

SOCIETY HILL NEWS

Gazette of the Society Hill Area Residents' Association

VOLUME 1 - NO. 4 - MAY 1958

PUBLISHED EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE

Meeting a 4-Star Success!

SHARA'S First Annual Meeting got off to a delightful start with a coffee-and-dessert prelude in the ballroom of the Hill-Physick-Syng mansion at 321 S. 4th Street, beginning at seven-thirty on the evening of April 28.

Mrs. George Diehl and her committee had not only cleaned and polished the handsome old house until it shone but had prepared a superb cake-and-coffee-and-tea table which was the center of attraction for the nearly 200 members and their guests who attended. The centerpiece was a handsome First Birthday Cake for SHARA, presented by Teitelbaum's Bakery, and the room was decorated with flowers presented by Lisa the florist on South Street at Third. Serving tea and coffee and acting as hostesses were the ladies of Mrs. Diehl's Committee, including Miss Selma Levin, Mrs. Joan Powlen, Mrs. Elizabeth Schoenfeld, Miss Thresa Barranca, Mrs. Lillian Hall, Mrs. Robert Levins, Sr., Mrs. Katherine Kelly, Mrs. Edith Stern, Mrs. Henriette Silverstein, Mrs. A.J. Spause, Mrs. Isadore Rugowitz, Mrs. Florence Gansky, Mrs. Elizabeth Nicholson, Mrs. Bertha Martin, Mrs. Helen Buerklin, Mrs. P. Patterson, Mrs. Kay Riordan, Mrs. Teresa Cathcart and Mrs. John Phillips.

In the Library were displayed exhibits, photos and models of Society Hill renewal projects. It had been planned to have the Annual Meeting itself in the gardens, but because of the inclement weather this had to be moved to the auditorium of Old St. Joseph's Church at 4th & Willing's Alley.

President Sums Up

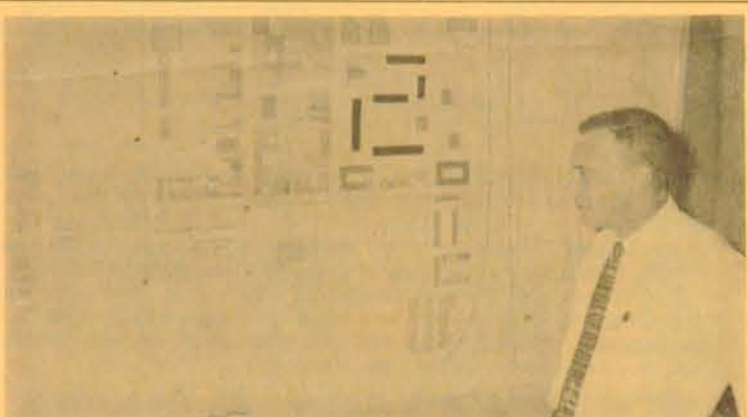
Here the meeting got under way soon after 8:30, and a brief welcoming address was made by the president, Maureen Murdoch. In her talk Miss Murdoch reviewed the accomplishments of SHARA since its organization just a year before: four well-attended and satisfying General Meetings and two Rehabilitation Workshop sessions which proved there's plenty of enthusiastic do-it-yourself rehabilitation going on throughout Society Hill. A good half of the 300 members of SHARA are active in many ways and on many committees for the greater good of all area residents. Some helped in making a survey of community needs and desires, and have presented these to the City Planning Commission, the Redevelopment Authority and the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation. They have represented neighbors and property owners at zoning hearings and have kept close and friendly contacts with city and planning officials so that SHARA is kept advised of progress in the plans for Society Hill.

The Education & Recreation Committee was instrumental in bringing the City Library's Bookmobile into the areas on Fridays between 1 and 3 p.m., at 4th & Delancey Streets; a Great Books Discussion Group was organized by the same Committee. A Halloween Party for children was held in Lawrence Street and was attended by some 300 happy, costumed youngsters.

The Society Hill News took over from the Old Philadelphian, under the editorial guidance of George Kearney. Other Committees -- Membership, Police Cooperation, Health, Urban Renewal, Zoning and Rehabilitation have been functioning effectively to "help make and keep Society Hill a safe, attractive and friendly place in which to live and work.

