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Sandy Moore retiring after three decades at TB&LN

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Sandy Moore is ending a 30-year career as a legal proofreader for the Tulsa Business & Legal News.

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Sandy Moore carefully read a legal, spotted a mistake and picked up the telephone.

The person answering the call at the lawyer's office might have hesitated initially, but after learning Moore was with the Tulsa Business and Legal News immediately put the call through to the requested attorney.

Moore explained the problem and nine times out of 10 the attorney was appreciative and authorized the correction. A published error would have delayed a legal proceeding involving his or her case.

Moore will retire from the position she has filled for 30 years on July 3, that is both serious and humorous.

"I felt that it is time to retire while I am young enough and healthy enough to enjoy life," she said. "It was a tough decision and I wrote down all the reasons I could retire. My son, Jack Reedy, told me that I would be bored. If I do, I will find something else to do. I had always worked, even when the children were small."

There are many activities at the Owasso Senior Citizens Center that Moore plans to be part of, whether it is playing Bingo or taking a line dancing class.

Proofreading legals might not have been part of Moore's long-range plans in the 1980s.

She had joined the Collinsville News in 1983 as a typesetter.

Bill R. Retherford, Neighbor Newspapers publisher, purchased his competitor in 1985 and Moore applied for a position with the new owner.

"Mr. Retherford told me the only job that was available was as a proofreader for the Legal News," Moore recalled. "He felt that it would be a job that I would enjoy."

Retherford was right.

Moore has enjoyed her work and association with her current colleagues Nancy Moore, (no relation) Kathy Drake and Valerie Praytor as well as others who have worked in the department over the past three decades. She admits she will miss those she has been so close to during that length of time..

Moore was trained to read legals by Clifford White who worked as a legal proofreader for more than half a century before retiring.

White was legendary among lawyers and judges who knew that if he called, there was a problem with a legal scheduled for publication.

Some attorneys still remember White as being the one who caught errors, saving them embarrassment and their clients money.

Sandy Moore recalled the impact the Legal News had on attorneys.

"I had just started working for the company when I caught an error in a legal filed by an Oklahoma City attorney," she said. "Clifford told me to call their office — collect.

"The secretary answering the call had a fit and couldn't imagine anyone from a newspaper placing a collect call to their office. The attorney asked who the call was from and when he found out, he quickly said, 'My God, put that call through.'"

The issue was resolved and everyone on that office staff knew from that time on, that when they received a call from Moore, or anyone on the Legal News staff, that it was to be sent through immediately. They knew there was a problem if someone from the Legal News called.

Often a phrase was dropped, she said. It would be read to the attorney along with a suggested solution and the answer generally was, "Oh please, fix it."

Some legal documents were the same except for the name, the date and location of the hearing.

Everyone makes mistakes despite every effort to prevent it from happening.

Moore learned to read every word, look at every comma, every punctuation mark under White's tutelage because her trainer was a perfectionist.

Attorneys often said they thought they had proofread every document thoroughly and were surprised any error was found.

"It really takes a cold, different set of eyes to pick out any mistakes," Moore said.

Sometimes a similar document was prepared and no room was allowed for critical information.

An example was the Sheriff's Sale legal when no space was allowed to put the amount of the assessment.

The correct name spelling is vital because if there are differences it would be disallowed by the judge.

Moore explained, saying that if a name were misspelled in a foreclosure action, the property owner could claim that his house couldn't be sold because he or she was't that person listed in the legal.

One of the more humorous incidents involving a name occurred when a legal notice was received that Robert wanted to change his name to Roberta.

Moore noticed the difference and White immediately instructed her to call the attorney's office and ask if there was some mistake.

"I knew you would be calling," the secretary told Moore. There was no error. The man was undergoing a sex change and wanted his new name to be Roberta.

Emails are used to keep an open line of communication with the Legal News staff.

That makes a difference when time is short and the publication deadline is imminent.

Sometimes the change isn't made because of the failed contact effort.

"Clifford taught me that when I called a lawyer's office and any changes were made that I was to get the name of the person I talked to," she said. "If there were any problems, we knew who gave us the amended information.

Moore admits to being her own worst critic and feels badly when an error slips through and it is published.

That causes problems for everyone before it is rectified, she said.

The Legal News is a publication that is more than 100 year old, Moore said. Work has been demanding. One day, more than 100 legals were published.

"I couldn't guess the number of legals that I have read during the past 30 years," Moore said.

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