 10-hour shifts.

"OK, gentlemen," he says in what sounds like a daily routine. "Have a quiet one."

This day will be quiet.

At station house No. 1, one of six in the township, the first call of the day comes over around 10:30 a.m. A fire is reported at Edison High School.

Greg Gush, 34, waits outside the school in full garb, next to Engine 4. Turns out the entire school stands on the lawn because of a smoking garbage can.

"I always wanted to be a fireman," Gush says. "It's a great job. You're always doing something, and it's not the same thing every day."

There will be no dramatic fires to fight this day.

The fire department has responded to more than 1,000 calls already this year. That ranges from opening elevators and saving cats, to taking axes to roofs, spraying water and saving lives.

More than 100 volunteers join forces with these 126 full-time firemen. In a town that balloons to 200,000 people during business hours, they are anything but over-staffed.

Campbell, chief for two years, tries to visit each house daily. A member of the force 29 years, he has faced the flames. He also has faced the loss of a good friend, the only township fireman to die in the line of duty in the past 50 years.

While a plaque in the memory of Capt. John Lindquist, who died in 1984, is on the walls at all six houses, death on the job is a topic of which few freely speak.

"People do this for several reasons," says Campbell, who fought fires 18 years before taking on administrative duties. "You want to help people, it's a pro-active environment, and there are challenges with a certain degree of excitement. As for why we run into buildings when everyone else is running out, I'm not sure any of us have that answer."

The topic at 1:45 p.m. is not about how fires rise to 1,400 degrees within two minutes, or about how many lives could have been saved with batteries.

It's lunch time. Today's meal is courtesy of veteran "Tutty" Asprocolas. Pancakes, bacon, eggs sunny side up, English muffins and lots of juice and coffee.

Meals rotate on a per-man schedule, with no money exchanged. Some guys are actual cooks, others are hot-dog kinds of guys. Two meals a day, complete with kitchen and working appliances.

There is plenty of food and conversation. With training and cleaning chores awaiting, there is also no rush to finish. Smiles come easy, and the talk turns to the job.

Several of the guys are second- and third-generation firemen. Asprocolas is not only third generation, he also has two uncles and two cousins who have fought fires.

"This is all I ever wanted to do," he says. "It's a privilege to save someone. I took a lady out of a fire once, the guys met me at the door and I went over and sat on the curb. Everyone was still working around me, water and smoke and everything. It was the best feeling. The aches and pains, you hardly feel it. You feel so good, but it's not like you accomplished anything by yourself."

"For me, let's face it — it's a thrill. But you're also giving something to your community," he adds. "And working with these guys is like working with your brothers; someone you really care about. I would let myself get hurt before the others."

Some work a couple of 24-hour shifts per week. They work in insulated boots, heavy pants, jackets, hoods, gloves and 40-pound air packs.

Relaxation comes in the form of beds in one back room for the overnight guys, and a TV lounge in another room. Otherwise, when they're not out on the trucks, they are setting up gear, working on apparatus, checking equipment, cleaning the firehouse, washing the trucks, filling air bottles and training.

And doing paperwork.

Lt. Pete Anselmo, a 23-year veteran, is filling out a report from the elevator caper. It is 3 p.m.

"Every alarm you have to file an incident report," he says. "One upstairs, one to Trenton."

For the moment, his is going nowhere. Except off the computer screen. Help will arrive, but accompanied wise cracks are almost not worth it.

Smiling, Anselmo beats his buddies to the problem.

"A bogus mouse," he says, quite pleased with himself.

It has been a good day so far. Not a creature is stirring. And that's just how they like it.



11:45 a.m.

Above, Edison High School students mill around outside as Edison firefighters investigate a heavy smoke condition inside the school.

2:15 p.m.

At left, Edison Fire Chief Jack Campbell, left, and firefighter David Edelstein conduct a confined-space rescue drill behind Raritan Engine Company No. 1.

MARK R. SULLIVAN
Staff photographer

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■ A familiar sight in Edison – the midday bustle on Route 1.

Images of EDISON



■ "Light Dispelling Darkness," the fountain/monument that sits atop a hill at Roosevelt Park, was created by artist Waylande Gregory between 1938 and 1939, in honor of Thomas Edison. The scenes depicted on the central structure represent man overcoming the forces of evil through knowledge, discovery, invention and applied science. The surrounding serpent-like figurines – representing war, pestilence, famine, greed, death, and materialism – were once partially submerged to suggest evil falling in the presence of goodness. The town is currently considering restoring the intriguing old fountain.



■ Edison Tower, a historic monument commemorating the many inventions Thomas Edison created in his Menlo Park laboratory, stands tall among the barren trees. A large replica of Edison's first commercial model of the incandescent light bulb tops the tower as a reminder to all of us of the contributions he made to the world.



■ At left, the bridge that connects Edison and New Brunswick, spanning over the Raritan River, is immense. The water drifts by quietly as the faint sound of traffic blows in the wind. Above, the sign above the upside-down car at Edison Generator asks "Does your car turn over in the morning?" It's a refreshing burst of comic relief to anyone who must navigate Route 1 south on a busy day.

Illustrations by Dawn Pendergrass

A tale of two township delis

Harold's: A New York state of mind

By ELIAS HOLTZMAN
CORRESPONDENT

Harold Jaffe is taking a rare short break, seated on a bench outside the restaurant that bears his name — Harold's New York Deli. Harold's has become somewhat of a phenomenon in the area because of the size of its deli sandwiches and other dishes. His fame has spread by word of stuffed mouth.

Harold greets a visitor as they walk in together. Harold has been at the deli since 6:30 a.m. The place opens at 7.

The deli adjoins the Ramada hotel at 3050 Woodbridge Ave., near the Raritan Center industrial complex.

Harold's wife, Kathy, is at the register. Across the way is the pickle bar, with a label reading the "largest pickle bar in

10:40 a.m. the world" and inviting diners to help themselves. Next to it is a large display case filled with

pastry cakes that could have come from H.G. Wells' "The Island of Dr. Moreau," the science-fiction story about an island where everything that grows is supersized. The chocolate cake is more than a foot high and weighs 40 pounds.

"I'm here 15 hours a day," Harold says. "The common comment I get from people is, 'Didn't you go home last night?'"

Home for Harold and Kathy is at the Harmon Cove Towers in Secaucus, where they have a great view of New York.

In 1993, when he had a deli in Secaucus, he was called upon by an official of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, who probably had been a customer at the deli, to rush sandwiches to emergency workers after the explosion at the World Trade Center.

The New York theme is an integral part of Harold's. Classic New York pictures in black and white are on the walls of the well-appointed place: The Brooklyn Bridge; construction workmen seated on girders, eating their lunch; the crowded beach at old Coney Island; Yankee infielder Phil Rizzuto making the spin and turn on a double play. The photo is signed by Rizzuto: "To Harold, whose food is as good as this play. Holy Cow!"

On the baseball theme, Harold's is like a delicatessen "Field of Dreams."

"You build a good sandwich, and the people will come," Harold says.

And they do. At 10:45 a.m. Rick Decchiario of Bedminster, a sales representative for a tile company, brings in his boss, Rick Deutsch, from Newark International Airport. Deutsch has just arrived on a flight from Chicago, and Harold's is a must-stop before they proceed to their company branch in Somerset.

"There's nothing like this in Chicago," says Deutsch.

At about the same time, Arthur Lefkowitz, "a genuine traveling salesman" who sells locks — not "lox," he emphasizes — is paying his bill and giving the place a boost.

"I know my delicatessen," he says. Asked where he's from, he points to the picture of the crowded beach at Coney Island, and says, "That's me, in there."

This draws a laugh from Harold, and the laugh is deep and rich. It's part of the ambience as Harold goes about, greeting customers.

Stacy Cirincione of South Brunswick works across the street at the Sheraton Edison Hotel Raritan Center as the catering sales manager. She's here for a sandwich. "It's wonderful," she says.

Joe MacAllister of New York's Staten Island, a pressman for the New York Times printing plant down the street on Woodbridge Avenue, is paying his bill.

He bought pastrami and brisket. "It's delicious, and you get enough," he says.

Kathy Jaffe, who is working the register in the morning hours, hears the comments and smiles. "It's a really great atmosphere. It's almost like having people to your home for dinner every day."

At 11:15 Terry Riccio of Harrison comes in to take over at the cashier's spot and Kathy takes over as hostess.

Jo-Ann and Robert Hrubic of Edison are getting their order at 11:30 a.m. They are seated in the "Midtown" section of the New York-style restaurant, which also has an uptown, a downtown and a SoHo. Jo-Ann is getting a lox-and-cream-cheese special, and Robert a Western omelet.

The orders are, well, humongous.



JOE McLAUGHLIN/Staff photographer

12:40 p.m. Harold's New York Deli owner Harold Jaffe displays a triple No. 14 sandwich, one of his many supersized sandwiches for which he is famous.

"This is like a breakfast for the Jolly Green Giant," Jo-Ann says, as she starts on her lox.

The Hrubics say they like the place because of the food, and because of Harold.

"He always takes time out to greet people, and he's very good at what he does. There are times when you feel low and he makes you feel very good."

Bob Hrubic, an environmental worker who cleans up toxic spills, is a coach for Edison Boys Baseball. He also is a diabetic.

"But you can get sugar-free cheesecake here," he says.

At 5:05 p.m., people are arriving for the evening meal. Doug and Debbie Hanson and their three children — Amanda, Nicole and Thomas — of Hillsborough are

going to the circus at the Meadowlands, and Harold's is on the way.

Steve and Evelyn Tsiados and Georgia Leontarakis, Evelyn's sister, are checking out Harold's. Steve works for Edison's recycling program and the women work for the Pines Manor operated by their father, Gus Leontarakis. Georgia is the catering director and Evelyn is the controller.

They like the place.

This is Harold's 39th store, and he thinks it will be the last one. He builds stores that aren't making it, and applies his formula — and then sells the store, name and all.

People who take over after Harold don't necessarily succeed.

For one thing, they are not Harold.

"They try to cut corners," Harold

says. "That's one thing I won't do. They cut quality. They lower the portions and raise the prices, and after a while, the customer gets tired of that."

Jaffe says that one of the secrets of his sandwiches is the bread.

"The bread has to be fresh. I don't use one-day-old bread. We get four deliveries of bread a day. The bread is always hot. The bread has no chemicals to keep it soft."

"We make our own roast beef, corned beef and pastrami."

He also bakes his own cakes and eclairs, also known for their size.

"Another thing," he says, "I don't charge for sharing."

Harold is a former Marine and served as head of the Honor Guard at the funeral of President John F. Kennedy.

He was the owner of the Claremont Diner in Verona, and still uses the recipe for the Claremont's well-known cheesecake. He also was the general manager, from 1985 to 1990, of the famed Carnegie Deli in New York.

One of the show-biz customers at the Carnegie was comedian Henry ("Take my wife") Youngman, whose picture — eyeing a large triple-decker sandwich — is on the back of his business card, as well as on the wall.

Many of Harold's customers come from Staten Island — like the two Sals, Sal Cascio and Sal Messina, retired construction workers who also are deli mavens. They know Harold from the Carnegie in Manhattan.

He was a gentleman then, and he's a gentleman now, they say.

Cooper's is keeping it in the family

By ELIAS HOLTZMAN
CORRESPONDENT

Lenore Pinoos of Edison is at Jack Cooper's Celebrity Delicatessen at Tano Mall and walks over to Jack's son, Warren, at a corner table.

"Excuse me," she says. "I have to tell you all. Warren saved my life. He put a box of food together, and I sent it to my son in Virginia."

"I've got three boys married to three Catholic girls. They live across the country. I send them all packages from Jack Cooper's. This is their heritage package."

It is a pleasant experience for Warren, one of the responses for his air-express deli that has become a big hit with customers.

10:05 a.m. "It was probably the 'Nosh from the Old Neighborhood,'" Warren says as he acknowledges the thanks. The "Nosh" is a sampling of delicatessen, meats and bread.

Jack Cooper's Celebrity Deli is run by the Cooper family, with son Warren and sister Cheryl Cooper-Schickler playing increasingly major roles, along with Jack and Dee Cooper. The deli will be marking its 25th anniversary at Tano Mall on March 25.

Jack has had prior delis in East Brunswick, West Orange and Newark.

The Celebrity has its own ambience. Even with its sit-down luncheon and dinner menu, it is a carry over for many area residents from the old-time neighborhood delis where the affable counterwomen — or counterwomen — called you "hon" and "dear" when you stood at the counter and ordered "a quarter-pound lox," and exclaimed "Slice it thin!" or "Make sure the pastrami is lean!"

Cooper's always carries chicken soup — with noodles or matzo balls. Who can tell when a person will come down with a cold? The deli also has two daily soup specials, the names of which are written on a large white sign at the counter —

soups such as split pea, mushroom barley, black bean, lentil, chicken corn chowder or clam chowder.

The cole slaw, health salads, macaroni salads and the white fish are there in the counter case to be seen, while above, there are the bagels and breads and other goodies one is tempted to buy.

At most any time Felix Fumang-ing or Debbie Treffinger or George Rossi or Richie Mielczarek are behind the counter — talking to customers as they serve, spearing a pastrami from the steam oven or preparing large catering orders.

Warren is taste-testing a group of salads brought in from New York the night before by Cheryl and the deli chef, Ariel Nunez. Ariel, a native of the Dominican Republic, started with the Coopers nine years ago as a bus-boy, not speaking a word of English.

Cheryl and Ariel had visited three upscale New York markets and delis — Balducci's, Dean & DeLuca and the Garden of Eden.

Warren looked at one of the salads disparagingly. "These are supposed to be from high-class joints," he says. "That's not a high-class olive."

The salads — selected and enhanced — will be part of a greater food selection as the store expands. The Coopers are planning to break through a wall and occupy the adjoining area previously used by a print shop.

Today, Warren and Cheryl arrived at the store before their dad. "All of us are hands-on," Warren says about their deli expertise. "We all learned from dad."

Cheryl has a master's degree in finance and marketing from George Washington University, and Warren has a doctorate in psychology from Rutgers University.

But these days Warren, a take-charge guy, is probably more of a doctor of delicatessen than of psychology. He has created a Celebrity On-Line Jewish Cookbook at www.celebritydeli.com on the Internet and also produced the new Celebrity newsletter. He is plan-



JOE McLAUGHLIN/Staff photographer

12:08 p.m. Jack Cooper, owner of Jack Cooper's Celebrity Deli, serves up a sandwich during the lunchtime rush.

ning to computerize the ordering system for waiters so that with the use of a touch pad, orders will be transmitted directly to the kitchen, reducing errors and speeding service.

At 1:30 p.m., Brendan Flynn of the Flynn & Son Funeral Home, another family business, walks in to order a turkey sandwich to go. The Flynn's and the Coopers are old friends. Brendan asks about the planned expansion and is told it will be ready about May 1.

"It's all family," says Flynn. "That's what makes this place go."

At a table near the front window, Morris and Ceil Zutz, owners of the former Morris Stores of Metuchen which closed in 1996, are seated with the two other Zutz brothers,

Bill and Irving, and Bill's wife, Ethel.

Waiting for her companion near the door was Lillian Lorber, a widow, of Redfield Village, but originally from Perth Amboy. She had just finished a light lunch.

"I've known Jack from the time he opened the store," she says. "You couldn't find anybody nicer than Jack."

"Lillian is one of our favorite people here," says hostess Ginger Stopienski of Edison. "We love her. She's wonderful."

Paying their checks are Martin Hacker, a CPA of Metuchen, and his wife, Sunni. They also are steady customers.

"This is like a borscht belt dining room," Martin says. "You always

meet people here."

Some of Cooper customers include Sen. Frank Lautenberg, former Perth Amboy Mayor and Assemblyman George Otowski, Warren Wilentz, Norman Tanzman and Edison Mayor George Spadaro.

"Our place is a 'haimishe' place," says Warren, using a Yiddish term that means homey. "It has 'tom,' " Warren adds, which means flavor.

"Food, family and friends," Warren says. "That describes us."

At 2:30 p.m. Jack and Warren are talking about how the name Celebrity came to be.

