



Citizens of Franconia Township have a special relationship with Clerk, John Jackson. Initially appointed following the death of Clerk Bill Mallery, Mr. Jackson is the longest serving elected official in township history. This summer, following several months of rehabilitation and a brief resignation (the Town Board asked Mr. Jackson to reconsider while it sought his replacement), Mr. Jackson provided notice that the end of his service as Town Clerk was at hand.

It was the spring of 1968 when Supervisor John Nelson approached Mr. Jackson soliciting his consideration and acceptance of the appointment as Town Clerk. Relying on unrelated family members Harland and Lou Vitalis, John sought guidance by these trusted local leaders and soon thereafter accepted the nearly one-year appointment.

An educated (recent graduate of the University of Minnesota), yet shy young man, interested in farming alongside his parents; John Jackson proclaimed the oath of office. Organizing many boxes of township records, an unbalanced set of books, and attending meetings as they were called Mr. Jackson's reputation as an honest and trustworthy man circulated. As the election approached, Mr. Jackson expressed to the members of the town board his thanks for providing him this recent opportunity that they now knew him and his work, and that if they did not wish for him to seek election to the office, well, he would accept this and they would part, without hard feelings. Supervisor Phil Johnson was first to respond. Reaching into his wallet, Supervisor Johnson provided the filing fee to add Mr. Jackson's name to the ballot. No further discussion was needed, and over the next twenty-two election cycles, Mr. Jackson would seek this office, unopposed.

Throughout the years, Mr. Jackson would repeatedly earn the peoples trust. For those interested in an issue being presented before the Board, Clerk Jackson would make every effort to inform the citizenry. He did not feel a need to be a voting member (only Town Supervisors have voting rights), and he did not wish to utilize undue influence on the Board; however, if things strayed a bit too far, Mr. Jackson would offer some advice, not as the clerk, but as a resident. Listening comes first for Mr. Jackson.

Elections have changed throughout the years. At one time Town Board Supervisors performed as judges and late night vote counts frequently occurred. One thing you could count on at all general elections is the proclamation, "*Hear Ye, Hear Ye, the Polls are now open/closed.*" This is but a small reminder to all present of their civic duty and sense of patriotism, the honor of democracy and ability to vote ones conscience. On one particular March election, two Twin Cities television stations covered a contested Supervisor election, and in recent times, Clerk Jackson was photographed by and appeared in the New York Times. Voting machines are a nice addition to the rural landscape according to Jackson.

Other betterments over the years include: early repayment of the \$60,000 debt incurred during the 1960's to re-grade, re-gravel and provide road signage on township roads, the

acquisition of the first motor powered road grader, a joint powers agreement with the City of Shafer to establish the combined fire department, and the contracts for ambulance services. Years ago, mortuaries provided the emergency transportation using station wagons. One must have suffered great anxiety not knowing their destination upon the arrival of the mortician. Eventually station wagons gave way to vehicles equipped with highly skilled professionals and medical equipment that could be administered much more timely.

Mr. Jackson is also well known as the local historian. Distinctive writing skills found in his hand-written Minute Book are carried forward into many published articles preserving both the ordinary and extraordinary events of Franconia Township, Taylors Falls, and Chisago County. Many readers have enjoyed the story of the Taylors Falls airport, which was partly in Franconia Township. For the sesquicentennial celebration, Mr. Jackson provided many, a walking tour of the old Village.

Knowledge, trust, honesty, inspiration, loyalty, friendship, and guidance, are words used to describe Clerk Jackson. His contributions numerous, his place at the Town Board meetings already missed.

Looking into Franconia's township history you will find another John Jackson, Town Clerk of Franconia. Our Mr. Jackson's grandfather held the positions of Town Clerk and Assessor. Fully committed to his task, Assessor Jackson would plan his routes, walking from one farm to another, verifying heads of cattle and other personal property. Somehow, his route always led him to an open invitation for lunch.

A celebration to honor recently retired Clerk John Jackson will take place spring 2012. Please check back for the date and time and join us in thanking John for his service.

The end of an era for Franconia Township has come. In as many years, two long-time servant leaders have made way for the presence of new leaders. Many will come forward but few will leave a legacy such as these men.