

Community has lost a friend

Barbara Blackford, Portland's clerk-treasurer for the past nine and a half years, died Wednesday at Jay County Hospital following a sudden illness. She was 64.

Blackford, a resident of 627 E. High St., Portland, took office as clerk-treasurer in 1996. She also served two terms as Jay County recorder from 1987 to 1995.

"The community has lost a dedicated and wonderful public servant. More importantly, the community has lost a friend," Portland Mayor Bruce Hosier said this morning. Flags at all city-owned buildings have been lowered to half-staff, and small black flags have been placed on the antennas of all Portland police vehicles.

Tina Paxson, who has served as deputy clerk-treasurer for 26 years, will assume Blackford's duties until a replacement is named by the local Democratic Party.

"(Party politics)" didn't come into play (with Blackford)," Paxson said this morning. "She liked everybody. She was a great person, easy to get along with. She never came (into work) without a smile."

Maxine Lewis, one of three mayors during Blackford's tenure in office, said this morning that she was "stunned" by the news of Blackford's death.

"I think she wanted what was best for the city," Lewis said of Blackford.

Hosier, who went to the hospital Wednesday afternoon after learning Blackford was ill, said he had recently nominated her for Indiana Clerk-Treasurer of the Year.

"It's gonna be a difficult transition ... But I think the city and community will pull together. I know in my heart that she would want us to continue and take care of business," Hosier said.

Born Sept. 7, 1940 in Portland to Lester and Mildred (Gibson) Aker, she was married Sept. 21, 1958 to Gary C. Blackford, who died in 1981.

Prior to being elected county recorder, Blackford had worked for 20 years at The Jay Garment Company. She was also a longtime member of Asbury United Methodist Church, where she served as treasurer.

A Kentucky Colonel, she was named 1993 Indiana Recorder of the Year, and had received two Indiana clerk certifications in 2001.

She was a member of the Indiana League of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers, Women of the Elks, Women of the Moose, American Legion Auxiliary, Jay County Hospital Auxiliary and The Museum of the Soldier. She also served as treasurer of Jay County Democrat Women's Club and was a member and past president of The Cincinnatus League.

Surviving are a daughter, Dr. Lezlie Blackford, Indianapolis; three sisters, Betty Gee, Ruth Lee and Bonnie Aker, all of Portland; a brother, Sam Aker, Portland; one granddaughter; and several nieces and nephews.

Services will be held Saturday at 10 a.m. at Asbury United Methodist Church, 204 E. Arch St., Portland, with Pastor Greg Rittenhouse officiating.

Visitation will be Friday from 3 to 8 p.m. at Baird-Freeman Funeral Home, Portland, and one hour prior to services Saturday at the church.

Memorials may be made to Jay-Randolph Developmental Services or to the Jay County Humane Society.

Contributed by Jane Edson