

Milford Moments in Time

By Joyce M. Clark

Twenty-five years ago we all looked a little different. Whether we had a thicker head of hair, less wrinkles, or more spring in our step, we have all changed a little. And so has Milford .

According to the 1980 Census, Milford Township had 5146 residents while Milford Village had 5041. For 2007, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) projects that Milford Township will almost double to a population of 10,182 while Milford Village expands to 6324 residents.

But even though Milford 's population was approximately 60% less on June 29, 1981, through the perseverance of then Milford Township Clerk Elaine Skarritt, Milford moved into the national spotlight. On that day, the Federal government issued its International Year of the Disabled Persons postage stamp and Milford was selected as the one and only location to distribute it on its first day of issue.

The General Assembly of the United Nations identified 1981 as the year to observe, through stamps and other means, the International Year of Disabled Persons. Our federal government issued an 18 cent stamp observing the United Nation's designation, and Milford was the only location for the First Day of Issue.

But how did Milford earn this honor? Elaine Skarritt loves Milford , is very patriotic, and has a real passion for Milford history. As one of the charter members of Milford 's Historical Society, Elaine was committed to making the 150th Anniversary celebrations memorable. Through her persistence, she contacted Senator Carl Levin and asked if he could help get Milford selected as a location for a First Day of Issue for a postage stamp. Senator Levin and Elaine quickly teamed up to make it happen.

According to the Federal Government, when the Postal Service selects a location as the official first-day city, the community is put in the spotlight because it is the only location in the United States where sales of the stamp take place on that first day. Based on this fact, Elaine and the Milford Historical Society selected the event as the "official kick-off" for Milford 's 150th Anniversary. This event, along with many others, helped celebrate Milford 's Sesquicentennial.

Milford 's First Day Issue ceremonies were held on the Milford Village Office grounds (1100 Atlantic). A large platform was constructed by employees from the GM Proving Ground. In addition to Senator Carl Levin, National Deputy Postmaster General C. Neil Benson was on hand to lead the ceremonies. Elected officials from local, county, and state levels as well as 25 postmasters from surrounding communities attended the First Day Issue ceremonies. Honored guest was David L. Augustine, then Dispatcher for the Milford Police Department.

The American Legion Color Guard (Post 216) was on hand to shepherd in the event as well. The White Lake Junior High School Band and the Milford High School Vocal Ensemble provided music.

The New York Times ran an article on July 5, 1981 by Samuel A. Tower telling readers how they can request First Day Issue stamps from the Milford Post Office (zip code 48042). Stamp collectors from around the world sent requests to the Milford Post Office asking for First Day Issues.

Besides helping to usher in the First Day Issue stamp, Elaine's can-do nature positioned her to personally meet with and promote the finer points of Milford to former Governor John Engler as well as Presidents Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush. As 1991's elected State President of Michigan Townships, Elaine continued to favorably represent Milford to other Township Clerks located across Michigan .

Milford has acknowledged Elaine as a strong promoter and supporter of the community and named her Milford 's 1982 Citizen of the Year. Milford High School has also identified Elaine as a distinguished graduate.

Elaine has been a strong supporter of Milford over the years and has helped construct some historical, memorable moments along the way. Through her efforts, along with other Milford Historical Society charter members, she was able to procure the building that now houses the Milford Historical Society Museum (124 E. Commerce). Her passion for Milford continues and is easily seen on her car's license plate which proudly reads: Milford .

2007 is the 175th Anniversary of Milford and in celebration of this major milestone, we are asking you to share some of your stories with the rest of the community. If you have a little Milford history to pass along, please contact Sue Bullard, Milford Historical Society President, 248.685.7308 or milfordhistory@yahoo.com. The Milford Historical Society is happy to document your story and share it with others.



Caption: Envelop showcasing the 1981 First Day Issue of the *Disabled doesn't mean Unable* postage stamp.



Caption: Senator Carl Levin and Elaine Skarritt take part in the First Day of Issue Ceremony held June 29, 1981.



Caption: Jack Gillow (Milford Postmaster), Anthony J. Schiavone (Michigan District Manager), Elaine Skarritt, C. Neil Benson (Deputy Postmaster General from Washington D.C.) and Senator Carl Levin pose for photos after the First Day Issue celebrations.