

Water district retires first bonds

Franklin Favorite

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Forty years after signing bonds that would make way for public water service in rural areas of Simpson County, Billy Jeff Cherry, former chairman of the Simpson County Water District board of commissioners, joined officials in celebrating the retirement of the last of the bonds issued in 1967.

The project, which essentially started treated water service in rural areas in Simpson, included two 150,000-gallon storage tanks, two pumping stations and about 55 miles of water mains.

Today, the water district has seven tanks with a total capacity of 2.15 million gallons, seven pumping stations and 365 miles of water lines.

“Seeing these bonds paid off is definitely a good and rewarding feeling,” said Cherry. “David Roark, Jack Ferguson and I worked as a team to get running water for the different communities around Simpson County. We realized the need for water in the county, and we worked hard to see that the need was met.”

At the time of the bond issue, Roark served as treasurer, and Ferguson as secretary of the Water District. “One of the greatest rewards we gained in the process of providing water to the Simpson County citizens were the calls that we received from people each time they used their water. They would call and thank us for making their lives easier,” said Cherry.

James Snider, current chairman of the Simpson County Water District, presented Cherry with one of the original bonds that he signed 40 years ago at a gathering last Thursday.

The bond issue totaling \$500,000 played a vital role in the history of the Simpson County Water District by funding the water utility’s first project. Cherry said that in order to get approval to issue the bonds, 365 customers had to sign up for water meters. This was a process that took about four years to complete. Construction of this project provided the first public water supply outside the city of Franklin.

In the 40 years since he signed the bonds, Cherry has seen the water utility that he helped create grow into a critical component of Simpson County’s infrastructure on which citizens depend. During this period, the Water District has grown from 365 to 3,120 customers and has completed several expansion projects with line extensions that now serve virtually all existing homes in the county.

“Billy Cherry, along with the other original commissioners, paved the way for a successful organization that continues to provide safe, reliable water service to the community,” Snider said.