



## John P. Williamson

February 22, 1922 - October 26, 2014

John Pritchard Williamson, retired Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of The Toledo Edison Company, passed away peacefully on October 26, 2014 at Parkcliffe Community. He recently had been in declining health as a result of dementia. John was born February 22, 1922 in Cleveland, Ohio to John and Jane Pritchard Williamson.

John was a self-made man of tremendous accomplishments and achievements. Losing his parents at an early age, he worked his way through Kent State University by delivering blocks of ice for food refrigeration. In 1974 John received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Kent State. His continual leadership roles with the university over many years resulted in the honorary dedication of the "Williamson Alumni Center" building. However his most memorable achievement was to meet and marry fellow student Helen Morgan. Together they would raise a family of 3 sons and share 69 years of marriage.

After graduating from Kent State in 1945 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, John started his business career as a Certified Public Accountant with Arthur Andersen & Company. In 1951, he joined The Toledo Edison Company as its very first Director of Systems and Procedures. After advancing through a number of positions he was named Secretary and Treasurer in 1962. In 1965, he was named Vice President-Finance and 3 years later became Senior Vice President. In 1972, John was again promoted, this time as Toledo Edison's President and Chief Executive Officer. Seven

years later, he became the Chairman of the Board and CEO. By the time he retired from The Toledo Edison Company in 1986 he had served 14 years as its CEO.

John was highly respected throughout the public utilities community and was selected to head a number of their state and national organizations. He served as chairman of the East Central Area Reliability Council, President of the Ohio Electric Utility Institute, Executive Committee member of the Edison Electric Institute, Chairman of the Public Utilities Institute and Chairman of the National Electric Security Committee for United States. In 1984 he was selected by his industry peers to serve a 3 year term as the Chairman of the North American Electric Reliability Council. This organization represents all of the electric utility companies in both the United States and Canada.

John also felt a deep sense of responsibility to serve the communities of Toledo and surrounding areas. He was involved with the Toledo Kiwanis Club (past President), the Toledo Area Chamber of Commerce (past President), the Ohio Chamber of Commerce (past Chairman), the Toledo Area United Way Campaign (past General Chairman), the United Way of Greater Toledo (past President), and the Toledo Council of the Boy Scouts of America (past Vice President). He also served on the board of directors of The Toledo Symphony Orchestra, Toledo Museum of Art, Riverside Hospital, Toledo Hospital, Toledo Trust Company, First National Bank of Toledo, American Red Cross – Toledo Chapter, Junior Achievement of Northwest Ohio, Boys Club of Toledo, Financial Analysts Society of Toledo, Covenant United Presbyterian Church (founding elder) and Epworth United Methodist Church (foundation chairman). In 1976 John was named “Toledo Area Citizen of the Year” by the Toledo Board of Realtors. That same year he was also awarded a recognition plaque by the Mayor and City Council of Toledo for his skilled leadership as the first Chairman of the Toledo Development Committee. Its purpose was to provide a blueprint for the future development of downtown Toledo and specifically for the revitalization of the waterfront. It was always John’s belief that the area along Water Street should remain “open” so views of the Maumee River could

be enjoyed by all the citizens of Toledo. He was also very instrumental in the establishment of Promenade Park next to Water Street Station.

His spirit of community beautification can also be found in his spearheading the campaign to light the Anthony Wayne Hi-Level Bridge and also the campus of the University of Toledo. The Toledo Edison Memorial Fountain, a gift to the University by the Toledo Edison Company for the Centennial of Light (1879-1979) celebration is still enjoyed by all who pass by. An inscription on the fountain reads as follows:

“As Thomas A. Edison brought the light of electricity to mankind, this university brings the light of knowledge to its scholars.” - John P. Williamson, Chairman of Toledo Edison Company.

John is survived by his wife Helen, sons John M. (Karol) Williamson, James R. Williamson and Wayne A. (Kathy) Williamson, grandson John R. (Stephanie) Williamson and great-grandson John D. Williamson. Also surviving are family members Christopher (Kim) Seitz, Lisa (Greg) Bowling, Laura (Tom) Baird and Jamison (Amanda) Adams. He was preceded in death by his parents, brother Ivor Williamson, sister Betty Irwin, and Danny Adams Jr.

The family will receive guests Wednesday, October 29, 2014, from 5:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M. at Coyle Funeral Home – 1770 S. Reynolds Rd. Toledo, Ohio.

Internment at historic Joy Cemetery in Ottawa Hills will be private. A memorial service will be held in the Reed Chapel at Swan Creek Retirement Village, 5916 Cresthaven Lane, on Saturday, November 1, 2014, at 10:00 AM.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks a donation be considered to a charity of the donor's choice or to the ProMedica Toledo Children's Hospital Foundation, 2142 N. Cove Blvd., Toledo, Ohio, 43606, in honor of “John D. Williamson – Pediatric Leukemia Treatment Program”. The family would like to express its appreciation to the staff and caregivers at Swan Creek Retirement Village, Parkcliffe Community and Hospice of Northwest Ohio.