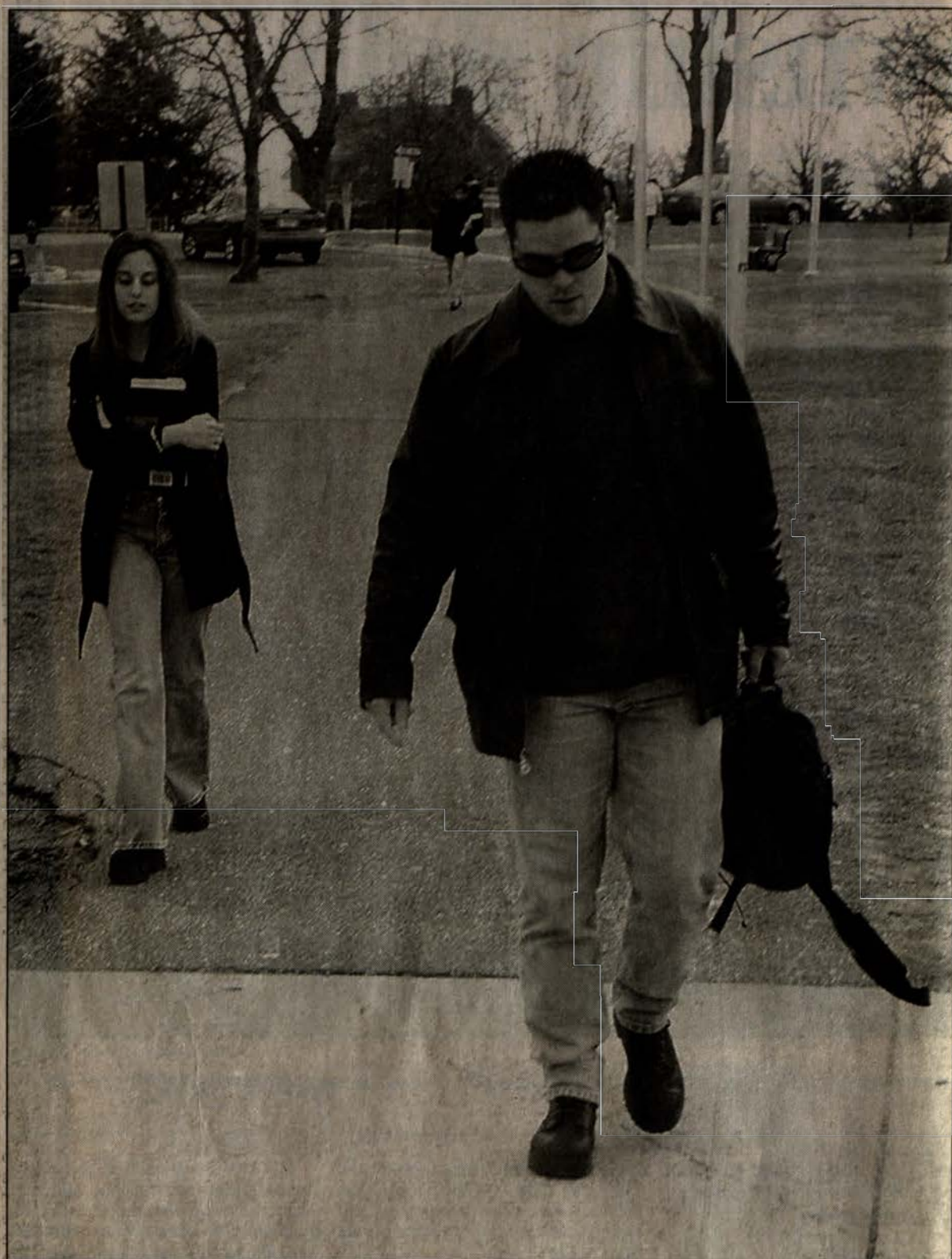
"We decided to make our customers the celebrities," says Jack, "and we started taking their pictures and posting them. The first year it cost us \$300, which was OK, but by

the fourth year, the cost had jumped up to \$6,000, so we discontinued."

"We may start it again," says Warren. In January he sponsored a "Y2K-nish" promotion, in which a customer got a free knish with each one ordered.

"Our air shipping is the fastest growing part of our business," says Warren, "even though it's just a blip in regard to our total sales. It's connected us to people all over the country and is an absolute mirror of our relations with the local folks."

"The other day I got a call from a man from Black Hills, S.D. We talked for a half hour about a recipe for whitefish salad."



9:30 a.m. Nontraditional student Danny Pizzone arrives at Edison Hall for his first of the day's three classes at Middlesex County College.

Life's experiences guide not-so-average freshman

By **MARCY I. MARSHALL**
STAFF WRITER

Danny Pizzone, decked out in a black leather jacket, jeans, dark blue sweater and wraparound shades, has a determined look on his face as he strides down the walkway with a blue canvas bag slung across his shoulder.

Pizzone has reason to look determined. He is aiming for success, and he is not afraid to work hard to attain it.

Pizzone, 24, is in the heart of his first semester at Middlesex County College. He has been here before, not as a student but as a contractor — one of many jobs he has held since dropping out of high school in 10th grade.

Pizzone worked "stupid little jobs" until he turned 18. After that he worked in construction for about three years, moving on to a two-year HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) program at Somerset County Vocational-Technical School, graduating in April. But, he did not like that trade, and he realized that he needed a new direction.

9:15 a.m. "If you are going to invest time in a job, you might as well enjoy what you do," says Pizzone, speaking from the experience of an adult.

And, returning to the classroom is Pizzone's way of attaining that goal.

His first class, Introduction to psychology 123, is in Edison Hall.

After hanging his leather coat on the back of his chair, Pizzone takes out his notebook and psychology book. One by one his fellow students, who appear fresh out of high school, enter the room.

In walks professor William R. Kuhl. Pizzone, situated five rows back, leans his head in his hand as he nestles into the lesson on classical learning theory. Kuhl launches into his lecture, periodically asking the class, "Are you with me?" Pizzone and his classmates acknowledge him with nods.

After the lecture, Pizzone collects his belongings and heads into the refreshingly springlike outdoors and makes a point of slowing his stride to enjoy the break in the winter weather.

On his way to his favorite class, English composition 121, he searches for his younger brother, whom he usually meets on Wednesdays between classes. No luck today.

Realizing he's early, Pizzone sits

down outside the IRC building to soak up the beautiful day and catch a quick smoke.

A man recognizes Pizzone and greets him warmly. Jerry Olson, Pizzone's English professor, is an energetic man who obviously loves what he does and loves where he works. Olson eagerly points out the rich history of the campus, which was constructed on the grounds of the former Raritan Arsenal.

They chat while walking to the classroom, which is equipped with enough computers for each student. This is the new wave of teaching English: cross-curricular education utilizing the amazing technology that is now available.

Pizzone settles into his station. Olson projects the image on his computer screen to demonstrate the use of search engines as a means of research. Students follow along at their terminals. For the semester, the students will refine their writing skills by exploring psychological essays on free thought and obedience to authority.

"Jerry Olson is colorful. He entertains and teaches (in such a way) to keep us focused," Pizzone explains. "He keeps you on your toes."

"Jerry provides all you need to learn and do well. He has so many resources."

Next stop, Main Hall for math 010, a noncredit remedial course for those who did not score well on entrance exams.

"English and history are my best subjects," says Pizzone, who is considering a career as a high school English or history teacher and an air-conditioning business during the summer months. Pizzone emphasizes that he wants to own the business, already well aware that the actual labor is not his gig.

Before finding his class he goes directly to the vending machines.

"I need to bring up my blood sugar to keep from getting the shakes," Pizzone says as he selects a NutRageous candy bar and a Pepsi. Usually he has a big breakfast to get through the day of three one-hour-and-20-minute classes. Today he's on empty.

Pizzone gets to class promptly, pulls out a sharpened pencil, prepared for the first math exam of the semester.

Professor Selina Thompson enters and first reviews some math problems before distributing the 25-question exam and scratch sheets.

It is during this class that the differences between Pizzone and his fellow students are most evident.

"It's like I'm back in high school," says Pizzone, who lives with his girlfriend in Manville and is far removed from the high school scene.

Students lumber in late, many with a who-cares attitude. But Pizzone is unfazed by the disruptions. He keeps his focus on the exam, periodically taking sips from his can of Pepsi.

"Kids are so different now out of high school," Pizzone says. "And, I'm not even that old."

Pizzone realizes how important it is to have an education, but in high school things were different for him.

"I wasn't doing anything. I was smoking cigarettes in the bathroom and was always late for class," he says. "Because of my tardiness, I would have detention every day. And, when I did not go to detention, they would suspend me."

"I was bored. I didn't like the whole dynamic (of high school). It was just very rigid. When they would bear down on me with rules, (I decided) that I'm not bothering anymore. The last year (I was there) I did not even know where my locker was."

There even were discrepancies in Pizzone's grade level; the principal had him listed as a junior and the guidance office listed him as a sophomore.

Pizzone told his mom that he wanted to leave, and his mom realized it was the best thing for him.

"My mom told me to get out and grow up a little bit," Pizzone says.

And grow up he did. Now, Pizzone has the wisdom of experience, discipline and a good work ethic.

"I look at coming here like a job, which is learning. But, my first priority is paying the bills and then it's school. You have to stay alive first."

After math, Pizzone grabs a couple of slices of pizza in the College Center cafeteria before heading home, where he will spend several hours on course work. His books will be closed by 6 p.m. or 7 p.m., then it's dinner with his girlfriend and later meeting a group of friends.

Tomorrow, Pizzone's job title switches from student to restaurant worker because he's got to pay those bills.

Plant driven to provide ideal working environment



JOE McLAUGHLIN/Staff photographer

9:40 a.m. Above, Tom McKenna, an assembly-line worker at the Ford Motor Company's Edison Assembly Plant, checks a brake pedal in Ford Rangers moving down the line. Top, McKenna displays the bolts he uses to secure the truck bed to the frame on Rangers.

Getting to the nuts and bolts of the Ford operation

By **RICK MALWITZ**
STAFF WRITER

Tom McKenna grabs a 10B21 bolt, manufactured by the Alpha Bolt Co. of Madison Heights, Mich. The bolt is one of 2,700 parts that goes into making a red Ford Ranger compact pickup truck.

Steel for the bolt came from Charter Steel Rolling in Wisconsin. Once formed by Alpha Bolt Co., using a press made in Belgium, the bolt was taken to the Alpha Steel Co. in Livonia, Mich. There it was hardened. It was joined by a washer, made by the Alpha Stamping Co., also in Livonia, and from there bolt and washer were sent to Troy, Mich., where ND Industries added an adhesive patch.

Finally, the bolt was shipped to Ford and made its way into McKenna's right hand. The assembly line moves at a rate that sees 43 vehicles pass one point every hour, giving McKenna slightly more than a minute to secure the bed of the truck with four bolts.

9:24 a.m. Around him co-workers work at the same measured rate. To a visitor it appears as though they put as much thought as one would put into typing or riding a bike or shifting gears on a five-speed transmission.

"You learn the pace, you know the job, and you do it," McKenna explains.

The 33-year-old McKenna of New Egypt was out of bed at 4:30 a.m. and was on the road 20 minutes later with his brother-in-law Jeff High, heading for Ford Motor Company's Edison Assembly Plant. His shift begins at 6 a.m. and concludes at 4:30 p.m. Ten hours a day, five days a week, McKenna works for the industrial giant, erected in Edison in 1948 to help assemble Lincolns and Mercurys during the post-war boom.

Today, McKenna will be a jack of seven trades. The plant used to shut down three times for 30 minutes during his shift. Now, it shuts once, at lunch time. To allow others to rest, McKenna provides relief at one of seven stops. Putting bolts on the truck's bed — called "the box" in the plant — is one of his seven jobs today.

"I like the variety," he says.

The bolt has to be tightened just right by a pneumatic drill with precision torque.

"Too much tension would stretch and break the threads," explains Scott Jordan, the general manager of Alpha Bolt Co. in Michigan.

Too little tension would cause the bolt to rattle, likely prompting the buyer to curse Ford and the worker who did not do the job right.

"We make a good product," says McKenna, who purchased a Ranger himself. He did not follow one truck from beginning to end during the four hours it takes to assemble to make sure his baby was built with tender loving care. "I bought one from a dealer, just like you would."

The red Ranger is one of 170,000 Ford and Mazda trucks that will be assembled here this year. It may go to one of 50 states or one of several foreign countries where Ford pickups are coveted, including Argentina, Chile and Israel.

The Ford plant occupies a 101.7-acre site, paying the township

\$1.6 million in property taxes. The plant itself covers 1,456,164 square feet. A visitor is surprised by what the plant is not — it is not dirty, not noisy, not too hot, not too cold.

"People feel better when they work in this kind of environment," explains Kathleen Hamilton, a member of Ford's public relations staff.

"They pay attention to ergonomics," says McKenna, referring to a word that does not even appear in the 1967 edition of Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. This relatively new science seeks to adapt working conditions to the human body.

"They want us to use as little energy as possible," McKenna explains.

Some jobs require workers to walk on a vehicle moving slowly down the line. Others put the worker on a moving walkway, to keep pace. Others put the worker below the vehicle. Others allow him to work on an angle. Robots do the heavy lifting.

"At the end of the day I might be tired, but I'm not sore," says McKenna, who joined Ford in 1992 when High told him the plant was hiring. He and High take turns driving to and from their homes in the Jackson area. "When he drives, I take a nap on the way home," says McKenna.

It remains one of the most coveted jobs in what is left of the American manufacturing sector: auto worker.

Technically, however, Fords and Mazda pickups are not manufactured here. They are assembled, from about 2,700 parts, including those 10B21 bolts.

McKenna, who grew up in Edison and Spotswood, graduated from the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High School in East Brunswick, where he learned the cooking trade. After working in the kitchen at the Forsgate Country Club in Monroe, he got a job with a contractor. He went into business for himself, before learning about the opening at Ford. "They have benefits, and it's a great place to work," he says.

The pay rate for hourly production workers, negotiated by the United Auto Workers, averages around \$22 per hour, according to Alan Evans, the Human Resources Manager for Vehicle Operations.

McKenna works 10 hours a day — including two hours overtime — five days a week. The second shift, from which he graduated several years ago, begins at 5 p.m. and gets out at 3:30 a.m.

How many vehicles Ford will assemble this day is Ford's little secret. In the competitive auto market companies do not like to spill any beans.

Do the math: If 170,000 vehicles are assembled here every year, and the plant is working 20 hours a day, 250 days a year, how many vehicles does it birth during an average working hour?

(Answer: Thirty-four.)



JOE McLAUGHLIN/Staff photographer

9:30 a.m. Tom McKenna, who has worked at the Ford plant since 1992, puts in 10-hour days, five days a week.

A melting pot of Asian cultures

By ROSA CIRIANNI
STAFF WRITER

The Asian Food Center Inc. is bustling with shoppers, mostly regulars, looking to buy the freshest meats, rare produce or the best catch of the day.

The aisles are marked with red overhead signs. There is one just for tea, and others for Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian, Philippine and Vietnamese nonperishable food items, similar to the "no frills" and soup aisles in American supermarkets.

Pears imported from Korea can be found in the produce section; blue fish and salmon are killed and filleted before a customer's eyes; whole roasted pork and pigs' feet are displayed from the butcher station; tofu treats are offered at the bakery and a hot-food station provides Asian food specialties like deep-fried smelts and spiced cuttlefish.

This Route 27 store is the corporation's largest. There are two others in Middletown and North Plainfield, says Tracey Chan, store manager.

A sweet smell and the aroma of Chinese food drift from one section of the 25,000-square-foot store where the bakery and hot-food station are located.

Bakery worker Chun Yuen is re-

moving piping hot milk-cream buns, which look like rolls laced with icing, from a tall oven. She places them on a long tray and into a glass case where they are marked for 60 cents each.

The hot-food section has a variety of dishes to be served for the lunch crowd in addition to whole roasted chickens, ducks and an entire pig, all hanging in a separate case.

