

Keeper of city records commended

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 04 August 2011 13:41 -



Home-grown professional is clerk of year.

Connie Dalrymple still considers a sunny, crisp day in November as her lucky one.

After an employee called in sick, the 23-year-old was asked to come to Gothenburg City Hall and copy meter books.

She continued part-time employment in other areas until she was hired full-time in the public works department.

In April of 1978, then-mayor John Gallagher called Dalrymple into his office.

“The clerk job was open and he said I needed to take it,” Dalrymple said.

She’s never left.

Thirty-three years later, a plaque has been added to a shelf in her office that also holds a picture of her 13 grandchildren.

Dalrymple received the plaque after being named West Central Nebraska Development District’s clerk of the year.

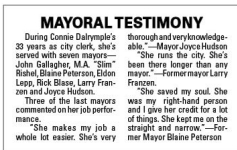
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CJ Poltack of WCNDD said clerks eligible for the award include 59 communities and 18 counties with community and economic development.

“Gothenburg is fortunate to have a clerk with Connie’s professional qualities and abilities,” Poltack said.



Although last Thursday at city hall began without power, because of a lightning strike in the night, Dalrymple didn't appear rattled in the least.

She calmly took care of a resident who had questions about a building permit before she explained her job as city clerk.

“Keeper of records.”

Then came a litany of documents for safekeeping—resolutions, ordinances, committee records, agreements, leases, easements, building permits, liquor licenses and more.

“They’re all part of public record,” Dalrymple said.

Doing payroll, a task she admits she enjoys, is also part of her job description as is payment of city bills and bonds. She’s also treasurer for the Redevelopment Authority.

Dalrymple said she likes to watch the dynamics of city council meetings and how members interact with citizens and the issues that arise.

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“We appreciate citizen input,” she said, noting that much can be solved without taking issues to the council. “Sometimes all they need is an explanation or reason for something.”

One of the most emotional and contentious issues she remembers was whether or not semi-trailer trucks could park on city streets.

“Some streets are narrow so, generally speaking, semis don’t belong in residential areas,” Dalrymple said, noting that discussion became heated at times. “Those who favored it were as adamant about their rights as those who thought they shouldn’t be there.”



The end result was a law that doesn’t allow trucks or disconnected trailers to park on city streets.

Another hot issue, she noted, was a failed attempt to move the Pony Express station from Ehmen Park to Lake Helen.

Often issues return to the council table.

Dalrymple pointed to the rehabilitation of Lake Helen. Today, the council is considering ways to clean the lake which has filled with sediment and a toxic algae.

In the 1980s, residents added a hiking trail, picnic facilities and a covered bridge that connects

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the area to Lafayette Park.

Other noteworthy improvements, she said, include grants to improve housing and downtown revitalization.

Born, raised and graduated in Gothenburg, Dalrymple wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

She pointed to forward-thinking people who promote economic development and other things and a supportive community.

When she attends clerk meetings and advanced education schools, Dalrymple said she hears about Gothenburg from other city officials who tout the town's beauty and success at receiving grants to make it better.

"It's humbling but it makes me proud," she said, adding that the versatility of the city crew and its willingness to do in-kind labor contributes to the ability of Gothenburg to receive grants.

During her years as clerk, technology—especially the introduction of the computer—has been the biggest change, she said.

More interlocal agreements, especially between the cities of Gothenburg, Cozad and Lexington, have also been a positive change, Dalrymple said, as was a half-cent sales tax passed by voters in 1986 that kick started economic development in Gothenburg.

"We were one of the first communities in outstate Nebraska to do it," she said.

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Her most formidable challenge is “getting everything done that has to be done by the time it has to be done.”

Block grants, RDA paperwork and increased government regulations have added to her workload, Dalrymple said.

Dalrymple said she hopes citizens realize that city officials “are here to do anything we can to help people.”

Government, in general, can leave a sour taste in people’s mouths because of regulations, she said.

“We try to steer citizens in the right direction, correct information, keep expenses down and productivity up,” Dalrymple said. “It’s hard for me to hear people talking about the city when they don’t choose to access us.”

Pointing to the city’s website at www.ci.gothenburg.ne.us, she said officials try to do everything as transparently as possible.

“I couldn’t ask for a better place to work,” she said. “Small towns can be a blessing and a curse but I don’t have a desire to escape Gothenburg.

“That doesn’t mean I’m narrowing my horizons but it’s where I’m rooted and happiest.”

She described the city as a safe, close environment in which to raise a family.

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During her growing up years, Dalrymple said she either wanted to join the Navy or be an “administrative-type” secretary.

“I’m living my dream,” she said.

Dalrymple is married to Jim Dalrymple, a farmer, and has four grown children: Cressy and Chad of Gothenburg, Corey of Seward, and J.D. Dalrymple of Lincoln.

Outside of city hall, she likes to be home, where she enjoys tending her flowers, and spending time with her grandchildren.