

Eli

From Page 1

was interested, he told me to apply. I did, and I got the job.”

Prior to that, Eli had thought she might like to live in Sioux Falls. An uncle worked in the city, so she went to look for work.

“They told me that, because I was 17, the main thing I could do was wash dishes,” Eli said. “I went back home, because I could do that there.”

In the auditor’s office, Eli was tasked with doing payroll and claims.

“I still do claims, but

(co-worker Karen Faerber) has taken over payroll,” she said. “I had good people train me when I got the job. I started out liking what I did, and I still do.”

It was approximately 1970 when Eli became the chief deputy auditor.

While technology has changed — Eli used a manual typewriter in the early years, for example — many things have not.

“In our office, there haven’t been that many changes in all the years I’ve been here,” she stated. “In other county offices, they’ve seen more change.”

One reason Eli believes she managed to stay in one place so long was that she didn’t let the

events of any one day get to her and instead tried to keep things in perspective.

“You have good days and bad days,” she said. “I didn’t believe in getting upset one day and deciding to move on to the next job. You’re going to have the same problems no matter where you go. Everything isn’t roses.”

Eli said one thing she hasn’t enjoyed about her job is election day. The auditor’s office oversees county, state and national elections. It also assists with Yankton’s municipal and school elections.

“Everybody is watching and there is so much to do,” Eli stated.

On the other hand, she loved

working with a diverse group of people during the last 50 years.

“You meet a lot of interesting people,” Eli said.

Four women have served as auditor during Eli’s tenure: Grace Hjerlald, Carol Peterson, Betty Maruska and Paula Jones.

While surpassing the 50-year benchmark became important to Eli in the past couple years, she did know that she was ready to retire.

“I said to myself, ‘There’s not going to be another boss,’” Eli stated. “And I knew I wasn’t going to be the boss. I never wanted that. I was happy where I was at.”

“There gets to be a time when you’re ready for retirement,” she

added. “Let someone else do the job.”

The last several months have been some of the most challenging in Eli’s career. Current Auditor Paula Jones has been on medical leave since February, just as the office was at the focus of many unanswered questions regarding property tax issues and other matters.

“I think we’ve done quite well. The staff here has really pulled together,” Eli said. “We’ve had help from the state and other counties. Our county commissioners have also been very helpful. We wouldn’t have made it without outside help.”

Before retiring, Eli agreed to help train a new employee for

the auditor’s office and has followed through with that promise.

Meanwhile, Patty Hojem, a long-serving employee in the auditor’s office, will take over as chief deputy in May.

Eli hopes an auditor is back in the office soon.

“Three people can’t do the work of four,” she said.

Looking ahead to retirement, Eli said she has no big plans.

“I’m just going to take it day by day and enjoy things,” she said. “If it’s nice on May 1, I’m going to walk across the (Meridian) bridge. I’d really enjoy that.”

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage](https://twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage)

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TRANSLATOR: JOHN MURRELL

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