The market sells about two pigs daily and about seven each day on the weekends for parties, according to Chan's father, who is called Mr. Chan and is also a manager at the store, overseeing his daughter.

In the farm section there is a wide array of fresh vegetables and fruits — 12 kinds of apples, for example — and the Chinese foogua plant that symbolizes good fortune for the Chinese New Year, which was observed last month.

Intricately designed ceramics and tea sets from China, Japan, Thailand and Vietnam also are on sale.

"We really attract non-Asians" as well as Asians from the tri-state area, Tracey Chan says.

Since the majority of the store's approximately 50 workers speak little or no English, Chan — who is Chinese — has a teacher come to the store two days a week to teach English so workers can communicate better with customers.

Perhaps the biggest lure at this

market is the seafood section, where most of the customers are in line this morning.

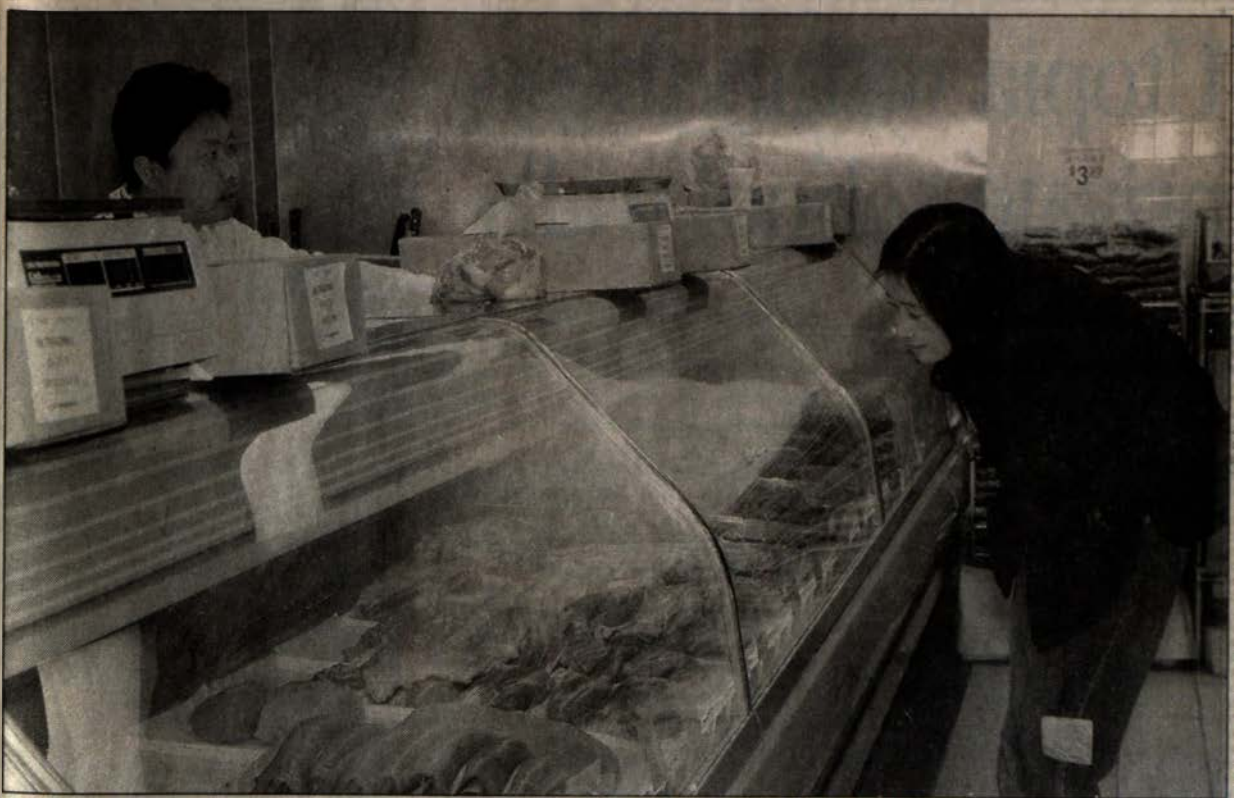
Iselin resident Henry Wang is buying an Asian newspaper, tempura — a fried fish product — and seaweed. He said although he does not like to travel to Edison to shop, he comes here because he can't find the variety elsewhere.

Large fish tanks with live oversized crabs for \$7.99 per pound, king lobsters for \$10 per pound and striped bass for \$6.99 per pound line one large wall to the ceiling and are an attraction for those waiting to give their orders to employee Robert Donato, a native of the Philippines. He is wearing a white coat, rubber gloves and hat as he stands on top of a crate peering over the mounds of cubed ice, which is red from the blood of the newly killed fish on display. Buckets of snails, clams, scallops, squid, cod and shelled shrimp are also on ice.

Mr. Chan says it is a tradition in China to kill the fish in front of customers to show them that what they are getting is fresh. At 3 a.m. store workers travel to New York City's Fulton Fish Market to purchase seafood for the store.

"We cannot find this where we live, and it's a lot cheaper here," says Esha Sujun of Yardley, Pa., who took the day off from work to make the trip his wife, Ghosh.

Another patron, Esha Sujun, is from India, and his wife is from Taiwan.



11:15 a.m. Christine Huang, right, of Princeton gets some assistance from employee Aiu Xiao as she shops at the Asian Food Center Inc.

"We come here when she gets homesick. We cannot find this in a regular supermarket," he says. The couple have filled their shopping cart with Korean-style vegetables, rice, bamboo leaves for wrapping meats, a can of coconut cream and tofu.

Behind the scenes there are a few kitchens at work and a loading

dock constantly receiving shipments from the center's warehouse in Piscataway. Employee Cheung Pang is placing an array of fruit — such as melon balls, maraschino cherries, kiwi and strawberries — on top of a white frosted birthday cake. There are large rectangular sheets of cooked eggs, hot fudge on a warmer, mixers, large ovens and a loud fan in the background. In the

next room a few men are boiling cow stomachs in what looks like a giant wok. Mr. Chan says the stomachs are a delicacy.

"The seafood and dairy are cheaper and fresher here," says Marie Chen of Plainsboro, back out in the store. "I love to come here. Edison is changing a lot. It's a multicultural area. It's not Chinatown, but it's getting there."

New leader takes the helm at park-based camp

Virginian gets acquainted with new post, new life

By CINDA BECKER
STAFF WRITER

Kevin Cullum wakes from his third night at what is arguably Edison's best address.

Daylight pours in from a generous-sized window pointing east with a view of a tennis court in the center of a forest. A cathedral window pointing south offers an uninterrupted view of the tops of tall sturdy oak trees against a gray sky.

It's an illusion of sorts. Cullum's new home lies on the edge of a 13-acre forest, which lies within Roosevelt Park, which lies within spitting distance of an interchange of four major, perpetually congested highways.

7 a.m. a car-assembly plant, and an in-

terminable string of high-tension wires that help keep the eastern seaboard humming.

Not to mention Menlo Park Mall.

But Cullum, newly arrived from Falls Church, Va., is blissfully oblivious to the strangeness of his new surroundings. Later today, when asked about his first impression of his new home, the exceedingly polite young man with the trim brown beard has to think long and hard.

"It looked like an organized and traditional camp," Cullum says. "We just have to be creative with the programming."

The new executive director of Kiddie Keep Well Camp, Cullum, 29, arrived Sunday evening in his blue Integra, packing a sleeping bag, clothing, computer, and a few pots and pans. The majority of his worldly goods and his wife, Shelly, a social worker, will join him at the end of the month. To tide him over until then, the camp has furnished the spacious two-bedroom apart-



10 a.m. Kevin Cullum tours Kiddie Keep Well Camp, of which he just became executive director.

ment that comes with the job with a bunk bed, dining room table, and wood-trimmed sofa and chair.

Cullum, who most recently worked for a property management company, says that his wife has an artistic bent. She will likely want to change the mustard-yellow paint on the walls, he sheepishly admits.

To date, Cullum says, he has ventured off the campgrounds only for groceries at the A&P and for some coaxial cable at the mall, his closest neighbor.

After awakening this morning, Cullum reports, he had a breakfast of cereal and a banana, and jumped on the Internet while the only phone line into the camp was free. He searched college Web sites in preparation for some on-campus recruitment of camp counselors, who are paid about \$1,200 for the summer.

Before the start of summer, Cullum will need to hire 40 counselors.

He says he has about 15 applications from former staff wishing to return and perhaps another 10 inquiries, but ultimately he would like to select the 40 best from a pool of 100.

By 10 a.m., Cullum is ensconced in the west wing of the camp office, weeding through the papers that have accumulated since the last executive director left on Labor Day. Ernie Oros, the camp's board president, is sitting at his desk in the paneled back room. Oros is listening to the strains of the Glenn Miller Orchestra emanating from a boom box on a side table: "I've Got a Gal From Kalamazoo."

Oros, 76, is dressed the way you

would expect a grown-up camper to dress three weeks out of spring: casual walking shoes, khaki pants, and a deep green velour shirt reminiscent of the color the leaves will be when summer arrives and the oak trees are in full bloom. Out of Cullum's earshot, Oros explains he is letting his new director slowly get his feet wet, allowing him time and space to familiarize himself with the strange surroundings.

"Every day we take a walk," Oros says. "Yesterday it was the grounds. Today it's the kitchen."

Kiddie Keep Well is a relic of the days when people still believed the problems of the poor could be solved with fresh air, exercise,

three square meals and a bottomless glass of milk. Success in those early years was measured by the weight gained by each child during an encampment. Oros chuckles, thinking of how simple it once was.

Now that the camp is in its 76th year, the mission hasn't changed much though the means has, Oros says. The camp serves a total of 600 underprivileged boys and girls each summer during four two-week encampments; most of the children are referred by their school nurses.

During the rest of the year there are 10 weekend encampments with slots for approximately 150 children and 100 seniors. Since the board has made up its mind to run the facilities year-round, Oros says the camp always is experimenting with new ventures such as a weekend for foster children and a camp day for diabetics.

The 13 acres of county-owned land, which predates Roosevelt Park, is leased to the camp for \$1 a year though no one is quite sure if and when anyone has ever actually paid the rent. The camp itself owns the two dozen or so buildings, which includes a dining hall capable of producing 800 meals daily; two swimming pools; a row of yellow bunkhouses inherited from Fort Monmouth and adapted by the Telephone Pioneers of America; dozens of birdhouses donated by an earnest volunteer; and a new pine log cabin, built with a \$100,000 state

appropriation and the sweat equity of volunteers.

Oros, a lifelong volunteer who unofficially serves as the camp's chief fund-raiser, has arranged for a woman named Katarina to come in today and begin scrubbing the camp kitchen. She will work two days a week for the next month, he says. Oros guesses this rare convergence of pre-spring cleaning and new executive director will be a good opportunity to acquaint Cullum even more with the camp.

But as Oros and Cullum leave to embark on their third mini-tour of the week, Oros learns that Katarina is not coming in today, but next week. Clearly disappointed, Oros forges ahead with the tour anyway. It is an unseasonably warm but gray day with the sun struggling to break through a thick blanket of clouds.

Walking toward the dining hall, everyone stops to admire the view. To the right, beyond the naked trees of the camp, a chain-link fence, and section 28 of the mall parking lot is the modern gray facade of Nordstrom's. Lying to the left, through the trees, is the stately red brick building that houses the county-owned nursing home, Roosevelt Care Center — another relic of public works gone by.

"You can't beat Jeffersonian architecture," Oros says, shaking his head at the sight. "It never goes out of style."

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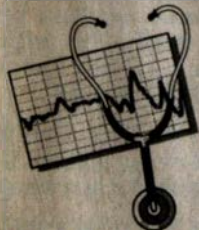
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Utopia within these private-school walls

By JOSEPH PICARD
STAFF WRITER

Jean Gisriel, head of the Lower School, takes her customary position outside the entrance to that section of Wardlaw-Hartridge School. The private academy's wide, green lawn spreads to her right and the cars arriving along the tree-shaded lane pass before her. A smile spreads across her face and her arm extends, as she begins to greet the prekindergarten through fifth grade pupils and the parents who have escorted them.

"I enjoy my job, and this is one of the most enjoyable parts of it," she says.

Meanwhile, across the courtyard, in the Upper School wing, the 7:55 a.m. 165 ninth- to 12th-grade students gather in the auditorium for the traditional morning meeting. The numerous national flags hanging from the high rafters complement the students' diverse ethnicities.

"The diversity of our student body is one of the things that makes Wardlaw-Hartridge an exciting community," says Head of School Christopher Williamson. "There are wonderful opportunities here for students to value one another for their personal strengths."

About 40 art students are taking advantage of one of those opportunities, gathering for their day trip to the Cloisters — the medieval art branch of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art — in upper Manhattan.

"Students are encouraged to participate in their fields of interest," says Shannon Crudup, a sophomore from Rahway. "You can join a club, even start your own club."

"There is no racial tension here," says Savan Patel, a 10th grader from Edison. "There are so many nationalities and religions and cultures represented that everybody gets to meet and work with people from different backgrounds."

Wardlaw-Hartridge School is located on a 32-acre campus off Inman Avenue near the Plainfield line. It has a modern library, art studios, computer labs, two gymnasiums and an indoor swimming pool. The Lower School has 200 pupils. The Middle School, grades six through eight, has 120. That's 485 students in all. They come from about 40 communities, most of them from Central New Jersey.

The school's motto is *Cognoscere et Conficere* — To Learn and to Achieve — and they mean it. Year after year, the school places 100

percent of its graduates in colleges and universities, many among the most highly regarded in the nation, including Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Princeton, Vassar and Brown.

"I can remember one or two students who attended a community college," Williamson says. "But that was their choice. They could have gone to universities."

The school began as two schools in Plainfield over 100 years ago — the Leal School for Boys in 1882 and the Misses Scribner and Newton's School for Girls in 1884. The Leal School became the Wardlaw School in 1916, when Headmaster Charles Digby "Pop" Wardlaw purchased it. Emelyn Hartridge bought the other school in 1903, becoming head mistress and changing the school's name.

Well-known from the start for their college-preparatory successes, the two schools always had a close relationship. They merged in 1976 and functioned as a two-campus institution, with the higher grades at the new site in Edison. In 1995, the whole school was established at the current location.

Student art abounds on the walls in all three sections, from snow scenes made from paper and photographs in the Lower School corridors to the impressionistic renderings of juniors and seniors in the vicinity of the headmaster's office. On the walls of the Middle School are drawings accompanied by poems.

In one fifth-grade classroom, the students have constructed large-scale insects for a science project. Amanda Loder of Watchung puts a cloth tapeworm in a cardboard pig's belly and can tell you what it is doing there. In another classroom, also fifth grade, Peter Baio of Colonia is learning about Leonardo Da Vinci, not only by reading about him but also by building a bust of the renowned Renaissance man with scrap fabrics and a plastic bottle.

"We have high standards here, and the students know it," Gisriel says.

For instance, there are computer labs for all students, and computer literacy is a requirement. Every student must know how to use a word processor, a spread sheet and the Internet before receiving a diploma.

The Lower School students wear uniforms. The Middle and Upper schools have a dress code.

"The teachers here are approachable," says Lauren Bowers, a senior from Metuchen. "It's a personalized



9:15 a.m. Chris Patras, left, and Carla Banks, fifth graders at Wardlaw-Hartridge School, create 'Crocodiles in the Nile' for class.

relationship. They encourage you to participate. They don't want to leave anyone behind."

"Classroom size is the biggest difference," says James Kim, a junior from Piscataway. "When in South Korea, there were 60 kids in my classes. Here, there are about 15. Teachers here are able to pay more attention to you."