The President also expressed SHARA's appreciation to the Faust-Gilliard-Bezubichick American Legion Post which has provided SHARA with an office address, and to the city and planning officials present at the meeting. These included Mr. John Robin, Executive Vice President of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, Mr. Francis J. Lammer, Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia,

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Mr. Preston Andrade, A.I.A.

REDEVELOPMENT OPENS SITE OFFICES

In prompt answer to a plea made by SHARA's executive board the Redevelopment Authority will open a temporary office at 321 S. 4th Street holding a series of weekly clinics there from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M. every Monday night.

Society Hill is so filled with unfounded rumors that the Redevelopment people were only too happy to meet SHARA's suggestion for the setting up of a practical information center within the area. An offer of space for such an office was made at 321 S. 4th Street which presently is owned by the Pennsylvania Hospital.

Clarence Alhart, well-versed in the Redevelopment plans and its various laws, will meet all residents with problems with, if necessary, a staff. He will be able to confirm the present plans for each house in the area and explain all legal matters. If alterations are to be made Mr. Alhart will talk over suggestions and find out what each resident wants. But he can't talk prices.

These sessions started on May 26th and will continue as long as necessary on June 2nd and June 9th always at the same time. In the day-time Mr. Alhart, on appointment, is available at the general office of Redevelopment Authority, 1818 Rittenhouse Square -- Kingsley 5-2206.

FLASH!

Miss Selma Levin, Chairman of Unit No. 2 Committee, reports that Redevelopment Authority officials have informed her that they are seriously considering SHARA's recommendations concerning the McCall School Playground, as well as those in connection with the continuation of retail stores throughout the neighborhood, with special reference to those on 5th and 6th Streets.

PENNA. HOSPITAL SALUTES SOCIETY HILL

Each June the grounds of the Pennsylvania Hospital at 8th and Spruce Streets assume the appearance of a festive fair ground. And each June the gala occasion has chosen a special theme for the day. This year the Hospital has chosen Wednesday, June 4th as the day and "Society Hill" as the area rating a big salute.

The entire theme will be carried out through using historic names of yesterdays famous Society Hill shops, inns, stores, and homes. The gay booths that dot the grounds will bear such names as "Stansbury", "the Abraham Petit Auction", "William Goods Bakery", and "Eugene Rouseil, Perfume and Fancy Assortments". The "Peter Platter Inn" will serve luncheon on the grounds and "Clarks Inn" will waft the scent of hot dogs and hamburgers around the tables of its patrons.

Nor will the children of Society Hill be neglected. There will be a good sized section laid out for fun games and rides -- with prizes to the winners. The Fashion Show to be held at three o'clock will feature not only the latest in summer cottons -- but will also present fashions seen in Society Hill in its earlier days.

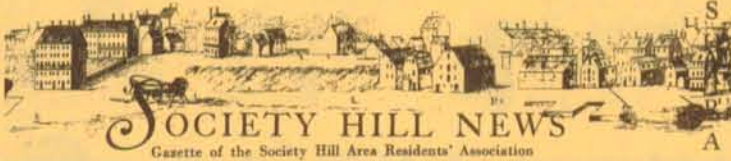
Another attraction will be the "Clothesline Exhibit" of art work of the Philadelphia Golden Age Clubs.

The gay booths will use as basic decoration colorful copies of the old Philadelphia "Fire Marks". In addition each booth will compete for honors as "Best Decorated". Among the judges who will make this important decision will be Society Hill's own Miss Maureen Murdoch and Miss Bertha van Mosehizsker.

At five o'clock the crowd will gather before the steps of Old Pine Street entrance to the Hospital to watch the winners names drawn from the "Ben Franklin Jackpot". Who will win the little 1958 Fiat sports car, or the \$100 cash, or the Philco T.V. set or the other prizes? Maybe these will find new homes in Society Hill.

Then too, there will be SHARA'S own exhibit of community activities occupying a booth on the main grounds. And, also, the main event of the morning which is to be a tour of the newly restored and the Historic homes of Society Hill. Among the homes to be visited are those of Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Martin at 705 Spruce, the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Canaday at 243 South 6th Street, the home of the Mutual Assurance Company of America wherein reside Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Seymour, and the Hill-Physick-Randolph-Keith Mansion at 321 South 4th Street home of Mr. George F. Kearney. The Powell House, the Philadelphia Contributionship, and the Morris House will wind up the day's tour.

