

New citizens

Fred G. H. Meijer (right) chats with (left to right) Mr. and Mrs. Victor Wright, Mrs. Mary Ann Seymour and Mrs. Antonia Mizak. The four were among 13 new citizens who were hon-

ored at the 25th annual American Ideals luncheon. Meijer, chairman of the board of Meijer, Inc., was the guest speaker.

Bicentennial inspires residents to acquire American citizenship

By JONESETTA LASSITER CREAL
Chronicle staff writer

They came from Great Britain, from behind the Iron Curtain and Scandinavia. Some came from the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, Asia. One crossed our northern border, while others crossed the southern border.

Some came to join relatives or to escape tyranny or to find a better way of life. They came 10, 15 or even 20 years ago.

They found jobs, some married, others went to school. They all found ways of adjusting to the new life. And now finally, they, like thousands do each year, have taken the final step: they became naturalized American citizens.

It may be only coincidence that 13 immigrants in the Muskegon area chose this, the year of the American Bicentennial, to become naturalized citizens. But it's more fun, maybe even patriotic, to think there's some special significance.

Since most of the new citizens have been in the country longer than the required five-year waiting period, we asked what prompted them to com-

plete their citizenship requirements this year. The answers were not entirely unpredictable, but one new citizen did have a very different answer than most.



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"My husband, George, and my son, kept teasing me with threats to send me back to Austria whenever I did something wrong," said Mrs. Mary Ann Seymour. "So I decided to surprise them and get my citizenship."

Mrs. Antonina Mizak, who came to America from Czechoslovakia 14 years ago, kept putting it off because the citizenship classes offered for immigrants were always held when she was working.

"But when I thought about the Bicentennial coming up, I just decided I was going to try anyway. I al-

ways wanted to become a citizen, and I thought this would be a special time to do it," she said. "I guess the Bicentennial was the inspiration I needed."

Victor and Lore K. Wright said the approach of the Bicentennial motivated them finally to get their paperwork started again. The Wrights had started citizenship proceedings two years ago, but had to drop them when his job as a chemical research supervisor with DuPont brought them to Muskegon from New Jersey.

Mrs. Wright, who is head nurse of Hackley Hospital's psychiatric unit, has had previous experience with adopted countries. Born in East Germany, she and her parents were among the refugees who escaped before the Russian takeover. She grew up in Hanover, West Germany, and went to England at age 20 to study nursing. After her marriage, she became a British citizen.

"It's an interesting experience," she said. "In each of those countries, I sensed the patriotic feelings of the people of that country, and I took on those feelings.

"But we've been here 10 years now, and we've really become used to the

American way of life. We really couldn't live over there anymore."

Perhaps recollection of the cause of the historical break between England and the colonies, coupled with the escalating fervor of this election year, prompted Mrs. Wright's final comment.

"When you live in a country and pay the taxes, you ought to be involved in what's happening."

Mrs. Mizak, Mrs. Seymour and the Wrights were among new citizens honored Thursday at the annual American Ideals luncheon, sponsored by the Muskegon Rotary Club and the Women's Division of Muskegon Area Chamber of Commerce.

Others in whose honor the luncheon was given include: Yang Mo Dennison from Korea; Michelle McKinney, Great Britain; Nick Apostle, Greece; Emil Domaszewsky, Poland; A. Kumar Das, India; Clarence W. Roberts, Canada; Karin Terryn, Norway; and Josephine Roberts, Cuba.

Frederik G. H. Meijer, chairman of the board of Meijer, Inc. was the guest speaker.