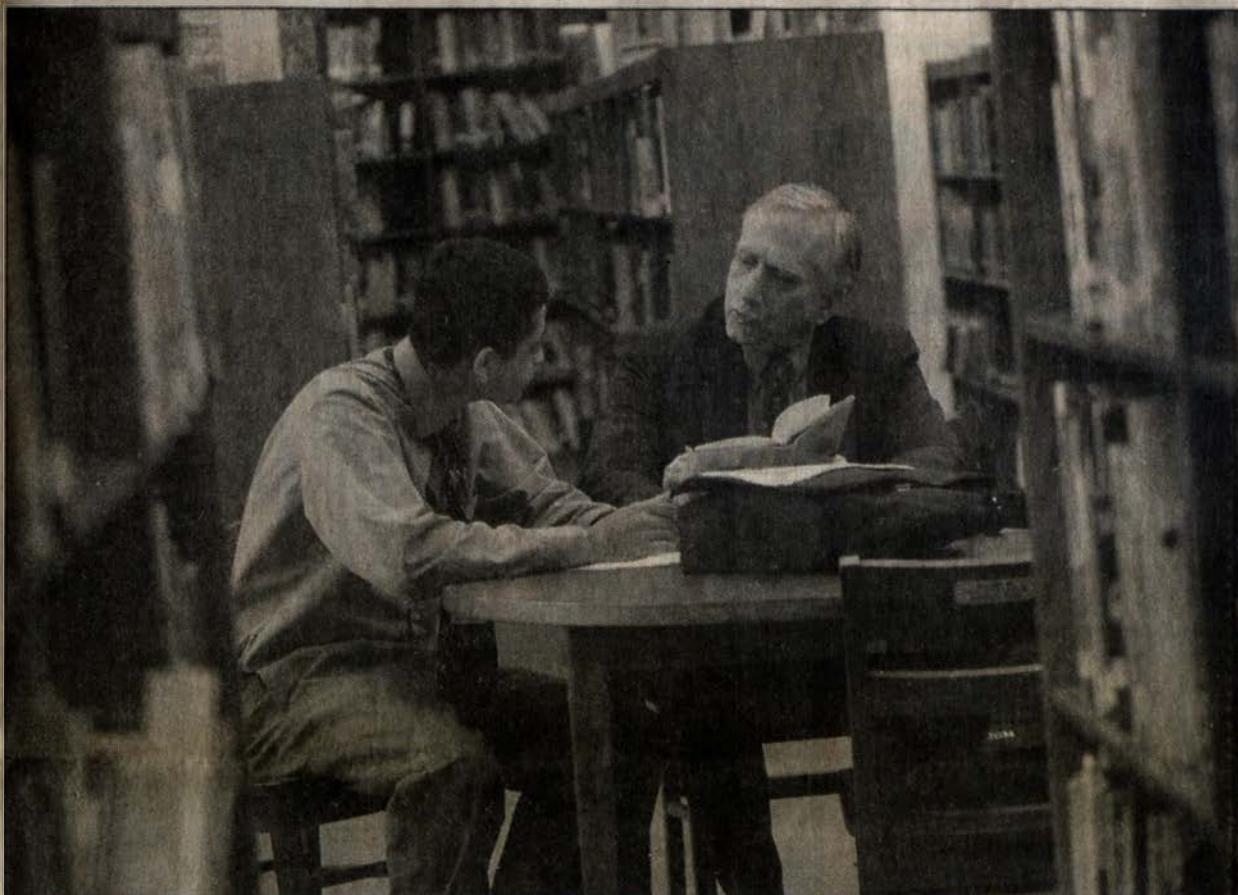
Smaller size is important, from the classroom to the office, Williamson says.

"The school can stay focused on its mission," he says. "The administration can make quick decisions when necessary without getting bogged down in bureaucracy."

But a private education, the headmaster notes, is not cheap. Yearly tuition for pre-K is \$10,500; for K-1, \$12,000; grades 2-4, \$13,300; grades 5-6, \$14,700; and grades 7-12, \$16,150.

The school has various scholarship and loan programs and will work with families to make education available to gifted children regardless of their circumstances. The school is almost totally supported through tuition and alumni contributions.

"We offer outstanding preparation for success in college and leadership in life," Williamson says. "This is an environment where the students are affirmed for their strengths and encouraged to discover their potential."



9 a.m. Robert Paoli, head of the English department, offers some advice to a 12th grader at Wardlaw-Hartridge School.

Williamson is in his office at midday, about to meet with a man considering a teaching post at the school.

"Talking about education with someone who wants to practice the noble profession of teaching — that'll be the most fun I have today," the headmaster says.

It's all for making a difference in patients' lives

By RON GEORGE
STAFF WRITER

It all starts by gauging the patient's mood and then making a few assumptions based on experience.

"With guys, you can usually talk about sports," Frank Strauss says with a smile. "I also learned that if there is a picture on the table or flowers in the room, you can ask if the picture is of family or who sent the flowers. That usually gets people talking."

With that in mind, the Edison resident sets out from JFK Medical Center's Volunteer Services office. A short walk to the elevator and he heads up to the third-floor orthopedic rehabilitation unit.

After an exchange of pleasantries with hospital staff, Strauss makes his first patient visit, applying the tools of his trade.

"How are you doing today?" asks Strauss, as he gently shakes the male patient's hand.

After determining that the patient is comfortable, Strauss lets the man know he'll be back later that morning.

Occasionally, Strauss, 75, will scribble reminders to himself on a small note pad that he keeps in his shirt pocket.

"I didn't want to stay too long," he says on his way to another room. "I could tell that he (the patient) was very tired."

It's a scene played out over and over during the course of the morning — Strauss never growing tired of visiting, and patients never turning him away.

"As a friendly visitor I primarily listen and talk to patients who have either had surgery or are about to have an operation," says Strauss, just two days after celebrating his 16th anniversary as a volunteer at the medical center. "We talk about whatever the patient wants to talk about."



10:07 a.m. The exterior of JFK Medical Center, where the efforts of volunteers can make a difference in the lives of patients.

Strauss's first four years of volunteering were spent as a patient representative, a position that serves as a link between the medical center and the patient in matters concerning care and services, advising patients on their rights and responsibilities, and assisting in resolving problems.

The last 12 years he has been a "friendly visitor," attending to patients' personal needs in hopes of making the hospital stay less traumatic.

Introducing himself as a friendly visitor, Strauss enters the room of a female patient and shakes her hand. She seems somewhat surprised that the hospital has a male serving as a friendly visitor.

"Yes, we do have male volunteers but none as handsome as I am," explains Strauss, who displays his trademark sense of humor, which he uses to his advantage.

His skill at putting people at ease



10:22 a.m. Frank Strauss of Edison serves juice to patient Connie Mesterhazy of Port Reading during his rounds as a 'friendly visitor' at JFK Medical Center.

comes less from books and training, and more from practical experience and a sincere desire to make someone's day a little better, if only for a few minutes.

The third-floor orthopedic rehabilitation unit where Strauss spends his two days each week is a drastic change from New York's Financial District where he made his livelihood as a bond underwriter. He retired in 1984, the same year he began as a volunteer.

Peering into each room, careful not to disturb those who are sleeping, Strauss continues his rounds.

"My greatest visit happened when I first started," recalls Strauss. "There was a patient who was bored and looking for someone to talk to. I was happy I was there for her. Just knowing someone was here for her to talk to made a difference."

"That's my reward," said

Strauss, who was first influenced to volunteer by his late wife, Thelma, also a JFK volunteer, "the satisfaction that you have done something that day."

The reward of helping also is what has driven JFK volunteer Doris Singer of Avenel for the past 10 years.

"I wanted to do something with my time that was worthwhile," says Singer, who spends one day a week at the hospital as a nursing unit volunteer.

Singer does whatever she can to help both the patient and nursing staff.

Her day consists of making beds, emptying linen baskets or even washing a patient's back.

At the moment her attention is on the linen baskets.

"I just don't like to see them filled. I like to put an empty bag in them so the nurses don't have to bother with it later on," she says.

And like Strauss, Singer also is there to listen.

"If it makes them more comfortable, I'll wash their back if they can't reach," says 71-year-old Singer as she empties a linen basket. "It's a good feeling knowing you've helped someone. Some people don't have family. I'm getting up there in years. I'd like to have someone around to help me."

Singer always has felt a calling for nursing, and at one point in her life, she contemplated it as a career.

"I guess I'm a frustrated want-to-be nurse," laughs Singer. "Instead I had six children."

She also has 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

"I have to say I'm very blessed," says Singer. "I had no idea what to expect when I began as a volunteer. I really didn't think it would be so uplifting."

Creating a special work place for special people

Nonprofit on-the-job training

By CHANDRA M. HAYSLETT
STAFF WRITER

Diane Gentzler's slender fingers quickly pick up a flyer from each of the nine stacks that lay before her on the wooden table.

She claps the papers against the table to straighten them before shoving them into a folder, which she then stuffs into a large white envelope. She neatly places the envelope in a box under the table; the contents of the box will be sent to Standard Forms in South River.

"I love working here. This job has two parts. There is paper already on the left side of the folder. I pick up a piece from each pile, get it all together and close it," Diane says. "It goes into the envelope and goes into the box."

This is Diane's job. She earns 25 cents for every folder she stuffs.

11 a.m.

Diane, 30, of South Amboy works eight hours a day, Monday through Friday, at the Edison Sheltered Workshop, where supervisors teach developmentally disabled clients skills in hopes of placing them in jobs outside the workshop.

Diane isn't shy and doesn't hesitate to tell visitors that she is the fastest worker at the workshop.

"I'm one of the best workers in this place. When they need a job done, they call me because I go quick without messing up," she boasts, speeding up her pace to show how fast she can work.

The workshop at 328 Plainfield Ave. serves about 55 clients. All but six who are janitors for businesses throughout Central New Jersey work at the center, says Ann Marie Stone, the workshop's vocation-rehabilitation counselor.

The nonprofit program has an annual budget of almost \$600,000 provided from state, local and private sources.

A majority of clients, who are required to be at least 16 years old, are referred to the workshop right after high school; but some, like Diane, are transferred from other programs. Before arriving at the Edison Sheltered Workshop, Diane worked at Raritan Valley, which is an Easter Seals program.

Clients are evaluated every six months to determine what areas need improvement.

"We look at their work and work behavior to determine if they are behaving properly — if they are coming in with clean hair, maintaining good relationships with co-workers and if they work at a steady pace," Stone says. "Their job is the goal. The vocational skills



JOE McLAUGHLIN/Staff photographer

10:45 a.m. Diane Gentzler collates printed materials and slides them in folders as part of her job at the Edison Sheltered Workshop.

are there but not all the behavioral skills.

"We have one or two clients who have been here since this place has opened, and many of our clients will be here for a long, long time, unfortunately."

Stone says finding reliable, safe transportation is another problem facing clients who want to work outside the program, calling public transportation "skeletal and the major battle."

She adds that some parents don't want their children "competitively placed" at an outside business because they view the workshop as a safe environment.

Diane has worked outside the

workshop before at Bally Total Fitness in East Brunswick but returned to the program because she felt like she was doing the work of two people.

At the workshop it's obvious she has no problem handling her work load.

Moving from one end of the table to the other, she continues to stack the flyers in order, placing them in the envelope and putting the envelope in the cardboard box under the table.

Occasionally, a supervisor walks into the room to check on the workers, but there is no need. The five clients in the production room — one of three in the building — doing the same job as Diane, re-

main on task, working at their own pace.

There is little movement in the room aside from the workers, except when the breeze from the open window blows a flyer from the table onto the floor.

Diane boasts about her job and bosses. Her fellow workers seem to be listening to Diane talk, because every now and then a co-worker cracks a smile when she says something funny.

"I have nice bosses here. I've been working here three years," Diane says without interrupting her pace. "This gets me out of the house during the week, and on the weekends I hang out with my mom."



"I love working here. This job has two parts. There is paper already on the left side of the folder. I pick up a piece from each pile, get it all together and close it. It goes into the envelope and goes into the box."

DIANE GENTZLER

EDISON SHELTERED WORKSHOP CLIENT

'Purr-fect' pool of sunlight

11 a.m.

Zeus, a Siamese cat owned by astrologer Judith Auora Ryan, basks in the heat of the rays that pour in from the late-morning sun.

MARK R. SULLIVAN
Staff photographer



All are welcome to visit on Wednesday evenings

By MARCY BEHRMANN
STAFF WRITER

The anteroom is nearly full. A police officer sits at the desk where a secretary usually sits. His presence is ominous. So are the iron gates blocking access to all municipal offices but one.

Approximately 12 people await their turn to address Mayor George Spadaro, who has been serving as Edison's chief executive since 1994.

5:45 p.m.

Today, most of those waiting in the room adjacent to the administration's offices aren't talking. One family of six sits quietly. A visitor asks them why they are sitting in Town Hall after the business day has ended.

"We have nothing to say," the oldest member of the family says. "This is strictly for the mayor's ears."

That is what Wednesday evenings with the mayor are all about. Introduced by Spadaro in his first term, the almost weekly sessions are a time when residents can have the mayor's ear without interruption and without an appointment. Everyone is welcome, Spadaro stresses.

"There needs to be an outlet for citizens who still need to see me personally," says the mayor. "If something's not right I know about it firsthand."

One North Edison resident in the waiting room is a regular at the mayor's office hours. He is follow-

Today, approximately 12 people await their turn to address Mayor George Spadaro, who has been serving as Edison's chief executive since 1994.

The man, who declines to give his name, doesn't have an unusual problem. Most involve traffic concerns, employment, neighborhood problems and evictions.

"Some are very specific and personal, and others are more general," Spadaro says.

One former township employee is waiting to talk to Spadaro about benefits.

"I just want him to move things along is all," says the resident, who also declines to give his name.

Catherine Suchodolski, the mayor's secretary, sits in on all of the conversations between the mayor and his constituents. But no one else is allowed to hear the discussion.

ing up on a survey conducted by the township in May about garbage pickup. He thinks the North Edison residents who don't have municipal trash service would like it, so he is waiting around to press the mayor on the issue.

"If the people want it we should have had it already," says the man, who has lived in Edison for more than 50 years.

"People can come in here without an appointment, for no reason, and they might not get what they want out of him, but they certainly have the opportunity to speak with him," says a man waiting for his turn. "I think they really like him for that."

John McGowan doesn't care who hears about his complaint. McGowan wants to know why the Veterans Administration hospitals couldn't tube-feed a patient who McGowan knew. That man had to go to JFK Medical Center for treatment.

"This is costing us a fortune," McGowan remarks as he waits for his turn.

McGowan isn't a first-timer either. He supports a traffic light at Inman Avenue and Featherbed Lane in North Edison. The township's reticence about installing the light has brought McGowan to Town Hall several times.

Spadaro estimates that he sees approximately 600 people a year, and so far none of them have had to be reprimanded by the police officers who stand guard in the area.

"There was one time we had to keep an eye on someone, but that's it," Spadaro recalls. But that comes with the job, Spadaro says.

"As a mayor, you make decisions all the time. When you are making a decision you make some people happy and some people upset."

Students mix it up during day's lesson

Tricks of the trade on tap

By JAKE STUIVER
STAFF WRITER

Sandy Rei is doing a balancing act with water, red dye and six shot glasses.

With the glasses lined up along a bar that looks big enough to serve the Yankees parade, Rei gently pours the punchy solution into each glass, carefully trying to avoid spillage while using up all the fluid in the container.

On the first point, she succeeds. On the second, despite encouragement and coaching from a group of bartending trainers, Rei has to pour a little bit of the fake drink down the drain, violating a basic tenet of bartending: Don't waste.

Rei came to the Authentic Bartending School to learn how to fill in at a club her father is opening in Elizabeth.

She says the course is tough, that she has to study at home quite a bit to learn all the different drink ingredients and types of glasses to use, but by the time she's through, she'll know how to tend bar.

The school on Plainfield Avenue just north of the Route 27 intersection has two barrooms, with Rei joined in the larger one by five other students, one woman and four men, all relatively young.

Each of them is practicing one bartending trick or another, whether it be pouring shots or mixing drinks.

"His elbow's too high," says school manager Steve Klein, pointing to one of the students and noting that's a sign he's not relaxed enough.

Outside the main barroom is a smaller bar, where the school trains people to work under tighter circumstances when they get to a more advanced level.

Alongside beer logos, the room and outer hallway are covered in "hired" certificates for every student the school has landed a job. It boasts an 80 to 90 percent employment rate, Klein says.