Throughout the day - from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. the activity will continue as Pennsylvania Hospital Day unfolds its Salute to Society Hill. Come join us for the occasion.



George F. Kearney, Editor,
Public Relations Committee

Daisy Primo, Secretary

Elizabeth Schoenfeld	Harry Altman
Selma Levin	Pat Reid
Bertha von Moschzisker	Raymond Gogolski
Catherine Phillips	Madge Buerklin
Howard Silverman	Danny Primo
Edward Scherneck	Anne List
Bernard Sokolick	Ed. Sobel
John Sennott, Staff Aide, SHARA	

Advice From Ye Olde Man About Rehabilitation

From the depth of a world of experience may Ye Editor of this publication urge the good people of Society Hill to stop worrying about what is going to happen to their particular houses. Some thirty-five years of a very active newspaper career makes me very leery of a well-known national disease we shall call, here, Rumoritis.

Not that SHARA wants to soft-pedal any injustices; in fact we have quite a husky reputation for being insistent about what we know is wrong here in Society Hill - as, for instance, the arbitrary decision to place a mammoth central police station and jail somewhere at the edge of Society Hill near Second and Pine Street. Our wily diplomat, Miss Maureen Murdoch deftly convinced our city fathers that the whole idea was wrong the city council soon gave in and placed the headquarters where it belonged, near Franklin Square.

Never underestimate the power of a gentle-spoken woman, like our Maureen, to get her own way. She's famous for it, and she's watching this situation of the redevelopment of Society Hill with her pal, Phoebe Patterson, SHARA's new president, with eagle eyes. And Phoebe's no man's fool either. They're gals in the right place fortunately for us.

Now permit Ye Editor to keep on wearing his white beard. We're still looking for a villain in this Society Hill but, honest-to-goodness, we haven't found one. A newspaperman becomes finally an expert in studying people suffering from Rumoritis. We have learned, from clinical observation that, if pampered a victim can have a hard time of it. We have met some very fine residents who are taking these things the hard way. My advice is -- wait and see. There is a fatalism in life which turns most grim rumors into the best things that happen to us in life.

And if you have a problem, a good-sized rumor, drop around on Monday evenings at 321 S. 4th St., to talk things over with this guy, Clarence Alhart, who can speak authoritatively about most everything in Society Hill. And we suspect you'll see Maureen Murdoch, somewhere around taking notes like mad on all your questions and Mr. Alhart's measured answers. He's quite a fellow and, besides, he is a dyed-in-the-wood Society Hiller and is fixing up a house down here.

The relationship between the members of SHARA and the various officials of the Redevelopment Authority has remained, in spite of the neighborhood tension, quite cordial, dignified and still below the boiling point. No one in this area has lost his temper under the greatest provocation. The people of Society Hill are willing to concede that certain changes must be made; that some people will be inconvenienced by the changes indicated in the Andrade plan.

At the neighborhood meeting last Monday night (May 26) the scene was quite heartening. Mr. Alhart, officially representing the Redevelopment Authority as the principal planner for Unit 1 area set up his office in the library of 321 S. 4th Street promptly at 7:30 P.M. He was polite, friendly, knowledgeable, sympathetic young man anxious to study the neighborhood reaction to the Andrade plan. He was assisted by two assistants plus a copy of the map of the area indicating the changes contemplated. It should be emphasized that the plans shown on the map are subject to changes as these conferences between the property-owners and the planners continue.

In another room the SHARA's Rehabilitation Clinic was in session. Here several architects, deeply immersed in the job of rehabilitating existing old houses, talked about the problems of reconstruction over with a dozen harassed, often bewildered property owners. Much was accomplished by these down-to-earth conferences and the atmosphere cleared considerably. Two architects, Damone Child and Frank Graham, both residents of Society Hill and intensely interested in the general problem of redevelopment, were present. They were aided by Mr. L. E. Martin, Chairman, SHARA'S Rehab Clinic and a man of wide experience in restoration of old houses. A

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SHARA'S FIRST FAMILY



Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin Schoenfeld, receiving SHARA 1958 Family Service Award Placque from Mr. L.E. Martin, SHARA Executive Board member at annual meeting.

During the last four years Elizabeth Schoenfeld has labored increasingly for the improvement of living conditions in the Society Hill area.

First as Chairman of Joint Committee, conducting a T. B. Chest X-ray program, then as president of the Old Philadelphia Planning Committee and finally as a founder and public relations chairman of the Society Hill Residents' Assn.

