

WIRA

EDISON



IT'S FINAL, FROM STELTON TO EDISON—Mayor Thomas J. Swales Jr. hammers sign into place identifying the Pennsylvania Railroad passenger station as Edison. The station was previously known as Stelton. Looking on are Park M. Roeper, regional manager of the railroad's New York Region, and Mrs. Charles Wira, president of the Women for Edison. The sign was changed at brief ceremony yesterday afternoon.

Stelton Goes Into History As Use of Edison Expands

EDISON—The name of the Pennsylvania Railroad passenger station off Plainfield Avenue was officially changed from Stelton to Edison at a brief ceremony at the site yesterday afternoon.

Participating were township and railroad officials and representatives of the Women for Edison. The name-change project was pushed by the Women for Edison, assisted by the Forum Club and civic minded citizens.

Mayor Thomas J. Swales Jr. thanked the railroad officials for their cooperation and the Women for Edison for completing the project. Other speakers included Commissioners Joseph Costa and Bruce Eggert; Frank G. Helyar, Planning Board president; James Fergione, former mayor; and Mrs. Charles Wira, Women for Edison president.

The Women for Edison were also instrumental in having the name of this community changed from Harrison Township to Edison Township and the name of the post office

from Stelton to Edison. The group also spearheaded the movement to have a central post office under the name of Edison, to be located on Route 27.

Roeper, the principal speaker, said: "It is not that we on the Pennsylvania Railroad have been laggard in honoring Thomas Alva Edison at this late date; on the contrary, the Pennsylvania Railroad was the first railroad to recognize the value of Edison's early experiments with electricity for lighting and for the propulsion of trains."

Roeper noted that station names are not easily changed. He said thousands of copies of timetables, of tariff books and of ticket forms must be reprinted and that permission must be obtained from the governmental authorities which regulate the railroads. Roeper said the railroad received quick concurrence from the N. J. Board of Public Utility Commissioners concerning the local station.

family and that the station was first established around 1870. The Stelle family settled in the Piscatawaytown section of this township as early as 1668, according to historical records, he said.

Roeper also reviewed the life of Thomas A. Edison, noting his many inventions and achievements.

DAILY HOME NEWS

OCTOBER 30, 1956.

Edison: Wira, Mr. & Mrs.

Involved resident gets new title

NT 12/1/88
By WAYNE YOURSTONE
News Tribune Staff Writer

EDISON — In 1950 township resident Charles Wira wanted to do something for the community so he and some of his friends got involved in the Edison Police Reserves.

And Saturday night his community did something for him as Wira was honored by the organization which he has served as chief for 15 years. His colleagues bestowed on him the title of honorary chief of the unit, the first such title, at an affair held at St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Church.

"It's been worth it because I met a lot of people through it and I still have a lot of friends from it," said Wira of his years of service.

There were tensions world-wide in 1950 and "I wanted to do something for the community," Wira said. "It would be more than just being involved in scouting," he said.

Wira said he also got some of his family members involved in the unit.

Now recovering from a heart attack, Wira said he will be able to make suggestions to the volunteer group in his capacity as honorary chief. He said the township police department, through the reserves' liaison officer, suggested the new position.

According to Wira, the unit performs traffic control work at township churches.

Wira and his wife, Johanna, have not been strangers to civic responsibility. Mrs. Wira organized the women's auxiliary at John F. Kennedy Medical Center.

The Wiras also were instrumental in the 1954 petition drive to change the name of Raritan Township to Edison. In a 1981 interview Wira said the name change move was intended to give the municipality its own identity and pave the way for the opening of a post office in Edison.



KEITH A. MUCCILL/ Special to The News Tribune

Charles W. Wira and wife, Johanna, looking at certificate naming him honorary chief of Edison Police Auxiliary.

WORKING FOR EDISON AREA HOSPITAL

Helping People Aim Of Auxiliary Head

By SHIRLEY A. DOXTATER
Evening News Women's Editor

EDISON—"What am I doing this for? Am I accomplishing what is important?"

Is there any woman in the midst of civic and social club work, who has not sometime asked herself these questions?

More than three years ago Mrs. Charles W. Wira of Liddle Road, did. Her answers did not please her. After years of what others would call a successful civic life, Mrs. Wira "retired."

Today Mrs. Wira is back at the helm in an important job—president of the Women's Auxiliary of the Community Hospital Group Inc., which is working for construction of a \$3,200,000 area hospital.

But before her return Mrs. Wira had spent three years finding the "right" answers to her questions. Mrs. Wira said she had left community life because she felt she was not succeeding in what she wanted to do—to be closer to God through her work.

The decision was made after Mrs. Wira was asked to run for councilwoman.

WHICH ROAD?

"I knew the time had come for me to decide which path to take. I wanted to work for God and to help people through and for Him . . . but I was becoming too involved. I refused to be a candidate and I quit all outside activities," she relates.

Mrs. Wira's three years were spent in prayer and getting to know God, she says. She became a daily communicant at Our Lady of Peace Church where the priests aided and advised her.