The school, which has branches all over the country, has students log a total of 48 hours each at their own pace to learn about 300 drinks, the glasses that go with them, how to serve draft beers rapidly, opening and closing procedures and alcohol-awareness issues such as how to deal with a patron who's had too much or wants to drive, Klein says.

Many of the students want to



2:23 p.m. Instructor Tom Curran demonstrates mixing and pouring techniques as students take notes at the bar.

learn the craft to take on part-time work, especially college students trying to pay their way through school, but others are looking for full-time careers, he says.

All the school's instructors also work bartending jobs themselves, ranging from Manhattan nightclubs to Jersey Shore party spots.

"There's a lot more to it than getting behind the bar and starting," says head instructor Dan Beckmann of Bradley Beach. Beckmann wants his students to be ready to work in country clubs, nightclubs or even private parties and cater to a variety of age groups.

Getting tips, he says, depends largely on how well a bartender is able to communicate with patrons, often having to determine whether they want frequent attention or to be left alone except when ordering.

"We're trying to get them ready for a broad base," he says.

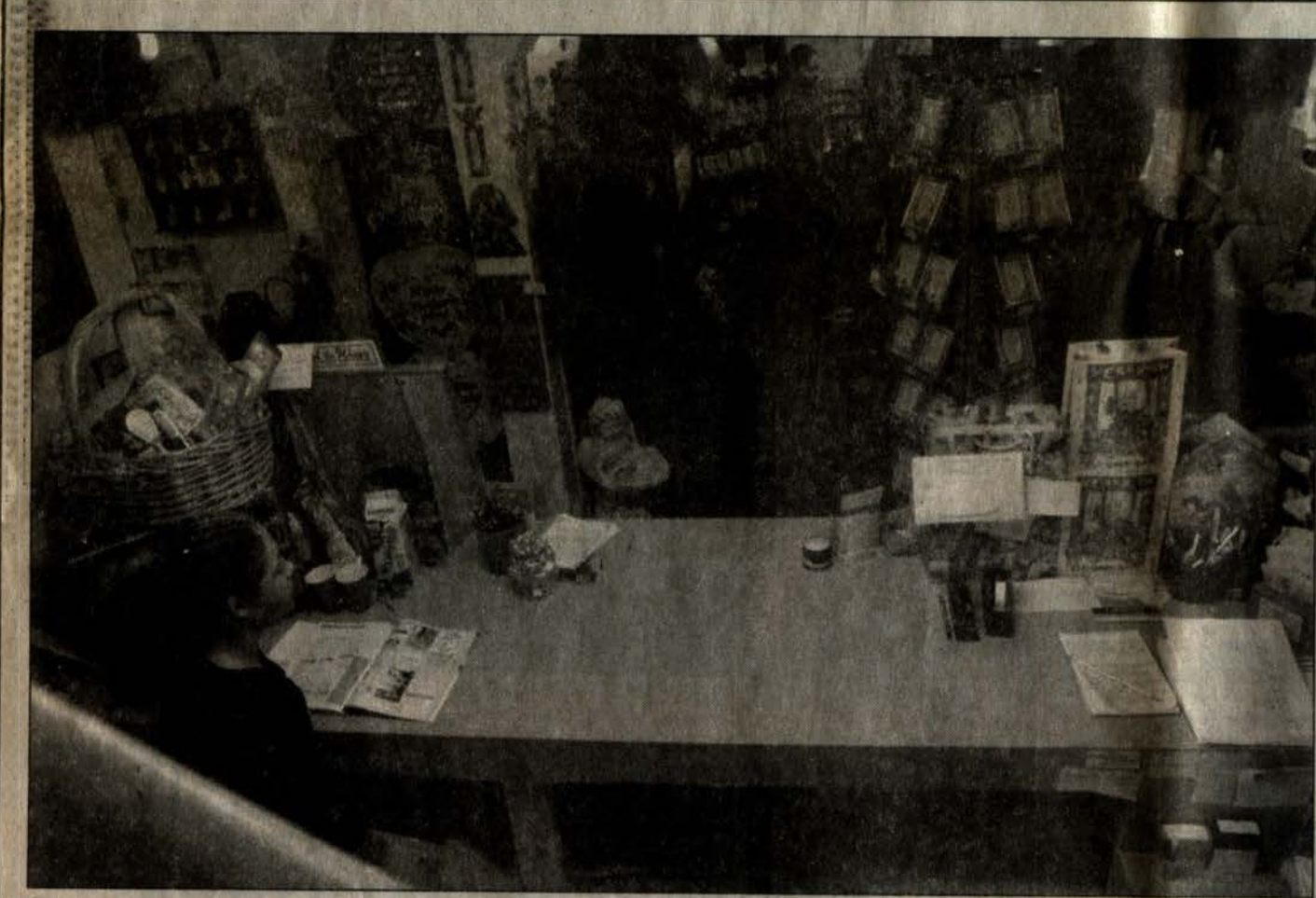
From behind the main bar, instructor Tom Curran is showing his six students more about making mixed shots.

"Now, if I want to do six," he says before demonstrating how to get the mix proportion right.

Rei says one of the bigger challenges is remembering which cocktails take ice and which don't.

"They pump you with a lot of information," she says. "It's a little frustrating at times, trying to find everything."

"But," she adds, "it's a relaxed atmosphere."



HEAVEN GOES COUNTRY

3:15 p.m.

At right, Jennifer Vasques reviews the register tape and tends to the counter, above, of A Heavenly Country Store, which, according to store owner Karen Wolf, is the only business of its kind in the township. The country store, at 2125 Oak Tree Road, is situated in a five-room house.



Photos by
SHEILA SPRINGSTEEN
Staff photographer

THE BEST-KEPT SECRET

Mobile library hits the road to provide a personal touch

By MARCY BEHRMANN
STAFF WRITER

The on-the-road staffers leave the tiny office in the back of the Main Library on Plainfield Avenue and head toward the garage to check on the bus. But this is no ordinary bus. This is the Edison Bookmobile.

The daytimers have just finished their lunch break, and they are ready to peddle books on township streets.

Only Mary Ellen Spitzmiller stays in the office to answer phone calls from impatient patrons.

David Kozal, a licensed commercial vehicle driver, pulls the big blue-and-white bus around the parking lot and toward the north end of town. As the driver of the bookmobile for the past 12 1/2 years, Kozal is responsible for navigating the bus around the curves of the township.

"It becomes like a war zone out here," says Kozal, gesturing at the Grove Avenue traffic, which won't let the 40-foot bus join the flow. "But I enjoy it," Kozal says with a smile. "I love it. It's my challenge."

Kozal also is responsible for keeping the bus in working condition. The bus doesn't make stops in neighborhoods on Fridays because it is usually getting routine maintenance. A strict repair schedule is the reason the vehicle has lasted 10 years, Kozal explains.

Librarian Sharon Giniger has been at the helm of the mobile library for the past four years.

Giniger likes her job. It provides a flexibility and personal touch that she missed in her 25 years as a librarian in Edison's stationary library branches.

"We try to do everything the library does, but in some ways we do more," Giniger explains. "It's the personal touch."

During the bookmobile's morning rounds, staffers hold a sing-a-long at Hartwyck at Edison Estates' new adult day-care program. Giniger prides herself on making the bookmobile accessible to more people, especially the many senior-citizen groups in the area.

"Many of these senior citizens would not be able to get books if we didn't come to them with the bookmobile," Giniger says.

The seniors use the bookmobile as a delivery service. The bookmobile is stocked with an impressive selection of large-print books and sizable collections on health and first aid. If the bookmobile doesn't have what a specific patron wants, the staff will request it from the main library's collection and deliver the selection at its next visit, usually two weeks later.

"We don't have the long waiting list that they have at the main library," Giniger says.

"Usually we're the best-kept secret when it comes to things like that," adds bookmobile staffer Barbara Sutch.

The next stop is the day-care program at Our Savior Lutheran Church, near Menlo Park Elementary School.

Giniger, a former elementary school teacher, enjoys teaching the day-care pupils about the joy of reading. Because spring is just around the corner, Giniger reads "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" by Eric Carle. The kids are impressed when the squirmy caterpillar emerges from its cocoon as a brightly colored butterfly. "That was magic!" one child exclaims.

Giniger asks the children to pretend to be caterpillars spinning cocoons for their transformation to adulthood. But there are some limitations.

"Since we can't spin around because we don't have room in the bookmobile, we are just going to rock back and forth," Giniger says.

The bookmobile is important to early readers and especially important to children in all-day child care, Giniger explains.

"Because a lot of parents work, some of these kids would never see a library if we didn't come here," Giniger says. "By the time parents get home, it's too late to go to the library, or they are too tired."

The highlight for the children is when they are allowed to browse through the mobile library's selections and choose a book to borrow. The books are checked out under the teachers' names.

"Sometimes, when it's winter, just the teachers come out for the books," Giniger says. "When it gets nicer, all the kids come out."

Adapting with the times is Giniger's mantra. The bookmobile is flexible, a small, mobile operation that can go anywhere at nearly all times. The bookmobile's selections and its route change with the times too.

"Some places that used to be stops have changed, and the children got older and moved away," Giniger explains. When that happens, one of the stops on the bookmobile's long waiting list gets moved up to the front. Anyone can petition for a stop. All they have to do is submit a petition with the names of 25 township residents to the library, Giniger explains. But the work doesn't end there.

"I tell them: Use the stop or lose the stop," Giniger says. "There are a lot of people out there waiting for the bookmobile to stop near them."

Dolores
dresses
them up for
their big
day

By SUZANNE C. RUSSELL
STAFF WRITER

Each group of customers that enters Dolores Bridal Boutique is greeted by the bright white sparkle from 36 wedding veils stacked in clear cases across from the door.

In the background, music is playing from a radio, but it's quickly drowned out by chatter. A group of women is in search of a bridesmaid dress that won't break their \$222 limit. The woman who appears to be the bride wants the bridesmaids to wear jackets because she likes that look, especially for the church service.

A sleeveless dress on display next to the veils, however, catches the eye of one of the appointed bridesmaids. It's platinum, the hot color of the millennium.

6:30 p.m.

The same woman jokingly pulls out a bright green-and-gold sequin number that she comments might look more appropriate on a belly dancer than a bridesmaid.

It's a Wednesday night at Dolores' shop on Lafayette Avenue, across from Menlo Park Mall, where even the light rain outside can't dampen the happy banter from future brides accompanied by their families and friends as they prepare for their special day.

They come to search through racks of about 800 dresses with long trains, short trains and no trains; dresses adorned with pearls, sequins, flowers and bows.

A crinkling plastic sound comes from customers thumbing through the racks of bridal gowns hung in heavy clear garment bags in the two showrooms equipped with floor-to-ceiling mirrors.

Weaving among the happy talkers is owner Dolores Martinez, with straight pins stuck into her sweater and a tape measure draped around her neck, who stops to comment on how nice the platinum dress looks, to measure a grandmother's dress and compliment a woman who is radiant in the white beaded wedding gown she's trying on.

Elizabeth Anderson of Woodbridge isn't getting married until Jan. 6, 2001, at St. James R.C. Church in Woodbridge, but she's



shopping solo and ready to try on about a dozen styles of wedding gowns.

She settles on a beautiful fitted gown with a detachable train for her marriage to Michael Toal from New York's Staten Island.

"I love this; this is the dress. I was in North Carolina looking for a dress. This is it," Anderson says, adding that she'll return the next day to show it to her aunt.

Hanna Lee and George Lysicatos, seniors at Edison High School, are getting married, too — at least for a health-class project they need to pass before graduating.

Lee, who already has decided she wants designer Scott Kay platinum rings, says they have stopped at the bridal salon to choose dresses for the bridesmaids as well as for herself. As part of the project they have to get prices and descriptions and then plan for a wedding and reception by getting information about everything from the marriage license and invitations to the gifts for the bridal party and arrangements for the honeymoon.

"The bridesmaid can't look better than me; you know that, don't you," Lee tells Lysicatos as they look

through catalogs to get prices for dresses.

Martinez, who has owned her business for 15 years, says she likes helping the students with their project.

"How else will they learn?" she says.

Martinez, a native of Spain, has been working in the business for 47 years. At age 14 she completed schooling as a pattern-maker and seamstress, and in 1955 she started working as a costume maker for a ballet company in Spain. When she came to the United States in 1964, she became a sample maker and has worked on everything from flower-girl and communion dresses to bridal gowns and mother-of-the-bride dresses.

Her sister, a seamstress for Flemington Fur in Flemington, shares her talent; but she says her daughter, Anna, a recent college graduate who works at the shop, can't sew a button.

Martinez sews everyday and can create a pattern for any dress from just looking at a picture.

"I made a bridal gown today," says Martinez, showing off a strapless gown a customer asked her to recreate from a picture.



SHEILA SPRINGSTEEN/Staff photographer

5:35 p.m. Top, Ara Ricart of Washington, D.C., tries on an informal wedding dress as Dolores Martinez, owner of Dolores Bridal Boutique, assists. Above, Joann Comp of Hopewell recommends a different neckline to future daughter-in-law Michelle Massey, also of Hopewell, who is planning an October wedding.

Midnight crowd: Kids, smokers and endless cups of coffee

By LEIGH BELZ
CORRESPONDENT

In the wee hours of the morning, the Edison Diner is alive. It's not crowded, but the parking lot is more than half filled.

The waitresses and waiters hustle around, carrying plates of chicken fingers, coffee and fried-egg sandwiches.

Most of the patrons are students or those who just got off a work shift. The diner definitely has a pulse, though this morning it's somewhat faint. The atmosphere is quiet. No one intrudes on anyone else's space.

Mia Scornavacca is immersed in her GRE study guide. She's been studying quietly in her booth for almost three hours.

12:02 a.m.

Scornavacca of East Brunswick says she regularly comes to the diner at night because of the atmosphere.

"I was hungry after I left work, and I'm a smoker, and I also wanted to study — I can do all those things here," she says. "And these people are really cool here. They don't rush you at all. They leave you alone so you can talk or work or whatever you want to do."

Nick Merlo of Edison just got off a 3 p.m.-11 p.m. shift at Quick Chek. Merlo has been frequenting the Edison Diner since the early 1980s. As soon as he takes his normal seat at the counter, Evan Kalambakas, the owner's son who manages the place, greets him and the two start bantering like old friends.

As Merlo eats his dinner — a veggie burger and French fries — they talk computers. Merlo says he used to frequent the diner every night,



JODY SOMERS/Special to the Home News Tribune

12:05 a.m. Nick Merlo of Edison grabs a bite to eat at the Edison Diner after working the 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. shift at Quick Chek.

but now he gets there only a few times a week.

"It's comfortable, it's busy," he says. "It used to be every night, but I'll always go here. I don't go anywhere else."

Serving Merlo is New Brunswick resident Steve Tsetsekas, who works the 5 p.m.-1 a.m. shift. At 12:45 a.m. he's remarkably chipper — perhaps because of the proximity of the end of his shift.

"Nights like this you get mostly kids coming in. A lot of smokers. A lot of coffee. It's busy all throughout the day, but you get used to it and how it gets."

The smoking section is definitely

more populated. It's also louder than the three couples, two groups of friends and one family eating and talking in nonsmoking area.

Elpi Arhontoulis of Kendall Park and Stephanie Coutroubis of Hazlet

Most of the patrons are students or those who just got off a work shift. The diner definitely has a pulse, though this morning it's somewhat faint. The atmosphere is quiet. No one intrudes on anyone else's space.

talk quietly in the nonsmoking section. Coutroubis pushes a cup of coleslaw around on her plate as she addresses Arhontoulis. They have been dating for two months. They both ordered hamburgers. They both left the coleslaw. They're adorably in sync.

"We wanted a burger, and this was the only place that is open now," Arhontoulis says. "And it's relaxed here, comfortable. The prices are a little bit cheaper."

After a few moments of silence, Arhontoulis goes to the register to pay the bill. The couple leaves the waitress a tip and the two uneaten coleslaws.

A few minutes later, Merlo gives Kalambakas a pat on the back, pays his bill and heads home to work on his computer. Tsetsekas takes Merlo's plate and wipes off the counter.