Aided the past two years by Ben, they have worked many hours weekly to the end that the average citizen of the area could have an organization with which to work on the many problems facing the area in the Urban Renewal program of the City of Philadelphia.

AWARD DINNER



On Monday, May 12th, the 12th annual Union League Boys' Citizenship Award Dinner was held.

John Winter, 15 years of age of 412 Spruce Street member of SHARA Education Recreation Committee, student of South Philadelphia High School; and Patrick Reid, 15 years of age of 332 S. 3rd Street, member of SHARA Public Relations Committee, a student of Bishop Neuman High School were honored.

The boys assembled at The Union League, 140 S. Broad Street at 11:30 A.M. and left by bus at 12 o'clock noon for the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Box lunches were provided. Upon arrival at the Navy Yard the boys went on a very special tour as special guests of the Commandant, after which they returned by Navy tug up the Delaware River and then by bus to the Union League.

The award dinner started promptly at 6 P.M. In addition to the presentation of the citizenship awards, outstanding sports figures, including members of the Phillies' baseball team, and many other representatives of college and professional sports, greeted the boys. Congratulations John and Pat.

COME TO THE FAIR

YOU are invited to the "All Free" Community Services Fair at the Armory, Broad and Wharton Sts., on Wednesday, May 28, 1958 - 7-10 P.M. and Thursday, May 29, 1958 - 10 A.M. - 10 P.M. co-sponsored by the Southern Area Health and Welfare Council, Inc., South Phila. Realty Board.

There will be continuous entertainment by --- South Philadelphia High School Orchestra --- Bok Technical-Vocational School Band and Choir --- Musical Rhythm Group of the Jackson School --- Dance Group, St. Nicholas Day Nursery --- Pierce School Chorus --- Trilby String Band --- Jazz Combo and Concert Band (provided for by a grant from trust fund of the Recording Industries, through cooperation of Local 77, American Federation of Musicians) --- Police and Fireman's Band --- Joe Aronson, nationally known folk singer --- Smith School Tumblers --- Benson School Rhythmairs.

Mr. Oscar Stern, 503 Pine St., Charter Board member of SHARA is chairman of the Southern Area Committee of The Health & Welfare Council.

ANNUAL MEETING - Continued

Mr. Clarence Alhart, Principal planner for the Redevelopment Authority; Rev. Joseph Cawley of St. Joseph's Church was also thanked for the hospitality extended by the Church to SHARA on many occasions.

At the conclusion of the President's talk, Mr. Robert Levins, Sr., presented the report of the Nominating Committee and the new slate of officers and members-at-large. Several members made other nominations from the floor, and after these had been considered and accepted voting proceeded on the suggested slate.

A motion was made by Dr. Benjamin Schoenfeld, chairman of the Urban Renewal Committee, that SHARA be incorporated as a non-profit organization, and this motion was seconded and passed by those present.

SHARA'S NEW OFFICERS

At this point the Election Committee returned and announced the new officers for SHARA for 1958-59, and these are as follows:

President: Mrs. Phoebe Patterson
1st Vice President: Rev. Joseph Cawley
2nd Vice President: Maureen Murdoch
3rd Vice President: Mr. Al Spause
Sec. (Pro Tem): Phyllis Johnson
Corres. Sec.: Leon Hall
Treasurer: Robert Levins, Sr.

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Miss Selma Levin
Mr. Morton Powlen
Mr. Oscar Stern
Mr. Philip Valvardi
Mr. Ralph Ottaviano
Mr. Joseph Smith
Mrs. Pauline Johnson
Mrs. Helen Buerklin
Committee Chairmen:
Membership -- Dr. Meyer Gansky
Public Relations -- Maureen Murdoch
Editor Society Hill News -- George F. Kearney
Police Coop. -- Leo Riordan
Health -- Dr. Edw. I. Siegal
Ed. & Recreation -- Mr. and Mrs. George Diehl
Streets -- Isadore Rugowitz
Budget & Finance -- Rev. Joseph Cawley
Urban Renewal -- Mr. Robert Levins, Sr.
Zoning -- Arnold Nicholson
Rehabilitation -- L. E. Martin
Special Events -- Kurt Winter

The retiring president then turned the meeting over to the new President, and Mrs. Patterson introduced the speaker of the evening, Mr. Preston Andrade, A.I.A., architect for the City Planning Commission's Washington Square Development Plan.

