

Dee Zimmerman recognized for 50 years at The Shopper

By Valorie Brecht

Well-known to the residents of Neillsville and beyond, she offers a friendly face to anyone who walks in the door. Her knowledge of local history runs deep. She has achieved a milestone of years of service that most people will never come close to achieving.

Dee Zimmerman of the Clark County Press and Shopper received the Spotlight Award at the Neillsville Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Recognition Banquet Saturday. The award was given in recognition that, come April, she will have been employed 50 years at the Shopper, the shopping guide for Clark and Jackson counties. Dee has also worked for the Clark County Press for many years.

Dee started working for the Shopper in April 1969, two years after moving to Neillsville from Loyal. At that time, Earle and Barbara Siebert owned the Shopper.

“Mr. Siebert’s son Mike lived next door to us, and he told me that his dad was looking for help. At that time Mike was the advertising salesman,” said Dee.

When Dee started out at the Shopper, she worked part-time.

“My kids were in school at that time and I didn’t have to go to work until nine in the morning, so I had plenty of time to make them breakfast and see them off to school,” she said.

At that time, the Shopper was housed in a building on West 4th Street behind the Masonic temple building (what is now Hillside Community Church). The



Valorie Brecht/Clark County Press

Dee Zimmerman will have worked at the Shopper for 50 years come April. She has also worked for the Clark County Press for many years, starting when the newspaper was bought by News Publishing Company in 1989.

business moved a few times to different buildings in downtown Neillsville before moving to its present location at 614 Hewett Street.

When she started at the Shopper, Dee’s responsibilities included advertising layout, bookkeeping and recording advertisements into the account system, as well as customer service.

In 1974, she started working full-time. Dee also oversaw the Shopper’s delivery. At that time, local carriers delivered the Shopper, not the postal service. The city of Neillsville was divided

into six sections, one for each of the carriers.

“I knew all the routes because I delivered them all some time or other,” said Dee.

Dee’s job responsibilities continued when News Publishing Company bought the Shopper and the Clark County Press in 1989 and the two were merged under one company. She also picked up some newspaper-related responsibilities like taking subscriptions and advertisements specifically for the Press.

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Ryan Spoehr/Clark County Press

Dee Zimmerman, pictured here with her son Greg, received the Spotlight Award at the Neillsville Area Chamber of Commerce's annual banquet Saturday. It will be 50 years on the job at The Shopper for Dee as of this April.

Dee From Front Page

A couple years after the merger, Dee began writing her "Good Old Days" column for the Clark County Press, which contains excerpts from Press issues going all the way back to 1867, often accompanied by Dee's recollections of the past. It remains a favorite feature among readers and began largely because of their requests.

"Some of the local readers would express that they would like to see a local history column, because the former owners, Gary and Jane Slaats, would weekly run an old photograph with a cutline about the photo and they missed that," said Dee. "And so they're the ones that encouraged a local history column."

Dee said that when she approached the editor at the time about doing it, the editor said she thought it was a great idea, but didn't have the time to devote to it and neither did the reporter because they were busy covering news.

"So I volunteered," said Dee. "I couldn't find anyone that wanted to do it, so I volunteered to do it. And eventually it evolved into a full page."

"Of course, we have the resources because of our large archives. Without that, it would be pretty hard to put together."

Dee has a keen memory when it comes to local history and her column is no exception. Despite the large number of issues that Dee draws from to put together her column, she is able to recall what things have been printed before.

"Amazingly I remember if something is run or not; it comes to mind when I read an article - 'well, I've run that before,'" she said.

Dee explained that she has seen a lot of changes during her time at the Press, not the least of which have been advances in technology.

For example, when the Sieberts bought the Shopper in the early 1950s, the minimum cost for a classified ad was 30 cents.

When Dee first took classified ads, she would have to set the individual letters for

the ad. "I was typing them out with a typewriter and then cutting them out with scissors and pasting them on the page. Bigger ads were set up on film and then developed in a dark closet."

Computers have come a long way too, said Dee. "There's no way that the first computers can compare to what the present-day computers are able to do. It was quite a process in setting up information in the first computers."

Along with the changes in technology, Dee has seen many changing faces of the staff at the Press and the Shopper. She has served as a resource for the reporters on staff who may not know what angle to take for a particular story or need background information on local happenings.

She has also gotten to know the people of the community very well.

"I have enjoyed working with the public and meeting the people of the community. It has been a good way to get to know people," said Dee.

She said that her job has given her a way to interact with people and keep busy.

As to how long she will continue at the Press and Shopper, "I take it a year at a time," she said.

She has already left a lasting impact on her community as a fixture for so many years.

"I enjoyed meeting and working with the people in the community," said Dee. "It was always an enjoyable part of the job."

Schleifer From Front Page

body and the scene is up to the sheriff's department or the police department to investigate. So we work hand-in-hand," he said.

Schleifer said that sometimes figuring out the cause of death is like putting together a puzzle. He may have to look at a person's medical history or autopsy results. Depending on the circumstance, a medical autopsy or forensic autopsy may be performed. A forensic autopsy is more thorough than a medical autopsy and is performed when there are suspicions of foul play.

Schleifer often works closely with the Clark County detectives, and said he was grateful for them.

Schleifer has three deputies who can also pronounce death. They all have EMT experience and one also has law enforcement experience. Schleifer said they've been a big help as well.

Part of the reason Schleifer has chosen to continue as coroner is it gives him something to do.

"I've worked a couple jobs all my life and I'm a person where I can't just sit still; I have to be doing something," he said.

But beyond that, the motivation to do his job comes from a purpose bigger than himself, said Schleifer.

"It's not about seeing accidents or anything like that; it's about helping families after the death of someone," said Schleifer. "If I can do one thing to help a family, then I feel I did my job - by helping people. And a lot of families, it's a shock when there's a sudden death and they don't really know who to call or what to do, and if you can guide them through this process and help them, that's what I like doing. I try to treat everybody like I would like to be treated if it was me in their place."

"It's a bad time for them, and so you try to console and answer all the questions that you are able to answer for them. We try to offer assistance to them also, like calling a clergyman or a friend to be with them," he added.

His job is far from easy, Schleifer said.

"To say that sometimes things don't bother you would be a lie, because they do. And you take a lot of things to heart, I guess you would say."

Nevertheless, Schleifer is glad to be able to serve his community in this role. He expressed his appreciation to the Clark County voters for supporting him for so many years and to his family for supporting him in what he likes to do.

"I do enjoy my job, and as long as the good Lord gives me the strength and the power to do it, I'll continue for a few more years," he said.

Schleifer's new term will expire in 2023.