Around 1 a.m., with a turkey burger, Greek salad and Diet Coke settled in her stomach, Scornavacca tips her waitress, pays her bill and, thanking Kalambakas, goes home to get some rest.

In a matter of minutes a pair of workers takes Merlo's place at the counter, and a couple sits in Scornavacca's booth as waitresses and waiters continue bringing out the plates of chicken fingers, coffee and fried-egg sandwiches.

DAY IN THE LIFE OF EDISON



Afternoon
queue up for
car checkup

12:15 p.m. Cars start to line up at the Kilmer Department of Motor Vehicles Inspection Station on Kilmer Road. The average wait time at the inspection station today was posted at 11 minutes and barely gave Lisa Tanay of Edison enough time to finish one chapter in the book she brought to read. The station had five lanes open, each of them conducting the state's new auto emissions test.

MARK R. SULLIVAN/Staff photographer

Generating
business

12:24 p.m.

A longtime landmark along Route 1 south is this overturned car that serves as an advertisement for Edison Generator.

JASON TOWLEN
Staff photographer



RARITAN CENTER
The Location Advantage



**Federal
Business
Centers**

*Coming
Soon...*

Edison's Newest Assisted
Living Community



A Distinctive Assisted Living Community

Affiliated with JFK Medical Center
For more information, or to receive a free brochure contact Carol Davey at (732) 906-2975

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Edison, N. J. 08817

Edison: Suburb of big shoulders

The Home News/Marc Ascher

HN 12/1/87
By **MATTHEW GOLDSTEIN**
Home News staff writer

EDISON — A Woodbridge native once described this sprawling municipality as "being everywhere."

Maybe that's because four major highways cut through the township and no less than nine towns share a common border with Edison.

The feeling that Edison is everywhere has made it an attractive setting for businesses and residential developments.

With a population of 83,000, Edison is the state's ninth most populous municipality. It is also second among all municipalities in New Jersey in the number of building permits issued for new residences and in the total property-assessment value of all commercial, industrial and residential development.

Development has come so fast

and furiously to Edison that it is no longer just known for Menlo Park, the place where Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. Now, the town also is known for Raritan Center, a 2,350-acre business and industrial center along the Raritan River, and the Metro-Park office complex, half of which is located in neighboring Woodbridge.

As a community, Edison reflects the kind of explosive growth that has rocked many communities in suburban New Jersey. New shopping malls, such as the Wick Plaza shopping center on Route 1, are crammed onto already overburdened highways.

Large corporate office buildings are commonly erected within eyeshot of residential developments. In many respects, the municipality has become more city than suburb.

But Edison, which used to be

See **EDISON**, Page D2

(Cont'd. on next page)



The new Wick Shopping Plaza at Plainfield Avenue and Route 1 in Edison.

Edison: History
(General)

12/1/87

12/11/81

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(Cont'd. from preceding page).

EDISON

Continued from Page D1

HN 12/11/81
called Raritan Township, has no town center. Metuchen, a small, self-contained community, is located in what had been Raritan Township's geographical center. At the turn of the century, residents in Metuchen broke away from Raritan and formed their own municipality.

A common complaint among Edison residents is traffic, which seems to get worse every year.

Yet despite these heartaches, residents do love their town because of its proximity to major highways, its high-quality school system and closeness to New York City. The township is also home to a major hospital, John F. Kennedy Medical Center, Middlesex County

College and 40 small, neighborhood parks.

To those in power, including long-time Mayor Anthony M. Yelencsics, the township's traffic jams are a sign that people and businesses want to be in Edison.

"Sure we're going to get traffic, but we love you anyway," Yelencsics said last summer to officials from The New York Times Co., who are building a state-of-the-art color printing plant in Edison for the newspaper.

Jim Macadam, a broker for Dana Realty, described Edison as a "modern, built-up area" with out-of-control development. But he said people keep wanting to move into the township because of its location and good schools.

For commuters to New York, Edison is an ideal location because it has its own NJ Transit train station, besides being close

to the MetroPark station in Woodbridge, and the Metuchen train station.

The New Jersey Turnpike, the Garden State Parkway and Route 287 all have exits in Edison, and Route 1 cuts right through the heart of the community.

Like Woodbridge, Edison has several older and well-defined neighborhoods such as Menlo Park, Clara Barton and Piscatawaytown. But the municipality also tends to be more unified than Woodbridge, in that all the township's residents know they live in Edison, while many Woodbridge residents refer to their neighborhood sections as their places of residence.

One of the most popular areas of Edison for new residential development is known as North Edison, generally defined as anything north of Metuchen.

"North Edison is the Cadillac area," said Macadam.

In North Edison, the homes and property lots tend to be larger than in other parts of the township, hence, home prices also are higher. Single-family homes in North Edison commonly sell for more than \$300,000, while a single-family home in other parts of the township can be bought for less than \$200,000.

There also are a host of new townhouse and apartment complexes in Edison, such as the Westgate Square, Greenwood Townhouses and Durham Woods.

Given its relative newness as a community, the only thing Edison is short on is history.

Yet Edison is the only place where you can find a 117-foot tall tower topped with a light bulb, in honor, of course, of the township's famous inventor.

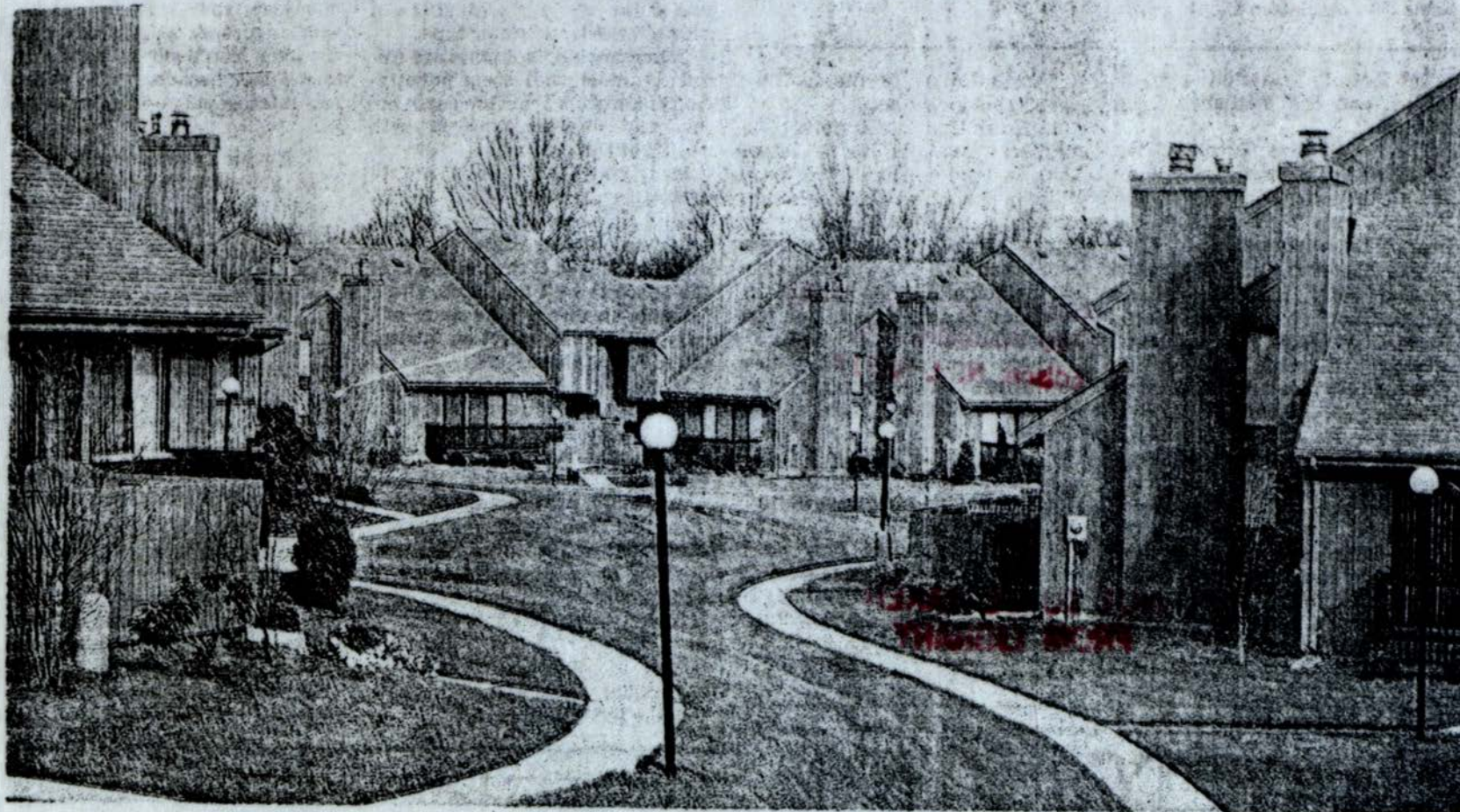
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The Westgate housing development is typical of many others in booming Edison, a diverse township of 83,000.

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Our Towns

Edison

At a Glance

Population: 83,000

Mayor: Anthony M. Yelencsics

Square Miles: 30

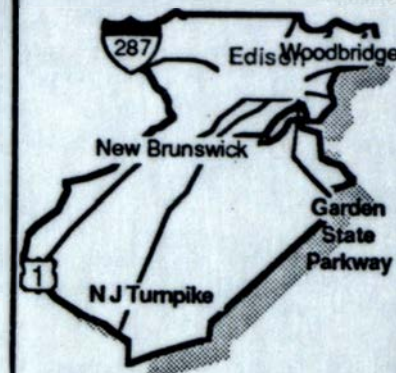
Tax Rate: \$2.58 per \$100 of
assessed value

Median House Price: \$185,000

Median apartment rental:
\$550

Key Shopping Areas:

Woodbridge Center; Woodbridge,
Menlo Park Mall; Edison, Wick
Shopping Plaza; downtown
Metuchen



Middlesex County

HN 12/11/87

12/11/87

ASK AT DESK Edison's Political Evolution

Edison Twp. Pub. Library
340 Plainfield Ave.
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by Mrs. W. J. McAndrew

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A year ago November the citizens of Edison endorsed a study of their local form of government at the polls and elected a group of five men to make the study. This November these same citizens will be asked to vote on a change of their local governmental structure.

The town presently has commission form of government which, briefly, provides for a five-man board elected every four years to serve as both legislators and administrators of municipal affairs. After the board's election, the mayor is selected by the commissioners from among their number. He serves primarily as a chairman of the board. The five elected officials share both the responsibility and the power in all legislative and administrative matters.

The Charter Study Commission has recommended to the community that it replace this structure with a strong mayor-council plan for Edison. In this plan seven councilmen would be elected to serve overlapping four-year terms as legislators only. A mayor would be elected for four years to serve as the executive with a department of administration under him headed by a trained business manager. All departments of local government would be responsible to the mayor as chief executive. He would have veto powers over the council's actions. However, the council could override a veto by a two-thirds majority. Also included is a recommendation to adopt partisan elections every two years rather than a special local, non-partisan election every four years.

Does this change represent political evolution in Edison? Definitely it does. When citizens set out to work for political reform, they may use one of two methods. The first is the direct method to improve the character of elective officials, to "turn the rascals out," to install new faces and higher purpose in city halls. The other type is the technical approach which is what is happening in Edison now. This method aims to clear out the battleground and open it to such easy scrutiny that the lay citizens can see their targets. This technique has to do with laws and the structure of government.

The first step towards this modernization of local governments came in New Jersey in 1950 when the state passed a reform bill allowing communities to change their local charters without permission of the public officials in city hall. This bill was called the Faulkner Act and set up a group of approved optional municipal charters which a community could adopt through the ballot. The citizens could petition for a referendum question presenting a specific change to be placed before the voters; or they could petition for the establishment of a study group to be elected to make a study of the local government and recommend a change if the study so warranted it.

A CITIZENS' COMMITTEE FOR A CHARTER STUDY came into being a year ago in Edison to advocate this second approach. The group circulated the necessary petition, got the needed 3,000 signatures to place the question of the study on the November '55 ballot and endorsed a slate of candidates to make the study.

In the November '55 election an opposition slate of candidates suddenly appeared. A study of their petition of nomination revealed the names of many town hall employees and machine politicians.



Historic moment on August 24, 1955 when members of Citizens' Committee for a Charter Study filed 3,000-name petition putting government study on the ballot.

The voters endorsed the study overwhelmingly. But the opposition slate (for the first time in any community in the state which had tried this type of reform) won by a small majority. In some quarters there were some misgivings as to the type of study that would be undertaken. However, the nine-month study proved fruitful and the community was presented with the recommendation that a strong mayor-council form of government be adopted.

The original sponsors of the movement re-organized as the CITIZENS' CHARTER COMMITTEE to campaign for this new form. The League of Women Voters in the township also endorsed the proposed change as they felt it would bring about much needed reforms in the township's budget and fiscal practices. Many other groups and individuals have rallied to the cause and pledged themselves to work for a "yes" vote at the top of the ballots this November.

But ultimately, as in all political reforms under democratic procedure, the voters must decide the issue on election day.

PUT 'EM IN OFFICE!

How "up" are you on local civics? Here's a chance to test your knowledge of who's who in Metuchen and Edison public life. Simply write in parenthesis the number that links the name with the office. Answers on Page 12

Metuchen

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Borough Attorney | () Warren N. Butler |
| 2. Health Board Secretary | () W. Franklin Buchanan |
| 3. Borough Clerk | () Grace Halsey |
| 4. Borough Councilman | () Leon Semer |
| 5. Borough Magistrate | () Rufus D. Renninger |
| 6. School Superintendent | () Wendell P. Ayres |
| 7. Borough Engineer | () Harold I. Meyers |
| 8. Planning Board Member | () DuBois S. Thompson |
| 9. Tax Collector | () Ray C. Herb |
| 10. Borough Librarian | () Samuel P. Owen |

Edison

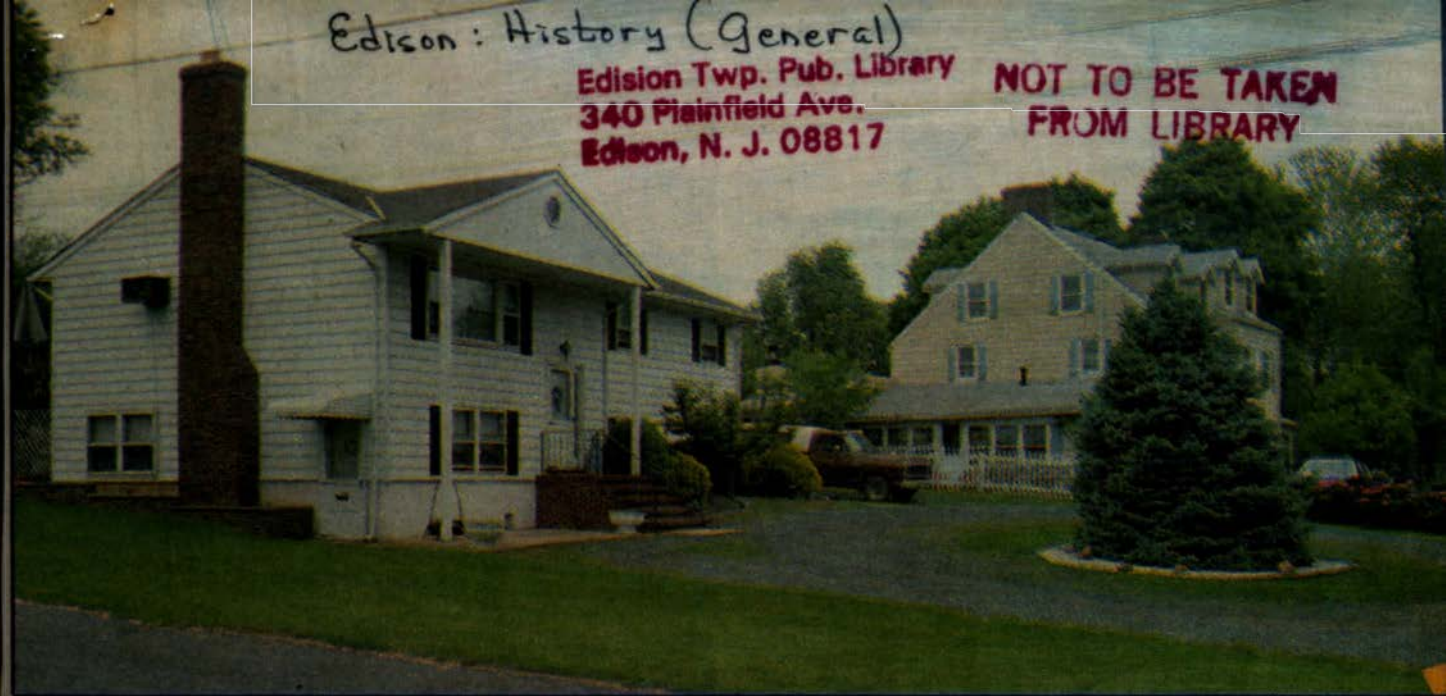
- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Housing Authority Chairman | () George Thompson |
| 2. School Superintendent | () Warren Voorhees |
| 3. Chief of Police | () Frank G. Helyar |
| 4. Township Magistrate | () John P. Stevens |
| 5. Health Officer | () Joseph Costa |
| 6. Planning Board Chairman | () Allison Grillo |
| 7. Township Attorney | () Charles Grand-Jean |
| 8. Building Inspector | () Thomas L. Hanson |
| 9. School Board President | () Christian Jorgensen |
| 10. Township Commissioner | () Joseph Ruggieri |

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Edison: History (General)

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FRANK WOJCIECHOWSKI/The News Tribune

Homes along Old Post Road in Edison's Bonhamtown section.

