

HALLOFFAME

If Oley Township were a patchwork quilt, **Shirley Moyer** would be part of the caring stitches that hold it together. She devotes most waking hours to her job as township secretary-treasurer and municipal authority secretary or to her community volunteer work — and she wouldn't have it any other way.

A Labor of Love

Shirley Moyer

Oley Township, Berks County

25 years of service

BY JENNIFER L. FLORER /
ASSISTANT EDITOR

In 1979, Shirley Moyer was working at a bank when one of her regular customers asked a question that would change the course of her career. The customer was the treasurer of the municipal authority in Oley Township, Berks County, and the question was whether Moyer would consider a new job.

She made the move to the authority, serving as secretary, with no inkling of what was to come. The township planning commission and police department, housed in the same building as the authority, decided they could make good use of her talents, too. Always up for a challenge, Moyer was soon the secretary for all three.

Then, in 1989, she took over for the township secretary-treasurer, who was retiring after about 30 years on the job. Truth be told, she had been doing much of the work anyway.

These days, she's the face of the township and the authority. With everything rolled together, she says, she's full-time. After a second, she corrects that.

"It's more than a full-time job," Moyer says. "I'm salaried on both sides, so I work until the work is done."

Take, for instance, the time she was in the township office on a Saturday



Between her job as the secretary for Oley Township in Berks County and her volunteer work, Shirley Moyer has dedicated much of her life to her community.

night around 11:30. (*Saturday, she says, is when she can lock the door, ignore the phone, and really get some work done.*) Moyer heard someone at the door and figured it was a police matter, but she was in the office alone.

Keeping the door closed and locked, she asked if she could help the person. He was there to talk about zoning.

"So I answered his questions," Moyer says matter-of-factly. With the clock nearing midnight, she was just doing her job.

She doesn't mind the extended hours, though. For Moyer, it's a labor of love. She was born in the township, grew up there, and is dedicated to its service.

"To me, it's worth it," she says. "This is the community I live in. I love it, I love the area, and I love the people."

Moyer can say that because she actually *knows* the people. Well, a lot of them, anyway.

"For the most part, except for the new people moving in, everybody knows me, and I know them," Moyer says. "Most times, I'll recognize their voice on the phone before they say who it is."

With a population creeping just north of 3,600, that's pretty impressive.

Still, the township is mostly agricultural and is dotted with barns and homes dating back to the 1700s. It was named a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, and plenty of residents are eager to make sure the charms of the township's past are still around in the future.

One of Moyer's most challenging times on the job, she says, was when a landfill was locating in a neighboring township. A plan was floated to pump the leachate — the liquid draining from the fill — through Oley Township and into its sewer plant. The residents were livid.

"That was a very controversial era here," Moyer says. "We had meetings that lasted until 11:30 at night, and it was a year-long process. In the end, the plan was turned down. There were just too many issues and unknowns."

The next biggest hurdle came when some of the supervisors wanted to create an agricultural preservation district. The same features that make Oley a prime farming area were drawing developers like flies: relatively level land with good

soil free of the rocks that dot other areas.

This time, it was some of the farmers who put up a fight. They were afraid such a district, which limits how the land can be used, would devalue their property. The preservationists won out, and Moyer says the township was among the first in the state to establish an agricultural preservation district.

"The developers have stopped knocking at this point," Moyer says. "They know that Oley is tough to develop in."

Moyer doesn't like her job *despite* the challenges but *because* of them. She thinks back to the early years, when she knew the township needed to embrace the computer age and sold the supervisors on the idea.

"At that time, the system was huge and took up most of my office," she says. "I was just terrified that I would not know how to use it."

The township is now on its fourth computer system, and Moyer says she's still learning — but that's part of what keeps the job interesting.

"I look forward to work every day because it's a challenge," she adds. "There's

something different all the time."

Some things just don't change, though. For Moyer, the worst part of the job is the paperwork.

"When we first got the computer, that was the selling point: 'You're going to be able to eliminate all of your filing cabinets,'" Moyer laughs. "Now, it generates *more* paperwork."

On the go

When she's not juggling paper, answering questions, and doing the countless other things that keep a township and authority ticking, Moyer relaxes — by volunteering.

She's an emergency medical technician and has been "running" as a volunteer on the ambulance since 1978. Years ago, she was a volunteer firefighter and has been the fire company's treasurer for the past 20 years.

Moyer also dedicates her time to the Oley Fair, which draws guests from near and far. She also morphs into Mrs. Claus for the annual "Christmas in the Valley" celebration, which shuts down Main Street, lines it with luminaries, and fills

the air with songs of the season.

"A lot of the questions that I get here deal with all the different functions throughout the year, even if they're not sponsored by the township," Moyer reflects. "Fortunately, I'm involved with all of them!"

Moyer knows that she won't be able to keep up the hectic pace forever but has no plans to leave her position anytime soon. There's just too much to do, and she says she has the benefit of working with very good supervisors.

The feeling is mutual.

"She is probably one of the most industrious, dedicated people I have ever met," says supervisor Jim Coker, who has worked with Moyer for more than 18 years. "Without her, I don't know what the township would do."

"We have a wonderful community here," he adds. "The people in the various leadership roles help make it that way, and Shirley is one of them. She takes care of things and she keeps us on the straight and narrow when we start to deviate. She just does her job and does it well." ♦

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