A special thank you is extended to all the talented and dedicated employees

at the Toledo Edison Company who so enriched John's life.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT **29**. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Coyle Funeral and Cremation Services

1770 S. Reynolds Road

Toledo, OH 43614

(419) 865-1295

<https://www.coylefuneralhome.com>

# Tribute Wall

“ (News article) John Pritchard Williamson, longtime chairman and chief executive of Toledo Edison Co. who was a leader in local and state professional groups and helped spearhead efforts to develop riverfront land into Promenade Park, died Sunday in Parkcliffe Community in Northwood. He was 92.

He and his wife, Helen, lived for the last five years in Swan Creek Retirement Village in South Toledo. They were former residents of the Hamlet in Perrysburg Township.

Mr. Williamson, who suffered from dementia, had been a patient in Parkcliffe about a month, said his son, John.

During a 36-year career, he rose through several financial and administrative positions, to become president of Toledo Edison Co. in 1972.

A certified public accountant, he came to Toledo in 1951 to join the utility as director of methods and procedures. He served as assistant treasurer, secretary and treasurer, vice president-finance, and senior vice president before being named president and chief executive officer.

Mr. Williamson, the oldest of the couple's three sons, said he established goals for himself and worked hard to achieve them, a characteristic that was probably formed as a teenager after his parents died.

"I don't know if the word driven is the correct word, but he was very goal-oriented," he said. "After losing his parents at a young age, he really had to make his own way."

During his tenure as chief executive, Edison grew from a \$400 million a year business to a \$3.4 billion operation. He was at the utility's helm in 1986 when it merged with Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. to form Centerior Energy Corp.

After the merger, he stepped down as CEO to become chairman emeritus of Toledo Edison and Centerior Energy Corp. He retired in 1987.

As the utility's chief executive, he took leadership roles in professional groups in the industry, including the National Electric Reliability Council, which represents all electric utilities in the United States and Canada.

*He also was a past chairman of the National Electric Security Counsel, which was charged with dealing with anti-terrorist security threats on U.S. utilities.*

*He was elected president in 1981 to the board of directors of the Edison Electric Institute, a national association of investor-owned utilities.*

*He served for six years in the 1980s, by appointment of then-Gov. James A. Rhodes, on the Ohio Development Advisory Council. He also held an appointment in the same decade on the Ohio Electric Utility Institute.*

*In the early 1970s, Mr. Williamson was the first chairman of the Toledo Development Committee, which was a top-level body set up to coordinate and guide the revitalization of downtown Toledo.*

*While some civic and business leaders suggested building offices and other structures along the Maumee River, Mr. Williamson believed the riverfront should be made into public space for everyone to enjoy, his son said.*

*Eventually, he and others won and the area near the utility's Steam Plant was developed into Promenade Park.*

*He was born Feb. 22, 1922, in Cleveland to John and Jane Pritchard Williamson. His parents died while he was in high school.*

“ He graduated from Kent State University in 1945 with a bachelor of science degree in business. His son said he paid his way through college by delivering ice blocks to homes.

He met the former Helen Morgan, also a student, in a sociology class. They married Aug. 3, 1945. The Williamson Alumni Center at the university in Kent, Ohio, is named after the couple.

Mr. Williamson was president of Kent State's Alumni Association from 1971 to 1972. He received the college's annual Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1974. Mr. Williamson was a senior accountant in the Cleveland and Detroit offices of Arthur Andersen & Co. from 1945 to 1951, which was the year that he was licensed as a certified public accountant. Mr. Williamson said his father left the accounting firm because he was spending too much time on the road conducting audits at companies throughout the country.

"He desired to travel less. He wanted more time at home to raise a family," he said.

Mr. Williamson devoted decades to Toledo civic groups, taking leadership roles in the community organizations.

In 1976, he received the Citizen of the Year award from the Toledo Board of Realtors for his community involvement and service in the Toledo area.

He was elected chairman of the former First National Bank in 1974 after holding a director's seat at the financial institution, which later became Fifth Third Bank, for 12 years.

He also was on the board of the former Lamson's department stores and former Riverside hospital. He was a former trustee of the Toledo Museum of Art, (ProMedica) Toledo Hospital, Toledo Symphony, and Boys and Girls Club of Toledo.

He also was a board officer of the Community Chest of Lucas, Wood, and Ottawa counties and its successor, United Way of Greater Toledo.

He was a past president of the Toledo Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club of Toledo, and the Financial Analysts Society of Toledo.

In retirement, Mr. Williamson and his wife spent winters in Rio Verde, Ariz., where he was active in the community's governing

*body.*

*Surviving are his wife, Helen; sons, Wayne, James, and John M.; a grandson, and a great-grandson.*

*The family will receive friends from 5 to 8 p.m. Wednesday in the Coyle Funeral Home, 1770 S. Reynolds Rd. A memorial services will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday in Reed Chapel in Swan Creek Retirement Village.*

*The family suggest tributes to the Pediatric Leukemia Treatment Program at ProMedica Toledo Children's Hospital Foundation in honor of John D. Williamson, who is Mr. Williamson's grandson.*

*Contact Blade Staff Writer Mark Reiter at: [markreiter@theblade.com](mailto:markreiter@theblade.com) or 419-724-6199.*

---

**Coyle** - October 28, 2014 at 12:37 PM