Edison community isn't gone, but it's close to being forgotten

By JIM BECKERMAN
News Tribune Staff Writer

NT 5/21/90

EDISON About 2,000 people call Bonhamtown home. They just don't know whether to call home Bonhamtown.

"My mailing address is Edison. As far as I know, it's in Edison," says Derrick Myers, who has been living on Old Post Road for two years.

"It's Edison, all right, but this is Bonhamtown; it always has been — I consider myself living in Bonhamtown," says Asellina Gallos of Old Post Road, a Louisiana native who came to the area 42 years ago.

"Bonhamtown has no identity," says Randall Dammers, proprietor of The Victorian Manor restaurant and banquet center on Woodbridge Avenue, perhaps the area's largest retail business. "It has no post office. If you were to put 'Bonhamtown' on the envelope, I would never get the mail."

Such an identity crisis is hardly unique to Bonhamtown, a community that exists on maps, road signs, and in the minds of the older residents — but possibly nowhere else. Since Bonhamtown has no post office and no municipal government, it does not, legally speaking, exist.

"You have to have a municipal government recognized by the state of New Jersey" to exist as a town, says Dave Sheehan, president of the Edison Township Historical Society. "In two senses, yes, Bonhamtown exists. One, there are certainly enough signs around here that say 'Bonhamtown, make a right, make a left.' And maybe it also exists in the hearts of those who live there."

Like many old New Jersey towns, named after the farmers or merchants who bought enough land in the 17th and 18th centuries to found their own communities, the 220 acres purchased by Freeholder Nicholas Bonham in 1666 have become victims to progress. Like



FRANK WOJCIECHOWSKI/The News Tribune
Maggie Muccia of Personnel Line at the former Bonhamtown School on Woodbridge Avenue.

other names on county road maps that have more or less fallen into disuse — "Nixon," "Melrose," "Stelton" — Bonhamtown is a name that belongs to the past, in a rapidly developing area that looks to the future.

"It is becoming more homogenized," says Chuck Butz, who has lived on Westervelt Avenue for eight years. "When someone asks me where I live, I say Edison. But if it's someone older, I'll say the Bonhamtown section of Edison."

The part of Edison Township where Bonhamtown can't be found is sandwiched between Route 1 to the west, Woodbridge Avenue to the east, Metuchen's Main Street to the north, and

NEIGHBORHOODS

BONHAMTOWN

Mill Road to the south.

Reputedly built on the site of an ancient Indian village, Bonhamtown was an important stagecoach stop for Colonials making the trek from New York to Philadelphia. George Washington was one of the many 18th century commuters who found himself taking the arduous route from King George's Road to Old Post Road, still the principal street of Bonhamtown.

Perhaps he even stayed at the Bonham Union Hotel, built in 1700 on the site of what is now The Victorian Manor. The hotel was rebuilt in 1900 after a fire, and was known as Bo's Den until Dammers bought and remodeled it in 1985.

"It was an old, old, old, old building," Dammers says of his stuccoed banquet and conference center.

Apart from The Victorian Manor, Bonhamtown boasts several other historical landmarks. The Grace Reformed Church dates back to 1875, and the neighboring St. Margaret Mary's Roman Catholic Church was founded in 1935. Most familiar to passers-by is the former Bonhamtown School, an imposing Georgian building that went up in 1908 and dismissed its last class in the 1970s.

But Bonhamtown is now home to about 200 acres of ramshackle warehouses, shattered windows, rusted railroad tracks and weed-battered concrete

See PART Page B-2

Part of Edison: History town's (General) past

Neighborhood outlasts its name

Continued from Page B-1

on the far side of Woodbridge Avenue. This is what was once the Raritan Arsenal, built in 1917.

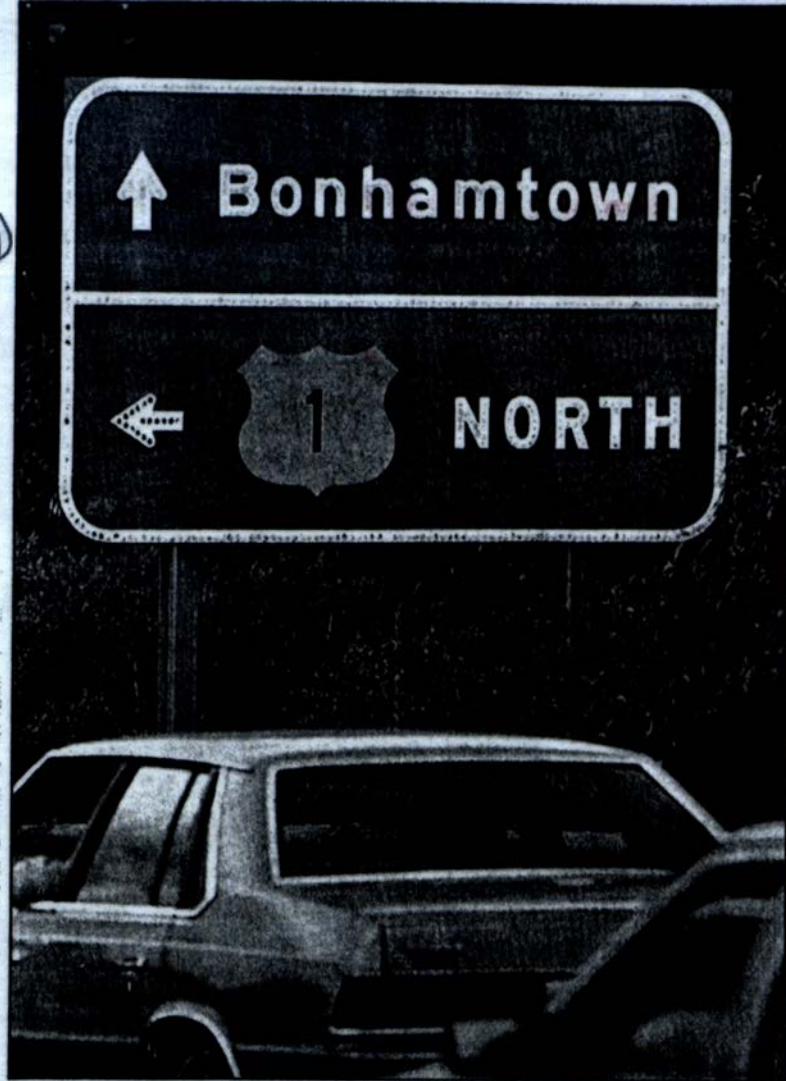
Since 1970 these government-owned buildings have been the site of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, and also the General Services Administration, the agency that stores confiscated motor vehicles, among other things.

However, 50 years ago, the Raritan Arsenal was not only the focal point of Bonhamtown, but also of major importance to the United States. During World War II, all the young men who were to be shipped overseas to Europe had to pass through the arsenal after their training at Piscataway's Camp Kilmer.

"It was a debarkation center — anybody who went from the U.S. to Europe went from this town," says Dammers. "It was very busy during the Second World War."

The days when Raritan Arsenal bustled with military activity are vividly recalled by many of the older residents.

"My husband was a machinist; he came up here to work," recalls Gallos, who married a Northerner and came up from Louisiana in the '40s. "I was a cook, but he wanted me to be a housewife. I said 'bosh' to that. I



Plenty of road signs point the way. This one is on Main Street.

The News Tribune

got a job in a factory making cigar boxes. Then the war broke out, and I wanted to help my country, so I got a job in the arsenal."

For younger residents, those days of blood, sweat, and tears are as faded as the gray timbers of the Arsenal complex.

But even in their own time, these men and women in their 20s and 30s can remember how Bonhamtown began to lose its rural character to become one more little pocket of industrialized Edison.

"In the woods back there, you

could find salamanders, but not now," says Maggie Muccia, Edison resident and receptionist at Personnel Line, one of the businesses that now operates out of what was once Bonhamtown School. "It used to be all woods, but most of the places are now buildings."

For the newly arrived, Bonhamtown's appeal rests less on the fascination of its past than the peaceful streets and friendly neighbors of its present.

"The worst thing I've seen a kid do around here is ring a doorbell and run," Myers says.

Edison: History (General)

Not all history is imposing: Just look at Edison's

Review 8/3/90

By David C. Sheehan

EDISON — Now that the dog days of summer are upon us, it's a good opportunity to look at the lighter side of facts, events, places and people that have come together to form the Edison Township we know today.

Not all history is a ponderous collection of dates and place-names. Although many interesting items that make up our past are not likely to find themselves forever memorialized in imposing academic publications, they are, nevertheless, pleasant reminders of our own history and often serve as an impetus for the amateur historian to delve into a topic more thoroughly.

Much of the interest in the history of the township centers around its most famous resident, Thomas Alva Edison — "The Wizard of Menlo Park."

Edison's mother and family referred to the famed inventor as "Alva" or "Al." Given his knack for showmanship in presenting several of his products of the Menlo Park "Invention Factory" laboratories, Edison was often called "The Enchanter" in the press.

It should come as no surprise that the famed inventor had technologically oriented nicknames for his two eldest children — "Dot" and "Dash."

Edison's father, according to *Menlo Park Reminiscences* by Francis Jehl, was fond of alighting

the train as it pulled into the tiny Menlo Park Station before the train made a complete stop. The elder Edison would attempt getting off the train earlier and earlier on each trip until one time, unable to maintain his balance, he fell and broke his collarbone. It is presumed that on subsequent trips he waited for the train to come to a complete halt before he took his leave.

Edison, it is reported, chose the Menlo Park section of the township to establish his laboratories, in part, because of its proximity to the railroad and, in part, because it was the highest point on the route of the railroad between New York and Philadelphia.

Many local residents and many visitors to the Edison Memorial Tower ask similar questions regarding Edison, the tower and the time he spent in the township with his workers:

Where was Thomas Edison born? Milan, Ohio, on February 11, 1847.

How tall is the tower? It is 131 feet tall and is constructed out of Portland cement, another Edison invention.

Can you go up to the top of the tower? No, there is a storage area directly above the room at the base of the tower, but there are no elevators or stairways leading to the top.

Why was the tower built where it was? It marks the exact spot where Edison perfected his incandescent lamp on October 21, 1879.

What else did Edison invent in

Edison? The phonograph, on which Edison made the first recording by reciting "Mary had a little lamb. ..." The first electric railroad which ran along the present-day Middlesex Avenue, near his Christie Street laboratories. Christie Street was the first street and Mrs. Jordan's Boarding House, the first residence in the world to be illuminated by incandescent lamps. Most of Edison's workers lived at the boarding house, and Edison and his family lived in a home on the grounds at the site of his laboratories.

What ever happened to the laboratory building? The lab, Mrs. Jordan's Boarding House, Edison's home, several out-buildings and even the topsoil and garbage cans were packed up and moved to Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Mich., by Edison's old friend Henry Ford. Ford reassembled the buildings and their contents on the property, and they are preserved there as a museum. Edison visited the site on the 50th anniversary of his inventing the incandescent lamp. A chair in which Edison sat during the anniversary celebration was ordered nailed to the floor by Henry Ford so that Edison's presence there on that date would be forever remembered.

Is Edison buried here? No, Edison moved to West Orange in 1889 and continued his prolific inventive life there for many years. He and his wife, Mary Stillwell Edison, summered in Fort Meyers,

Fla., often. Upon his death and the death of his wife, they were buried on the grounds of their estate, Llewellyn Park in West Orange.

The Edison Memorial Tower (a National Historic Site), the museum, its many photos, models and memorabilia today help to answer many of our questions and prompt new ones in the thousands who regularly visit the historically significant site.

Many inquiries are made into place names in the township. Others are fascinated by the "famous" who call or have called Edison their home.

Edison itself was formed from parts of Woodbridge and Piscataway townships and was incorporated originally as Raritan Township on March 17, 1870. "Raritan" was chosen because the Raritan River serves as the town's southern boundary and to honor the Raritan tribe of the Leni Lenape Indians, the area's first settlers.

However, because several other New Jersey towns bore the name Raritan and to honor the township's most famous resident, the citizens decided to change the name from Raritan Township to Edison Township in a referendum in November 1954.

Route 27, the "Lincoln Highway," was for a time in the late 1950s and early 1960s referred to as "The Miracle Mile." It was given the name because of the remarkable growth in the area and

the location of three Fortune 500 companies within less than 1 mile of each other on that stretch of Route 27. Johnson & Johnson (now the Revlon complex), RCA (now New Brunswick Scientific) and Westinghouse (now White Consolidated Industries) all stood on Route 27.

The long-sought Edison Post Office was sited there, and a new Pines Restaurant and the Nixon Park Shopping Center served to round off the burgeoning development along the highway.

Player Avenue, which is located in the southernmost part of the township near the Morris Goodkind Bridge, is said by many "old-timers" to be named for the many Broadway actors and actresses — "players" — who summered at Edison in cottages along the banks of the Raritan.

Other streets derive their names from natural attributes. Oak Tree Road and Grove Avenue are obvious choices. Others are named after the original and early settlers of the area — Bonham, Martin, Woodbridge, Raritan, Lindeneau, Meyer, Wood, Manning, Westervelt. Others bear the names of presidents and governors — Lincoln and Livingston, for instance.

Famous individuals who live or once lived in Edison — apart from Thomas Alva Edison — include Susan Sarandon. Sarandon, who starred in *The Witches of Eastwick* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* lived here and grad-

uated from Edison High School in the mid-1960s. Gail Fischer co-starred in the television series *Mannix*. Robert Pastorelli has made several strong movie appearances and currently plays the role of Eldin, the painter on the *Murphy Brown* television series. Gil Morgenstern gained international recognition as a violinist. George Spadaro graduated from John P. Stevens High School and went on to serve as a Township Council member and council president, and he currently serves as a member of the state Assembly.

J.P. Stevens High School was named after Edison resident and world-famous industrialist J.P. Stevens, who also served for a time as president of the township's Board of Education.

History and a knowledge of our roots as a township often help to foster a sense of community. This knowledge also helps, in some sense, to reduce the size of our sprawling township and large, mobile population to where we can readily identify with the town and with each other — as did those early settlers, that famous inventor and those civic, religious and cultural leaders who found — and still find — Edison a good place to call home.

David C. Sheehan is co-founder and president of the Edison Township Historical Society, and this is one in a series of articles written by society members on the history of the area.

Edison: A Paul Bunyon Among Inventors

By JOHN MOORE
Home News Staff Writer

EDISON — As if saying two great inventions are enough for any man, history usually brushes off Thomas A. Edison by reporting that he invented the phonograph AND the electric light.

