



from your Executive Director

By Bryan E. Smith

TOI Executive Director

IT ALL STARTED before I was even born. LBJ was President of the United States. The internet had not even been thought of yet! What am I talking about? I am talking about the career of Jo Ann Cooper with TOI.

For those of you who have been around any length of time or attended one of TOI's Annual Conferences, you have probably seen or met Jo Ann. She has been a staple at TOI for almost 52 years! Now Jo Ann, after that incredible amount of time, is ready to retire this month "completely" and no longer make the 135 mile round trip to Springfield a couple of days a week. That's right, I said 135 mile round trip!

When Jo Ann started working for TOI, she thought it was a part-time job. When she began her career with

TOI, she joined then Office Manager Neva Wise as the only other office employee under TOI's first CEO Troy Kost in Astoria. She has recalled that her salary when she first started was \$138 a month! Jo Ann holds the distinction of being the only TOI employee who ever worked for all three CEOs of TOI: Troy Kost (1943-1979); George Miller (1979-1996); and, since 1996, me.

Through the years, Jo Ann has seen tremendous change. She has worked at TOI's Annual Education Conference each year, from the days when there were few female township officials, the ladies and the men wore hats and limited resources provided a name badge to conference attendees and not much else.

When she first began working for TOI, each township official paid \$5 for individual membership in



JO ANN COOPER and Bryan Smith, 2004.



JO ANN COOPER at the TOI office in Astoria.

TOI, which eventually went to \$8. Today, TOI member townships are assessed a membership fee based on population and EAV that covers all elected officials. I might add that for many years Jo Ann used a manual typewriter and typed **EACH** membership card individually! That meant typing over 10,000 cards. I remember when



JO ANN COOPER

our office was in Astoria, I would sometimes go back to the office at night to work. On many occasions, Jo Ann would be there for several hours typing away on those membership cards!

Jo Ann has told the story many times about how they used to use stencils with each official's name on them that they used to label the magazines each month.

Once, when the office was moving, Troy Kost was carrying the box of stencils and dropped them. Jo Ann and the others had 10,000 names to try and get back in order! But it got done. That is how Jo Ann works. When a job needs to be done, everyone pitches in to get it done!

When I started with TOI in 1987, Jo Ann was the office manager. When we moved the TOI office to Springfield, Jo Ann did not want to make the 135 mile trip from Astoria each day, but still wanted to work. So Jo Ann became a part-time employee doing our



bookkeeping and financial work. She resisted changing from a typewriter to using a computer, but warmed up to using the computer. Her office, however, is still the only one that has a typewriter and soon it will seem strange not hearing her in there banging away on the keys!

Even though she has only worked a couple days a week for the past few years, she is still a wealth of knowledge about TOI history. It seems like I'm always asking her something from the past. She has been a dedicated TOI employee, there is no doubt about it. I'm going to miss her quick wit, eagle eye, and the delicious scotcheroos she would make from time to time.

Jo Ann, as you begin this new chapter in your life, I wish you only the best. I can't thank you enough for all your hard work and dedication through the years. You have been a joy to work with and an inspiration to not only me, but many others. Enjoy your retirement and if you ever bake an extra batch of scotcheroos, you know where to send them!

Duane E. Smith

Township Perspective

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