

**COMMITMENT TO THE ADVANCEMENT
OF THE PROFESSION**

APRIL 23, 2009

Who ever said, "Good things comes to those who wait" and that the race is not won by the swift, but he, in this case she, that endures to the end, had me mind.

I wish to express appreciation to the outgoing President, Mabel Washington Jenkins -- thank you for keeping me in the loop throughout your tenure. I also wish to recognize my children, in their absence, for their support and encouragement, and especially Earl Reynolds, Jr., my life line, the man who keeps me lifted up and pressing forward in spite of what is going on around me. I am pleased to have my Deputy City Sheila Hartman and Assistant Deputy City Clerk Cecelia Webb in attendance, along with Cece's husband, Travis --- without their support, this definitely would not have been possible. I would be remiss if I did not recognize the Clerks of Region 4 (ask to stand), thank you so much for your support.

I am so thankful for this opportunity to fulfill a desire that has taken approximately 16 years. I became Deputy City Clerk for the City of Roanoke in 2000 and joined the association in the same year. The following year, I began working towards my designation as a Certified Municipal Clerk, and was certified in 2004; and have submitted my application for certification as a Master Municipal Clerk.

I am of the opinion, in order to have knowledge of the Association, you must become involved and engaged. I was Region Director for three years, Secretary for two years, 2nd Vice-President and then 1st Vice President and here I am in 2009, President. It is indeed a process.

It is written that the Municipal Clerk is the oldest of public servants in local government. The profession traces back before Biblical times. The early keepers of archives were often called "Remembrancers" and before writing came into use, their memory served as the public record. As we all know, it still does today. (smile)

Over the years, Municipal Clerks have become the center focus of government, the direct link between citizens and local officials.

Some of the seasoned clerks may recall a manual that was published by the IIMC Professional Status Committee entitled, "Roll Call - Strategy for a Professional Clerk". I am proud to say that one of the committee members was my predecessor -- Mary F. Parker, City Clerk of Roanoke for approximately 30 years and a Charter Member of the Association. Chapter 2 of the Manual titled, Position Yourself for Success outlines seven strategies for positioning us a Municipal Clerks:

(1) Mind - Position yourself first in your own mind -- then will you see yourself. You either see yourself as a Clerk who is going places, or you simply doubt who you are and what you can do.

(2) Attitude - This is an important strategy for Clerks. It speaks to confidence and self-assurance. Your presence should say, I know who I am and where I am going. You have heard the saying, (my favorite) There are three kinds of people in the world: (1) who makes things happen; (2) who allow things to happen; and (3) who asks "what happen". Which one are you? My bestest girlfriend Ketta (she and I have been friends since we were 14 years of age) is always saying that I have an air about myself; that when I walk in a room, most of the time late, my attitude says I am here, we can now get started". Some Clerks think of themselves as a guest to be served by customers. While others think of themselves as servants to be walked on by customers. Neither one is correct. The right one is that you, as a Clerk, is a resource, a consultant and an important person to those you serve.

(3) Appearance - We have all heard it --- first impression is a lasting impression. Like it or not, people judge us by our appearance. If your appearance is professional, you are immediately perceived to be someone of importance and influential. If your attire is casual, chances are you will not be taken seriously. We all have witnessed this. Think about - when you are dressed down and you enter a boutique or a high end department store. How long does it take for a sales clerk to wait on you versus if you were dressed in a business suit? What's the message - Appearance does matter.

(4) Actions - Actions speak louder than words. If you act with confidence, respond with authority and are factual, you will have positioned yourself by your actions.

(5) Words - Say what you mean and mean what you say. The power of the spoken word is awesome.

(6) Presentation - The way we speak about our role as Clerk tells those we serve how professional we really are and how accurate and enthusiastic we are at presenting our ideas.

(7) Focus - Serve with passion and zeal. Desire to make a difference in the lives of others. Remember it is not about you -- it never is.

Referencing the Office of Municipal Clerk, Professor William Bennett Munro, a political scientist, writing one of the first textbooks on municipal administration (1934), stated,

“No other office in municipal service has so many contacts. It serves the Mayor, the City Council, the City Manager (when there is one), and all administrative departments, without exception. All of them call upon it, almost daily, for some service or information. Its work is not spectacular, but it demands versatility, alertness, accuracy, and no end of patience. The public does not realize how many loose ends of City administration this office pulls together.” These words, written more than 75 years ago, are even more appropriate today.

It is important that we be committed to perfecting the position of Municipal Clerk. We must be committed to supporting professional development through continuing education, networking, mentoring, and public awareness (a service which definitely enhances the profession of the Municipal Clerk). I enjoy sharing what I do publicly, especially with students. It allows them to see an ordinary person doing extraordinary things. It also shows them that all things are possible, if you believe.

We must be advocates for the advancement of this organization; we must be challenged to strive to be more than just a clerk. It has been said that success is in the journey, not in the destination. I believe success is in the legacy of the Clerk. We need to leave the position better than we received it. In order to be the best that we can be, we must envision what the role of the clerk should be and then work to achieve it.

In closing, I stand tonight to challenge each clerk to stretch themselves. By doing so, your role as Clerk will be recognized as something of importance. It is more than technical or administrative, it is not simple and not everyone can do it. We cannot continue to just talk about how we wish to be perceived, we need to be doers of our words.

Remember, there are three kinds of people in this world - (1) those that make things happen; (2) those that allow things to happen; and (3) those who ask "What happen". Which one are you?