"This time I devoted to God became very real to me. I didn't know when I would return to community life. I did know the time would come for me to mix in worldly affairs and to serve humanity as best I could. Now I am back; my one wish is to set an example," Mrs. Wira added.

Mrs. Wira returned to "public life" last fall when asked by the mayor to organize Friends of the Library for Edison Library. She became the group's president.

She was then asked to become a member of the board of trustees for the Community Hospital Group and to form its auxiliary. The organizational meeting was held in November. Mrs. Wira was elected president in January.

According to Mrs. Inez P. Crone, East Orange, president of the N.J. Association of Hospital Auxiliaries, the Edison auxiliary is believed to be the first organized "from the bottom up"—that is, with the formation of the original hospital group. Auxiliaries are usually formed after the hospital has been built, Mrs. Wira said. "All the state officers are very excited about our auxiliary," she said.

The auxiliary had 200 women at its first meeting in January. Now there are 400 members.

HOSPITAL A MUST

"We haven't found it difficult to get members because the hospital need is our selling point. Everyone knows how necessary it is that we have one," Mrs. Wira said.

The auxiliary has pledged \$30,

000 over a five-year period. Its first fund-raising event will be May 18 with Mrs. William Toth, first vice president in charge of ways and means, as chairman. The group plans to hold a swimming party in the heated swimming pool and a luncheon in the Officers' Club at Camp Kilmer.

Mrs. Wira has offered the use of her home and large yard for a June strawberry festival.

TWIGS FORMED

The Edison auxiliary is using the twig system and already projects have been organized under the direction of Mrs. Edward Partenope, third vice president, general twig chairman. There are 20 twigs each composed of 8 to 24 women.

Each twig has its own chairman and decides on its own money-making project. Twig members are making styrofoam Christmas decorations, ceramics and sewing aprons. One plans to hold a venison dinner; another to hold card parties. A twig is not only a service group but a social group as well.

Mrs. Wira is the only active woman member of the board of trustees. Mrs. Benjamin H. Reese, assistant recording secretary of the auxiliary, is an honorary trustee.

Other officers of the auxiliary include Mrs. Leo Weiss, second vice president in charge of membership; Mrs. Jeremiah Gumbs, recording secretary; Mrs. Edson, Because there were four ward Terentz, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Philip Schwalje, as assistant corresponding secretary and Mrs. Angelos Paraskevas, treasurer.

CAME FROM BROOKLYN

Mrs. Wira began community work several years after the family moved to Edison from Brooklyn. That was 22 years ago Mrs. Wira is the former Johanna Gerzanich of New York City.

Mr. Wira owns O.B. Fish Co., Inc., fishing equipment firm, which had offices in New York City until two years ago when Mrs. Wira moved the company to Edison.

Hospitals have always been of interest to Mrs. Wira who began her community life in 1947 by doing work at Halloran Hospital for Veterans in Staten Island until it closed two and a half years later. She was not only on its board of advisers but also worked as a volunteer. Conducting birthday parties was one of her main projects.

One of her proudest achievements was her success with the boys' and girls' activities she organized as chairman of youth conservation department of the Clara Barton Woman's Club.

HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERS

She formed a teen-age council and her girls were the forerunners of the Junior Auxiliary Nurses (JANs) at Perth Amboy General Hospital. There was such a shortage of help that the hospital agreed to try out the teenagers. A total of 500 girls worked that summer. The program was so successful that the next year



PRESIDENTIAL DUTY: Mrs. Charles W. Wira of Liddle Road, Edison, finds telephoning is one of the main obligations of being president of the Women's Auxiliary of the Community Hospital Group Inc., which is working for the construction of an Edison area hospital.

the JANs were organized. The boys on Mrs. Wira's teen-age council worked in Civilian Defense aiding the director.

Mrs. Wira was one of the prime forces trying to get a post office for Edison Township and was instrumental in changing the township's name from Rartian to Edison. Because there were four Raritans in New Jersey the post office department said the town would have to change its name. That was in 1954.

Mrs. Wira organized the women of Edison and with the help of her husband, put on a door-to-door campaign to change the name. Since then the battle for the post office has been waged.

The group was successful in getting the Stelton Post Office changed Edison several years later but that post office serves only part of the township, Mrs. Wira said.

SCOUTING, TOO

Both Mr. and Mrs. Wira were active in boy scouting. He was chairman of the committee of Troop 25 and she was president of the Women's Auxiliary. She was also a girl scout leader in the Metuchen Area Council.

Spare moments Mrs. Wira uses writing prose and poetry.

"I used to write much more; now I'm afraid my writing is directed mostly to letters," she said.

Most important of all is Mrs. Wira's family. Charles Robert, 23, is doing graduate work in physiology at Michigan State University.

Joanne, 21, who received an associate arts degree from Monmouth College in June, leads a full life working for the Edison Housing Authority, studying for her bachelor of science degree at Rutgers University and attending the New Brunswick Secretarial Accounting and Business Machines School.

Richard, 19, is a sophomore at Delaware Valley College, Doylestown, Pa., and Barbara Ann, 15, is a sophomore at Edison Township High School.