But Edison was to inventors what Paul Bunyan was to lumberjacks, excepting that the stories they told about Edison were true.

Whenever Paul needed new shoes for Babe, his blue ox, a new iron mine in Minnesota had to be opened, or so they used to say.

No Mythology Here

But when the "Wizard" put on his thinking cap at Menlo Park, the results weren't mythological.

True, he did invent the phonograph. But he also invented the microphone, the megaphone and the mimeograph.

Yes, he did invent the electric light. But he also perfected the telephone, produced the world's first practical electric generator and the electric motor.

Paul, they used to say, picked his teeth with pine trees. But Edison was content to invent such things as wireless electrical communications.

And the list, seemingly endless, goes on: The electric trolley and the electric train, the tasimeter (which measures heat) and the "Edison Electric Meter" which measures the amount of electricity used in homes.

He also invented the motion picture camera and produced the first movie, but that was later at South Orange, after the Wizard had abandoned Menlo Park in 1887.

And there were things, that they said he was inventing that he wasn't inventing. An 1880s comic said Edison was trying to take the heat out of fire and was trying to condense water for the Menlo Park firemen.

And when a reporter for The New York Herald reported Edison had invented the light bulb, the paper's managing editor didn't believe it, and wanted him fired for turning The Herald into a "laughing stock."

Country Wasn't Ready

The country wasn't ready for Edison. Or so it seemed.

Edison announced one day he had built an electric motor capable of powering sewing machines, lathes and small elevators and other light machinery. And the world laughed.

He reported another time that he had developed an electric generator capable of operating with 90 per cent efficiency, or about 80 per cent greater efficiency than its predecessors, and the world scoffed.

"His reputation as a scientist is smirched by the newspaper exaggerations," was the way one critic reacted to the news of the new generator, published in the October 1879 edition of the Scientific American.

Edison was turning on the world from his Menlo Park lab. He took the "talking machine" to Washington, got there late and arrived at the White House at 1 a.m., the machine under his arm.

A sleepy-eyed President Hayes let him in, and Mrs. Hayes, who had retired, jumped out of bed when she heard the famed inventor and his phonograph were downstairs.

The telephone as invented by Alexander Graham Bell was far from being perfect. Part of the trouble was that Bell had used the same device to receive and transmit.

And you couldn't use the contraption over long distances.

So Edison invented a transmitter, kept Bell's receiver, "and by making varying resistance possible and by use of an induction coil, extended the lines for hundreds of miles," wrote an Edison assistant.

Then he tested it, making some of the world's first long distance calls from Menlo Park to St. Louis.

Not Yet Satisfied

But Edison wasn't satisfied with the telephone and telegraph, and built a telegraph without wires.

"Mr. Edison actually sent messages without wires in 1885," wrote the assistant, Francis Jehl. "Indeed, his patent (No. 465,971), filed May 23, 1885, contained drawings of airdials and antennas long before such things were dreamed of anywhere."

"I have discovered," wrote Edison in the patent application, "that if sufficient elevation be obtained to overcome the curvature of the earth's surface and to reduce to a minimum the earth absorption, electric telegraphing — or signaling between distant points — may be carried on by induction, without the use of wires."

And by 1886, he had developed a wireless telegraph system "whereby passengers could send messages from moving trains," Jehl wrote. "The first railroad to use it was the Lehigh Valley Railroad."

But the Menlo Park wizard had relied on a system of induction to achieve his wireless feats, and these inventions were largely overlooked as European inventors employed what Jehl called "wireless waves" to develop the principles of modern radio.

His Technique Worked

But Edison's technique also worked, Jehl, in his book, "Menlo Park Reminiscences," took pains to state that Edison had his patent wireless patented and operating two full years before European inventors announced their discoveries.

"This discovery is especially applicable to telegraphing across bodies of water, or for communicating between vessels at sea and points of land. But it is also applicable between distant points of land," Edison wrote in the 1885 patent application.

Electric Pen

Seemingly unable to leave any part of the electrical

world untouched, Edison also invented what he called "the electric pen."

He commenced work on this in his Newark research facilities before coming to Menlo Park in 1876, but he perfected it here.

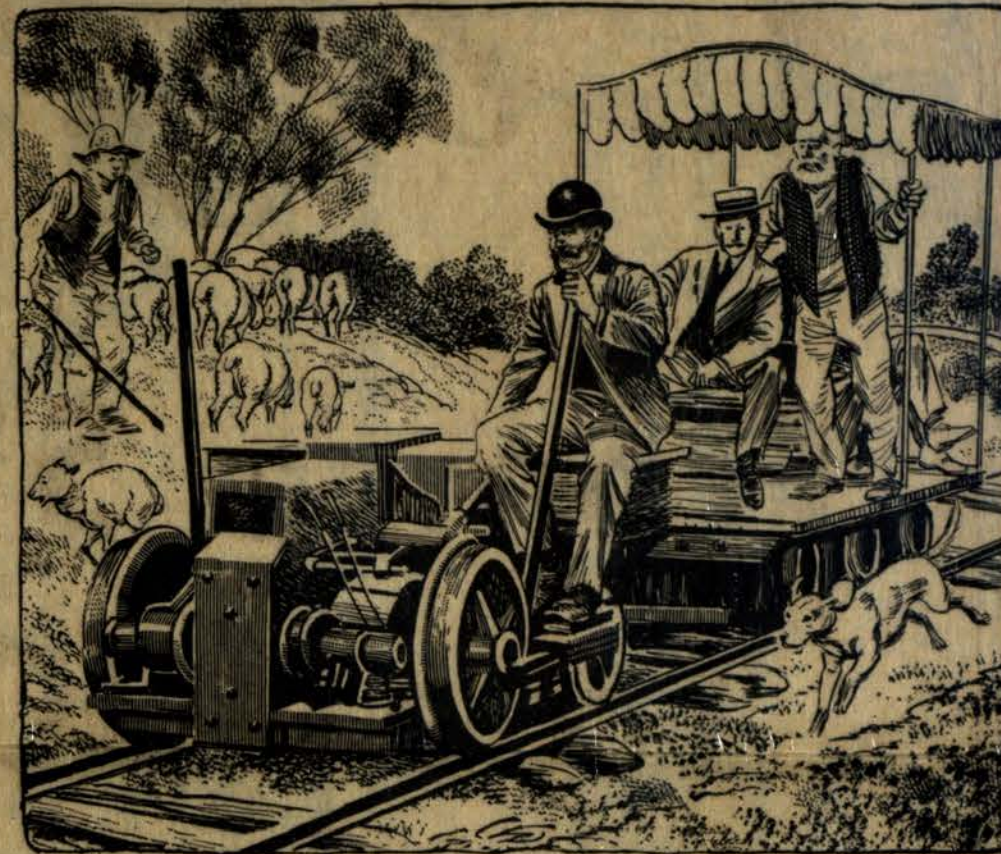
The New York Sun reported about the pen in 1878: "A wire is attached to the pen and while a person is writing, a steady stream of electricity perforates the paper, making almost invisible little holes corresponding to the formation of the letters. As you write, the needle is projected into the paper at the rate of 8,000 punctures a minute, forming a perfect autographic paper stencil."

"The stencil is then secured in a frame or press. A felt roller saturated with printer's ink is passed over the face of the stencil, and the perforations become filled with ink, which is deposited upon the paper underneath."



THE TALKING MACHINE — Thomas Edison and assistants gather around the

phonograph, one of Edison's best known inventions.



THE ELECTRIC TRAIN — Assistants of Thomas Edison take experimental elec-

tric train (another Edison invention) on at Menlo Park.



EXPERIMENT — Thomas A. Edison sits into the night watching his incandescent lamp on its first successful trial. Drawing, from "Where the Raritan Flows," is by Charles Waterhouse of Edison.

Sketches are by Charles Waterhouse, of Edison, and are from the book "Where the Raritan Flows," published by Rutgers Press.

Eventful past makes for bustling present

From skirmishes to inventions, township has seen it all

Edison Twp. Pub. Library
340 Plainfield Ave.
Edison, N. J. 08817

By DAVID SHEEHAN

Those who find Edison's present eventful might not be too surprised to find its past equally rich in newsworthy events.

Edison, formerly known as Raritan Township, was first settled in the late 1600s, when it was part of Woodbridge and Piscataway townships, and its first families included the Dunhams, Martins, Bonhams, Hulls and FitzRandolphs, to whom land grants were given.

Many of these names live on in the community in the form of street names and section names.

But people have lived in the Edison area since prehistoric times. Skull and bone fragments from the Stone Age have been discovered in the Piscatawaytown area, and more recently, arrowheads and cooking implements, ascribed to Indians living in the area, were found in an archeological dig in the Dismal Swamp.

The Old Post Road, the earliest public road in eastern New Jersey, passed through Edison and is said to have been used by President George Washington as he traveled through the state on the way to his inauguration in New York City in April 1789.

A re-enactment of that journey took place in Edison on April 13, 1989, during the celebration the bicentennial of Washington's first inauguration. His route was retraced, and special ceremonies were held at the historic St. James Church, Woodbridge Avenue.

The Bonhamtown area of Edison, on the Old Post Road, is named after Nicholas Bonham, a freeholder from 1682 to 1683. The hamlet is said to have been the site of an old Indian village and later a Continental Army camp and battleground during

the Revolution.

Bonhamtown also served as the seat of justice for Middlesex and Somerset counties as early as 1683. By 1834, the village featured 10 or 12 dwellings, two taverns, a store and a school-house.

Revolutionary War skirmishes took place in Bonhamtown, Piscatawaytown and along Woodbridge Avenue. In fact, the St. James Episcopal Church building served as a hospital for wounded British soldiers during the war, and six British soldiers killed in one of the area's skirmishes are buried in the cemetery at the church.

Edison is also home to the second oldest Baptist church in New Jersey and the 10th oldest in the nation.

Stelton Baptist Church was formed in the spring of 1689, and among its original members was the Stelle family, after whom the Stelton section of the township is named. Through 1875, however, the church was known as the First Baptist Church of Piscataway. Present-day congregants celebrated the tercentennial of their church in yearlong celebrations in 1989.

Edison grew in the second half of the 19th century as the attractiveness of the rural landscape became more accessible with the opening of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Easton and Amboy line. By the late 1800s, many residents commuted to jobs in New York and other parts of New Jersey.

One of the many passengers carried on the Pennsylvania line to Edison was Thomas Alva Edison, later to be known as the "Wizard of Menlo Park." It is said that he chose the Menlo Park site for his laboratories because it was the highest point along the Pennsylvania Rail-

road between New York and Philadelphia.

The establishment of Thomas Edison's industrial research laboratory — he preferred calling it his "invention factory" — in 1876 brought world fame to the township as it became the site for some of the most innovative research and manufacturing feats of the 19th century.

While there, Edison invented more than 400 patented items including the phonograph, the electric railway (which incidentally ran along present-day Middlesex Avenue) and the incandescent lamp. Christie Street, on which the Edison Memorial Tower now stands, was the first to be illuminated by incandescent lamps, and Mrs. Jordan's Boarding House, home to many of Thomas

Edison's workers, was the first residence so lighted. All of the homes, buildings, Edison's famed laboratory and even much of the topsoil surrounding these properties were moved by Henry Ford to his Greenfield Village Museum, Dearborn, Mich.

In 1937, the Edison Memorial Tower was erected on the site to commemorate the 10 years Thomas Edison spent at Menlo Park. In 1986, the Edison Township Historical Society erected 12 period street lamps surrounding the tower to commemorate the illumination of Christie Street.

The Edison Memorial Tower is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

From a rural-residential community in the 1920s, Edison

has grown into a major population, commercial and industrial center. It ranks as the second most populous municipality in Middlesex County and one of the 10 largest in New Jersey.

It serves as home to nearly 90,000 residents and is a hub of air, rail and highway networks for the distribution of numerous goods and services.

Raritan Center, located in the southeast section of the township, is the largest industrial park east of the Mississippi River. Its daytime population of Raritan Center is approximately 45,000, rivaling the population of many nearby communities.

In 1954, a group of citizens proposed a change in the name of the township, partially because of the confusion arising

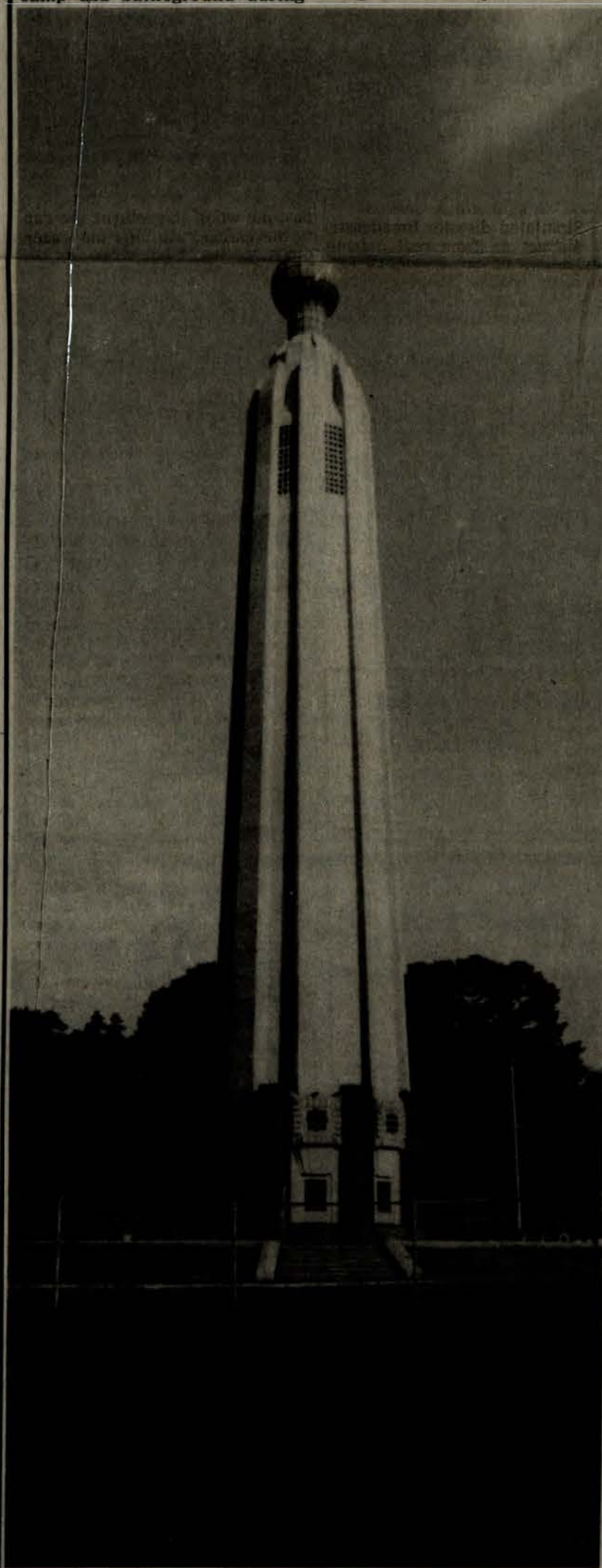
from the fact that several municipalities in the state were named Raritan. The name the voters selected was Edison.

This history of Edison Township, however, is more than a collection of facts and figures, chronologies of events and even a rich inventory of historic sites and buildings. It is a rich and varied legacy of the people, groups, institutions and organizations that have helped form the community into what it is today.

David Sheehan is the president of the Edison Township Historical Society, and this article is the first in a series by society members for the Metuchen-Edison Review on the history of the area.



Forman Martin (l), who once served as Middlesex County free holder, stands with son Oscar Martin. The Martins were an early Edison family of note.



The Edison Memorial Tower stands at Christie Street and Tower Road, the site of Thomas Alva Edison's Menlo Park laboratory. There he invented, among other things, the incandescent lamp. (Photographs courtesy of David Sheehan and the Edison Historical Society.)



The old Martin homestead as it appeared at the turn of the century. The house still stands at 30 Old Post Road and is the residence of David Sheehan, president of the Edison Historical Society.