

# LIFESTYLES

## In their own words on Michael Wildes

■ Lifelong Englewood resident and former State Assemblyman Arnold Brown said Wildes was the leader of the redevelopment in the city. "He is good with human relations and brought different peoples together. He was great for Englewood during his time," said Brown.

■ Local historian Olga Moseiario is grateful for Wildes' care and concern for seniors and veterans. "Michael always focused on veterans and took an interest in them because he has respect for the country and appreciates them for helping us live how we do, free," said Mosciario.

■ "Michael has the indefinable something," said veteran Frank Luciana.

"He treated all the citizens of Englewood as an individual not looking down on anyone. There were a lot of things he was not able to achieve, but then again there were obstacles preventing this," said resident Dorothy Carles.

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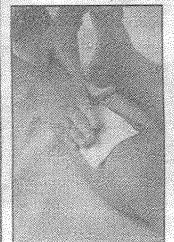
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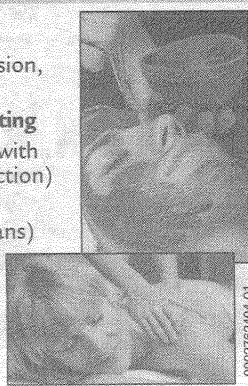
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## WILDES

FROM PAGE 31

"The most amazing thing is that people tend to be closed in life when they get older, but working with him I met so many people and did so many events," said Sniderman.

Sniderman said that the thing about Wildes is he is compassionate. The people came first, phone calls had to be answered and he always tried to get to the bottom of a problem. "It is mind boggling the amount of time he took to respond to people," she said.

Wildes explained that his inclination to give back and serve is simply in his genes. He is grandson to Holocaust survivors and his forefathers instilled in him not only an appreciation for America, but with a sense that he had to contribute.

"The best legacy I can leave is my kid seeing me do something right," said Wildes.

It was commonplace for Wildes to respond to a fire call in the middle of the night, work with firefighters to rescue civilians or organize charitable fund-raisers. Amy doesn't foresee this ending.

"He has a calling to help people to be a spokesperson. I don't anticipate him being home watching 'Married With Children,'" said Amy. "This is not out of his system, he needs to do it."

Under Englewood's charter the mayor does not cast votes at city council meetings unless it is to break a tie. The most important charge to mayor is appointments to the city's Planning Board.

Like any politician, Wildes faced critics who raised their eyebrows to his selections.

"Wildes' political alliance with convicted Bergen County Democratic Organization head Joe Ferrero and his use of the Planning Board as a patronage and pay-to-play tool will be his unfortunate legacy," said longtime Englewood resident Eugene Skurnick.

Wildes disagrees, stating he marched to his own drum and was



FILE PHOTO

Michael Wildes stands in his campaign office back when he was still a councilman in 2002.

never one to sit on the fence.

"I always conducted myself in a transparent fashion, recusing myself even if I didn't have to, to avoid the appearance of impropriety," said Wildes.

Sniderman also refutes that her Planning Board appointment was a biased move. "People were twisting and turning that it was political, but he knew I would do a good job, take all the issues and study them and to the best of my ability to make the appropriate decision," said Sniderman.

Wildes said the free time he has gained is going toward his law practice and his family – a time to reboot.

But no way is Wildes stopping for good. His tremendous work ethic and passion for his county will drive him for a long time to come.

Englewood veteran Frank Luciana predicts a bright future for Wildes.

"I know him from the Memorial and Veterans Day events and he has always been a very fine man. I see him as an assemblyman and a senator," said Luciana. "He has a charisma, a look like a young John F. Kennedy."

Wildes said he has never been shy about his dreams of Washington – he said there is no substitute for having a seat at the table to contribute to America.

Although he offers no specific timeframe, he seems raring to go, ready for the next door-to-door campaign to get the word and faith of the people.

Wildes does state that he has \$500,000 through fund-raisers for a congressional run. "It is a spiritual experience for me to see the government in session in Washington. To know I participated would be a synergy between my

SEE WILDES, PAGE 37

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# LIFESTYLES

## WILDES

FROM PAGE 34

profession and politics," he said.

But Wildes will wait and see; right now his focus is immigration law and charity groups.

Wildes has been blessed by his job having the opportunities to meet luminaries like Hilary Clinton and one that sticks out in his mind — Ted Kennedy.

The late senator visited Wildes in his Manhattan law office to give a speech. He saw Wildes' work and was inspired by his mission. He was also personally touched by the fact that Wildes brought guests such as bus boys and single mothers who couldn't afford the admission price. But after the event, Kennedy paid Wildes a phone call. He told Wildes that he would nev-

er forget the embrace he gave to his father, Leon Wildes, that it looked like a gesture he did often and to cherish it.

"I didn't need the senator to tell me to hug my father often, but that phone call reminded me to express appreciation," said Wildes.

There are some Englewood residents who can't manage the words for their appreciation of Michael Wildes.

Shirley Washington Hobson was born and raised in Englewood. Six years ago tragedy struck her when her daughter was murdered at Rock Creek Terrace.

"When I lost my daughter in 2004, Michael was at my side and my grandson's side the whole time. He is still a good friend of ours," said Hobson.

Hobson is emotional on the subject but is thankful for the little

things Wildes did for her grandson. "Michael took him to the movies a couple times; he even got an autograph from one the Englewood football players for him."

Shirley's grandson, who is passionate about karate and working toward his black belt, to this day has a picture of the former mayor on his nightstand.

As mayor, Wildes lacked the hauteur commonly associated with politicians. "Even when I see him on the street we say hello. I can never forget him," said Hobson. Safe to say, wherever Michael Wildes ends up, Englewood will see him and remember him for his embodied mantra "If I could be of service, don't hesitate to call."

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## DINING OUT

### DINING

FROM PAGE 36

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