Edison

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"proud and happy" about the change in name. He said that much confusion had resulted in the past because of three Raritan townships in the state and a borough of Raritan.

He said the people now have a well deserved identification and a "single name that may help to right the wrongs that have happened in the past." The next step, the mayor said, is a drive to eliminate the confusions caused by the fact that various parts of the township are served by a total of eight different post offices.

He said that on several occasions he has not received mail addressed to him as mayor of Raritan township. Although he is well known, and has lived here 49 years, he said, the mail would not be redirected and delivered to him.

Mayor Forgione said he "hopes to live long enough to see this growing community with a uniform mailing address and a post office name for all parts."

The mayor thanked Mrs. Wira and her assistants, Michael Germak of the Clara Barton section and every one else who helped bring about the name Edison.

Edison's Best Wishes

Mrs. Wira read a telegram from Charles Edison, former governor and son of Thomas Alva Edison. Mr. Edison wished the new municipality "a future as bright as the light born here 75 years ago."

Mrs. Wira also read a letter that Mr. Edison sent as a personal note to Mayor Forgione. In it Mr. Edison thanked the people of the township on behalf of the Edison family.

Then the chairman of the Women for Edison expressed her thanks and mentioned specifically the help given by Mayor Forgione, who signed the first name on the Edison petition, Commissioner Brace Eggert, the Raritan Township Forum Club and Mr. Germak.

She cut the cake and passed portions out to members of the governing body. She explained that building regulations prohibited serving food in commission meeting chamber but invited the spectators in the jammed hall to stop by the mayor's office on the first floor for a taste.

Father Martin gave the benediction.

While spectators pressed closer for a look at the cake, an informal party developed with some of them eating and others snapping pictures. Mr. Germak took movies of the ceremony on color film.

During this informal "break" in the official meeting Theodore Dowd, commander of Post 3117, V. F. W., talked to Mayor Forgione.

The mayor rapped for order and announced that at Mr. Dowd's suggestion the first piece of public business transacted in the name of Edison would be a moment of silence in tribute to the fallen in the nation's wars.

Everybody stood silently until the mayor rapped the signal for the meeting to resume.

A few minutes later the governing body introduced an ordinance with the name Edison sprinkled in among the legal verbiage and the new name was in official use.



HONOR PROF—Prof. Frank G. Helyar, center, accepts plaque from Mayor Thomas J. Swales of Edison at testimonial dinner last night. Mrs. Charles Wira, Women for Edison president, looks on. Testimonial was sponsored by the Women for Edison to honor Helyar for his service to the community.

Edison Turns Out in Tribute To Planning Board Veteran

EDISON — Municipal officials, civic leaders and friends turned out last night to honor one of this community's most respected and devoted citizens — Prof. Frank G. Helyar.

Helyar, a township resident of 30 years and chairman of the Planning Board for the last decade, received the plaudits at a testimonial dinner in The Pines.

More than 100 persons attended the affair sponsored by the Women for Edison to pay tribute to Helyar for his many years of service to the township.

Plaque Presented

Dr. Mason W. Gross, provost of Rutgers University, was the principal speaker. A highlight of the testimonial was the presentation of a plaque by Mayor Thomas J. Swales Jr. to the honored guest. Mrs. Charles Wira, Women for Edison president, was the master of ceremonies.

The inscription on the plaque, which expressed the sentiments of the local citizenry for the 74-year-old retired professor of Rutgers University, follows: "Man of Honor, Integrity, Wisdom and Kindness. In grateful appreciation of his untiring and beneficial efforts in rendering invaluable services to citizens of Edison Township."

Although Helyar was the recipient of the many kind words, he was quick to turn the spotlight upon those with whom he had

been associated here for many years.

He singled out his colleagues on the Planning Board in expressing his appreciation for their co-operation. They are Swales, Commissioner Brace Eggert, Jack Dickerson, Scott Macan, Daniel Jobbins, William Ghiskey and William Rimmey.

Helyar highly commended the work of George Thompson, building inspector, whom he described as "a public servant of whom the people of the township can well be proud."

The honored guest also singled out Vincent Huether, Zoning Board of Adjustment chairman, and Joseph Simon, zoning board secretary. The Board of Commissioners was also the target of Helyar's praises in his testimonial turnabout.

Women Lauded

Special emphasis was placed by Helyar on the civic accomplishments of the Women for Edison. He pointed out the organization's campaigns in changing the name of this community from Raritan Township to Edison Township and the names of the Pennsylvania Railroad station in the Stelton section and the Stelton Post Office to Edison.

Other speakers honoring Helyar included William Martin, dean of the College of Agriculture at Rutgers University; W. Robert Hale,

chairman of the board of the Edison Bank; Samuel White, Board of Education vice president; Edward Collins, postmaster; William Dunham, Housing Authority chairman.

Also, Charles Wira, a trustee of the Women for Edison; Commissioners Juluis Engel, Joseph R. Costa and Eggert, and Macan.

Helyar retired in June 1953 as director of resident instruction and professor of animal husbandry in the College of Agriculture. He came to Rutgers from New York in 1917.

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