



Gremms-Doolittle Library
Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305
(518) 374-0263

Guide to the Helen Quirini Collection, ca. 1910-2010 (2010.116)

Creator: Quirini, Helen, 1920-2010

Accession Number: 2010.116

Extent: 1.5 cubic feet (2 boxes)

Source: Donated by Rudolph J. Quirini, December 1, 2010.

Inclusive Dates: ca. 1910-2010

Access: Access to this collection is unrestricted.

Abstract: Personal papers of Helen Quirini, a union organizer, community activist, and lifelong resident of Schenectady.

Catalog Terms:

Quirini, Helen, 1920-2010

Human rights workers--New York (State)

Women--New York (State)--Personal and other papers

Labor unions--Officials and employees

Polish people--New York (State)--Schenectady

Scope and Content Note:

The Helen Quirini collection is composed of a variety of materials, including awards, honors, biographical information, and material related to the Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services Advisory Council. The collection also includes a copy of Quirini's memoir of work at General Electric during World War II. Additionally, the collection includes numerous family photographs, virtually all of which are undated and do not include attribution information.

Organization Note:

Files are listed alphabetically by original folder title or item description. All folder titles created or appended by the Librarian are indicated in brackets. Oversized plaques are arranged by date.

Biographical Note:

Helen Josephine Quirini was a union organizer, community activist, and lifelong resident of Schenectady. She was born in Schenectady on March 9, 1920 to Frank K. and Marie

(Ogonowski) Quirini, the youngest of four siblings. She graduated from Mont Pleasant High School in 1937. In 1941, she was hired by the General Electric Company as a pieceworker. Quirini would continue to work for GE in various positions for nearly 40 years, until her retirement in 1980. Quirini died in 2010 at age 90 at Ellis Hospital, following a stroke.

During her early years at General Electric, Quirini joined Local 301 of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America. She served as a shop steward and served on the local's Executive Board, and agitated for equal pay and equal treatment of women workers. After retiring in 1980, Quirini maintained a connection to the union, leading a unit for Local 301's retirees. With Kevin Mahar, Quirini helped to found the GE Justice Fund, which coordinates the efforts of GE retiree councils throughout the country to campaign for automatic cost of living adjustments for the company's pensioners. Quirini wrote about her experience as a worker for GE in the 1940s in a document titled "Helen Quirini and General Electric: A Personal Memoir of World War II." Quirini also co-authored "Reflections: The Story of Local 301 IUE-AFL-CIO" with Hank Antonelli. Gail George wrote and performed a play, *Helen and Jack*, about Quirini and General Electric CEO Jack Welch.

In addition to Quirini's work with the union and on behalf of GE retirees, she was also actively involved with a number of social justice and community organizations, including the Schenectady County Human Rights Commission, Refreshing Springs Day Care, Better Neighborhoods, Inc., Schenectady Day Care Council, Health Services Agency of Northeastern New York, Schenectady Day Care Council, Citizens for Preservation and Revitalization, New York StateWide Senior Action Council, and Schenectady Council of Senior Citizens. She was a volunteer for the Schenectady YWCA for more than 40 years, and served on the organization's Board of Directors.

Quirini received numerous awards during her lifetime, including the League of Women Voters' Susan B. Anthony Award, the Joseph A. Beirne Award from the United Way, the Gerald L. Phillippe Award from General Electric, the Bread and Roses Award, and the YWCA of Schenectady's Jefferson Award and Woman of Vision Award. The city of Schenectady twice named Quirini as a Patroon for her service to the community. The YWCA's Helen Quirini Memorial Scholarship Fund and The Community Foundation for the Capital Region's Helen Quirini Donor Advised Fund were established in her honor.

Condition Note:

Materials in the collection are generally in good condition. Some photographs in the collection are torn or creased. Most photographs have been rehoused in protective sheeting.

Related and Separated Materials:

A number of newspaper issues and other documents have been separated from the collection. Please see Box 1, Folder 1 for a complete listing of materials separated from the collection. See also the Helen Quirini Papers, 1941-2005 (APAP-102) at the M.E. Grenander Department of Archives and Special Collections at the University at Albany.

Processed By/Date: Heather Cunningham, April 2011

Updated By/Date: Melissa Tacke, 5/6/2011

Box and Folder Listing:

Box	Folder	Folder Title
1	1	[Materials separated from collection]
1	2	Aging – 1978-1988 & n.d.
1	3	Aging – 2006
1	4	Aging – 2007
1	5	Aging – 2008
1	6	Aging – 2009-2010
1	7	Biography – 1987-2010
1	8	Certificates – 1948-2010
1	9	Finding aid [for papers at University at Albany] – 2010
1	10	[General Electric visitor pass] – 2010
1	11	“Helen Quirini and General Electric: A Personal Memoir of World War II” [autobiography] – 1997
1	12	Labor activist – 2000-2008
1	13	[Newspaper clippings pertaining to history of Schenectady] – 1990-2005
1	14	Photographs – 1976-2000 & n.d.
1	15	[Photographs – Quirini Family Album] [1 of 2]
1	16	[Photographs – Quirini Family Album] [2 of 2]
1	17	[Photographs – Quirini Family Photos]
1	18	[Schenectady history miscellany] – 1961-1990 & n.d.
1	19	[Schenectady tourism materials] – ca. 1980-2005
1	20	“Secret Love” b/w “You’ll Never Walk Alone” 45 RPM record [Helen Quirini production credit]
2	N/A	G.E. Foundation for Distinguished Public Service – Gerald L. Phillippe Award,– 1975 [plaque]
2	N/A	Schenectady County Human Rights Commission – 1980 [plaque]
2	N/A	Schenectady County Office for the Aging – Senior Citizen of the Year Award – 1984 [plaque]
2	N/A	Schenectady County Human Rights Commission – Appreciation Award – 1988 [plaque]
2	N/A	Human Services Planning Council of Schenectady County, Inc. – Certificate of Appreciation – 1991 [plaque]
2	N/A	New York StateWide Senior Action Council – Rose Kryzak Advocacy Award – 1999 [plaque]
2	N/A	Town of Rotterdam – Citation – 2005 [plaque]
2	N/A	Catholic Charities – Senior Volunteer of the Year Award – 2008 [plaque]
2	N/A	6 unlabeled VHS cassettes