Mr. Andrade presented his report on the Unit One Study made by his staff during the past six months, illustrating his remarks with maps and charts. Considerable discussion ensued, in which Mr. Robin and Mr. Lammer as well as Mr. Andrade took part.

The most important development to come out of the meeting was the assurance by these planners that they are willing and anxious to have the suggestions and alternate plans of the area residents for consideration before the plan is finally sent to the Federal Government for implementing. Suggestions were made for further, particularized meetings with specific groups, and SHARA'S Executive Board immediately arranged for a special board meeting to formulate plans.

One of the highlights of this Annual Meeting was the presentation of plaques in token of appreciation for services rendered to Miss Murdoch, retiring president, and to Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin Schoenfeld, in appreciation to their contribution to the community and SHARA.

Society Hill Vignettes**Maybe You Remember****Mrs. Charles P. Keith**

Very shortly the Saturday Evening Post is going to publish an article about the genial Dr. Philip Syng Physick "Father of American Surgery" who probably was the most famous dweller of the old mansion, known as the Hill-Physick Keith house at 321 S. 4th which nearly everybody visits nowadays.

Many distinguished persons occupied, and frequently visited, this old home, rich in echoes and memories. George F. Kearney, its present occupant, has prepared a handsome brochure on its history, most of it written by the late Miss Frances Wister, founder of the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks whose arduous hobby was the raising of money to restore old houses, like the Powell House at 244 South Third Street. This started all the rage for the restoration of Colonial homes in the Society Hill area. The Hill-Physick Keith brochure was so much in demand that George Kearney has given them all away and is thinking about printing a new edition.

Actually the house should be called the Wister home as a long line of Wisters have lived there. The brochure recounts the geneology of this stately mansion which is one of the most famous homes in all America. Kearney, who is Irish and has a nimble imagination, threatens, if he still has time, to write the fabulous story of the many picturesque people, from the past and present, who have talked to him in the nights of Sundays he has lived there and slept with his third eye open. (And be sure and ask him about the mansion's house mice who do square dances at midnight atop his bedside table.) Kearney's tall tales of yesterday's people are quite out of this world; kids love 'em!

Henry Hill, who built this town house in 1786 was a brilliant officer in Washington's army; an importer of Madeira wine who sailed many ships in the seven seas. He often housed slaves and unruly seamen in the cellar dungeon which still exists there. John Marshall, the first Attorney General, was operated on by Dr. Physick in this home. Here Dr. Randolph entertained the Marquis de Lafayette when he came back to America in 1814 and made his wide-spread farewell tour throughout the country he helped to found.

Perhaps the best-known visitor to the mansion was the redoubtable Dr. Benjamin Franklin, who designated Henry Hill as one of the executors of his last will. Old Ben, so they say, drops around to talk with Kearney about the Junto, the Gulf Stream and the fourth dimension of space and time.

But, be that as it may, the last most picturesque residents of this house were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Penrose Keith. Mrs. Keith's name was Elizabeth Harvey Wister, a grand dame of her day who always came back into town to entertain her guests before the Assembly Ball. These were the days of crinoline, lavender and old lace. Old-timers remember Mrs. Keith supervising her gardeners from the porch leading out from the ballroom facing Delancy Street. There are a thousand and one stories about Mr. Keith, a lawyer and an historian, and Mrs. Keith who is said to have looked like a Gainsborough duchess in her party dresses of the mid-Victorian era.

Across the street Mrs. Keith acquired 320 S. 4th Street, also an old manse and also ("So I'll always have a nice view.") three houses which now comprises a memorial garden. Mrs. John H. Maurer, widow of the famed district attorney of this city, still lies there with her glorious memories of her wonderful husband.

On June Fourth the Pennsylvania Hospital, to whom Mrs. Keith willed the property, will stage a walking tour through Society Hill, and this hallowed house, as part of their June fete. However those who arrive at the bewitching hour of midnight, in hopes of seeing the house mice do their square dances, will be promptly turned into pumpkins as a punishment for being much too curious.

BOOKMOBILE POPULAR

Every Friday near noon a strange vehicle settles down on the Delancy Street sidewalk of 321 South Fourth Street. It looks for all the world like a space ship people are talking about nowadays. It huffs and it blows, grunts and groans.

