



From Your Executive Director

By Bryan E. Smith

TOI Executive Director

Annual Town Meeting as important today as it was 30 years ago



trustee (back in the days when they were elected) and I remember going with her on several occasions when she made visits to one of the cemeteries. The cemetery in question only had access through a cornfield, so the easement was definitely needed. Discussion brought up was that after the easement was received that the road leading back to the cemetery would be improved, making access to the cemetery much easier.

30 YEARS. It doesn't seem possible. Time sure flies when you're having fun!
The Annual Town Meeting coming up April 14 marks the 30th anniversary of me attending my first Annual Town Meeting. The year was 1985 and I had just won a contested election for Township Clerk the week before. I was excited and ready to learn all I could about township government. This was my opportunity.

I had found out the date of the annual meeting and was curious to find out more about a meeting where I could actually vote. The other people who had also been elected attended as well, and we all were curious to see the agenda. Besides the township officials, there were 16 others in attendance that night. The highway commissioner was elected to serve as Moderator.

After hearing the routine matters such as the Supervisor's Annual Report, there was a resolution presented to transfer surplus funds from the Revenue Sharing Fund to the Road District. Revenue Sharing was a federal program in the 1970s and '80s that provided townships with much needed money. Long Creek Township, through the years, saw a lot of this money go toward roads. Everyone seemed pleased with the condition of the township roads and the performance of the highway commissioner, so the resolution passed unanimously.

Another item on the agenda was authorizing the township to acquire an easement for ingress and egress to one of the township's smaller cemeteries. At the time, the township owned and maintained four cemeteries. I knew from personal experience that the township took great pride in keeping all the cemeteries very well maintained. My grandmother was a township cemetery

This issue too passed unanimously.

The final two items on the agenda were giving permission to the highway commissioner to dispose of some old equipment and setting the time for the next annual town meeting. I remember thinking that next year, I would be sitting up front and performing my duties as Clerk. I was nervous to say the least but so very much looking forward to it.

Immediately after this meeting, the clerk at the time came over and asked about a date the next week for swearing-in of the new officials. Everyone said they could be there, so a week later everyone who was elected took the oath of office. The picture with this article (I'm third from left) shows this ceremony. As a 19-year-old, I had no idea what this plunge into township government was going to mean, where it was going to take me or the impact it would have on my life.

Ever since I stopped serving as an elected township official in 1996, I have still tried to attend the Annual Town Meeting each year. I think I have made it with the exception of one or two times when my schedule would not allow it.

While some folks say the annual town meeting is out of date, they overlook the fact that the annual town meeting allows true democracy to be exercised by the residents of each township. This April 14, I'll be attending my annual town meeting and remembering 30 years ago when I attended my first one.

Good luck at your annual town meeting!