In our first installment of the Secretary Hall of Fame, the News honors Erma Martin of Mineral Township in Venango County. A fixture in the community for 55 years, she is possibly Pennsylvania’s longest serving township secretary. Ask anyone, though, and they’ll tell you that’s not the only thing that makes Martin special.

‘Call Erma’

Erma Martin
Mineral Township, Venango County
55 years of service

BY JILL ERCOLINO / MANAGING EDITOR

She very well may be Pennsylvania’s longest serving township secretary, but it’s not this accomplishment that makes Erma Martin of Mineral Township, Venango County, special.

It’s who she is.

“I call her ‘my Erma,’” supervisor and roadmaster Fred Krizinsky says, “because she’s there whenever I need her.”

A fixture in the township for 55 years, Martin is well-known for her precise bookkeeping, sunny disposition, and ability to make things happen in this small rural community with a population of 538.

“It’s hard to put into words how much she does because I’m sure she does more than any of us know,” Krizinsky says. “She’s a great asset. You just can’t put a value on that.

“And I know one thing,” he says, chuckling, “the residents would vote one of us out of office before getting rid of her.”

Erma Martin, possibly Pennsylvania’s longest serving township secretary, believes the secret to her longevity lies in her attitude. “I’ve always been even-keeled,” she says. “Nothing rattles me.” (Photo courtesy of the township.)

A pioneer

Martin began working for the township in 1957, when the price of gas was 24 cents a gallon and new homes could be had for about $12,000.

“The secretary quit, and my father-in-law, who was a township supervisor, asked me if I wanted the job,” she says. “I’ve been here ever since. That’s why I always say, ‘It’s not what you know, but who you know.’”

A pioneer in many respects, Martin was one of the first women in her family to take a job outside the home. In addition to juggling part-time duties with the township, she worked full-time at a nearby medical facility. In between, Martin and her husband raised three children.

While things certainly have changed since those early days in Mineral Township — Martin’s kids have grown up, and managing the municipality has become more complex and time-consuming — one thing remains the same: The secretary’s home still doubles as the municipality’s unofficial office.

“Oh, you should see my kitchen table,” she says. “It’s always full of checkbooks.”

Martin, however, wouldn’t have it any other way. She likes being busy. Even more than that, though, she likes helping her neighbors.

“The motto around here is ‘Call
Erma – she’ll fix it,” Martin says with pride. “I love this job. I always have.”

But 50-plus years? That’s quite a stretch for any job, especially for a township secretary, many of whom oversee the community’s day-to-day business and need to be just as well-versed in state and federal laws as the supervisors, if not more so.

Some secretaries don’t last a year in such a challenging position. How did Martin hang in for 55?

That’s easy, says the secretary, who estimates she has worked with 25 to 30 township supervisors. It’s all about her attitude.

“I’ve always been even-keeled … nothing rattles me,” Martin says. “Besides, the township supervisors work on the roads, and they let me do my job.”

And why wouldn’t they, Krizinsky says. “Erma makes life easy for us. She’s the backbone of the township.”

PSATS hosts Fall Engineers Seminar

Members of the Township Engineers Association gathered at PSATS in October to learn the latest news and techniques from a variety of experts. The group meets twice a year — once in the spring and once in the fall — and, as usual, covered a range of topics, including road reclamation, PENNVEST and natural gas impact fee funding, standards for the Americans with Disabilities Act, and stormwater management.