Then it opens up, smiles at the Society Hill neighborhood and begins handing out books on free library cards. This Bookmobile is sent out every week by the Free Library of Philadelphia which has its main headquarters on Logan Square.

Nor are the books they give out to the neighborhood any old kind. They are up-and coming fiction and informative books. Moreover, if you are interested in a special subject, anything, you can ask the gracious ladies in attendance to look up your specialty in the main library and bring it down to you next week.

We're proud of this Bookmobile, and the convenience it offers, as this was first suggested by Shara.

And you ought to see the school children crowding down to get their books. The teachers of the various schools now send an emmissary to bring back the books asked for by the rest of the kids --- neat, eh?



Houses for Rehabilitation

200 block Pine and 100 certified homes will have priority at Rehabilitation Clinic Session sponsored by SHARA.

Mr. L.E. Martin, clinic chairman, urges residents Mr. Edmond Bacon's statement "quite the place to get the proper guidance", to begin your rehabilitation is at SHARA'S Rehab Clinic, which will meet the same night and the same place as the Redevelopment Committee - The Hill-Physick-Keith Mansion, 321 S. 4th St., service by appointment, come in and register for your free Rehab session. These clinics will be resumed in the fall.

SPRUCE STREET IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION PLANS PARTY

A wing ding of a party for central city residents will be held on Saturday, June 14th at the picturesque Mask and Wig club-house 310 Quince St., under the auspices of the Spruce Street Improvement Association.

It will be something out of this world--booths, cake sale, a turkey and ham buffet, fortune telling, an array of pretty girls as attendants and the fun of visiting Mask and Wig with its many trophies and pictures.

A donation of \$1.50 will be asked. Tickets can be obtained at Mrs. Furman's, 1209 Spruce Street.

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EDITORIAL - Continued

number of pertinent questions were asked by Society Hill residents and some valuable suggestions were made and studied by the residents and these friendly architects.

A third meeting on general problems in the area was in progress in the old ballroom. It was the executive board of SHARA with all its members present. This group is the nerve center of our residents' organization; alive to its many problems. They reiterated their opposition to the high-rise apartment set forth in the plans for what we now call the Yellow Cab parking lot at 4th and Willings Alley. They also asked for an alternate plan for the very effective playground used by the Salvation Army and sponsored by the Lions Club of Central Philadelphia.

From now on forward we will hear a great deal about this playground, strategically located for the use of the neighborhood boys and also the children of working wives who are cared for by the Salvation Army in their very human way. The Redevelopment plans call for the retaining of the old building housing the Salvation Army on the north side of Willings Alley but not this playground which the Redevelopment wants to eliminate in order to give the high-rise apartment more park area along Third Street.

On this important matter, involving matters of policy, the SHARA's executive board is holding its breath. President Phoebe Patterson called for thoughtful consideration of this dilemma and asked for a substitute plan. The first thought, of course, was to convince the Redevelopment Authorities of the value of the playground on this particular spot. This, we believe, is the sore thumb of the Redevelopment plan and one which will continue to arouse public sentiment.

President Patterson appointed Ye Editor as chairman of a committee to study a substitute plan and he was asked to form a committee of the strongest element of the Society Hill community to deal with this overall problem. We have such a plan, or plans, which first must be studied from its many special angles. The committee, when formed, will welcome any suggestions. The committee is anxious to work in close co-operation with the various planning officials of the Redevelopment Authority and are reasonably hopeful that a more-than-adequate solution can be reached. It should take into full consideration the needs of our expanding community and, more particularly, the children of the working wives who are expected to crowd down here in houses and apartments convenient to their work.

The executive committee of SHARA was introduced to Mr. Chester Hayes, chairman of the Relocation Committee of Redevelopment and also Mr. Jerome Feinberg, chairman of the Real Estate committee. Both men talked like officials dedicated to the human situations involved in their jobs.

So this, we feel, is democracy in action, an interesting experiment in community action which will be studied closely by the whole nation in this readjustment period. There will be many heartaches...some people may lose their tempers in those difficult situations involving their homes, their businesses and their children's welfare. Democracy, we are told is an uncomfortable process especially in periods of transition and our only hope, and prayer, is that we can continue quietly to solve each situation with all the facts.



"Hi Captain"

Dock your boat in the Marina
and live in SOCIETY HILL;
a dream coming true

See

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