



# from your Executive Director

By Bryan E. Smith

TOI Executive Director

**E**LSEWHERE IN THE MAGAZINE, you will see an obituary for Jo Ann Cooper. For those of you who have been around any length of time or attended one of TOI's Annual Conferences, you probably saw or met Jo Ann. She was a staple at TOI for 51 years! Jo Ann passed away on July 12 at the age of 85 after a very short illness.

When Jo Ann started working for TOI, she thought it was a part-time job. When she began her working 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. Jo Ann holds the distinction of being the only TOI employee who ever worked for all three CEO's of TOI: Troy Kost (1943-1979); George Miller (1979-1996); and me, Bryan Smith (1996-present). Jo Ann told me once that when she first started in 1964 her salary was \$138 a month!

Through the 51 years plus that she worked for TOI, she saw tremendous change. She worked, especially 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 Jo Ann first began working for TOI, each township official paid \$5 for individual membership in 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 our office was in Astoria, I would sometimes go back to the office at night to work. On many occasions, Jo Ann would be in there for several hours typing away on those membership cards!

Jo Ann told the story many times about how they used stencils with each official's name on them that they used to label the magazine 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 she made sure it got done. But that's how Jo Ann worked.

When I started with TOI in 1987, Jo Ann was the Office Manager. When we moved the TOI office to Springfield, in 1997, 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 until September 2015. Jo Ann resisted changing from a typewriter to a computer, but eventually did work up to using the computer but only for what she absolutely had to!

Jo Ann was a wealth of knowledge about TOI history. I'm going to miss her even more now because I know I won't have the opportunity to hear from her or be the recipient of the delicious SCOTCHEROOS she would make me from time to time. Jo Ann was definitely one of a kind and a joy to work with and an inspiration to not only me, but many others.

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