

HALLOFFAME

Madge “Joy” Severcool does her best to keep Forkston Township in Wyoming County running smoothly. By taking care of the business aspects as township secretary, she has made it possible for the supervisors to keep the roads in good shape. It is a division of labor that has worked well in the small, rural township for nearly five decades.

The facilitator

Madge “Joy” Severcool

Forkston Township, Wyoming County
49 years of service

BY **BRENDA WILT** / ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Madge Severcool, who has been secretary-treasurer of Forkston Township in Wyoming County for nearly five decades, is known to just about everyone as Joy. Frank Miner, a supervisor for the township for nearly as many years, says she more than lives up to the nickname.

“She’s the nicest person to work with,” he says. “She just seems to go out of her way to get along with people.”

That’s a trait that comes in handy in the small township of fewer than 300 residents, where the secretary is as likely to be working out of her house as the township office down the road.

“The township is very rural. There is only one farm left, and we have one church,” Severcool says. “There are no stores anymore.”

The closest municipalities of any size are Tunkhannock and Dushore, each about 17 miles away in opposite directions.

Severcool moved to the township 58 years ago when she married her husband, Bill, who lived there. The two have three children, seven grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren, who all live locally.

Although the township hasn’t grown much over the years, Severcool’s job has evolved quite a bit.

“In 1965, it was a lot different than it is today,” she acknowledges. “I did all the accounting by hand. There were not nearly as many accounts or as much paperwork. The township didn’t have the



Madge “Joy” Severcool has been making the supervisors’ jobs easier in Forkston Township, Wyoming County, for nearly five decades. Over the years, she has taken in stride such challenges as converting to computers and weathering a flood that destroyed township records.

funds or the equipment that it has today.”

When the township finally got a computer, the transition was fairly easy for the secretary, who worked full-time in an office in addition to her part-time role at the township. That computer was initially located in Severcool’s house, which turned out to be a blessing in 2011 when the township building was destroyed by flooding from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee.

“Thankfully, I had the computer, but all the records were at the township office,” she recalls. “We had five-drawer filing cabinets, and the water was up to the fifth drawer. The records were full of mud.”

The board of supervisors, which had met in her house from 1965 until 2008,

began meeting there again until the township bought another piece of land outside the floodplain. A modular home on the site began serving as the township office in 2013.

‘She makes it easy on us’

Although the paperwork has grown over the years, Severcool says that she still enjoys every aspect of her job.

“I like working with the people,” she says. “If I didn’t have such a fantastic board of supervisors, it wouldn’t be as good as it is. In all of my 50 years here, I have never had a board of supervisors who did not work well together or get along.”

Miner, for his part, says that Severcool makes the supervisors’ work go much more smoothly.

“She takes care of the business end of the township so we can concentrate on the roads,” he says. “She makes it easy on us, like most good secretaries.”

The same could be said of her efforts for residents.

“If I’m not at the office, everyone is welcome to call me at my home,” she says. “I try to answer questions as best I can, and if I don’t know the answer, I try to find it and get back to the person.”

“She looks out for people,” Miner says. “She always tries to be on top of people’s problems. She’s just a caring person.”

So caring, in fact, that she’s not too eager to end her tenure at the township.

“Sometimes, I think, well, I’ll put in my 50 years and then quit,” she says, “but now that I’m in my 50th year, I think I may stay. We’ll have to play it by ear. If my health continues, I may keep going.”

“She has made our life as supervisors a whole lot easier than it should be,” Miner says. “We will miss her when she retires — if she ever does.” ♦