

## Angler for progress: Oxford dedicates maintenance building to Tom Turner

Engineer remembered for “do-it-right-the-first-time” approach, volunteerism and love of fishing

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The late Tom Turner, left, was responsible for Oxford’s exceptional maintenance building, which was dedicated to his memory Friday. Turner served the city in many ways, voluntarily teaching computer and management skills to employees, and he even took Jody Reid, right, on a New York fishing trip. (Special Photo)

OXFORD — As project manager for the city of Oxford’s construction of its state-of-the-art maintenance building, the late Tom Turner was a crafty angler — he loved to fish and he knew how to angle unconventional methods to achieve construction puposes.

He oversaw every detail of the maintenance building project, even the stain to go on the wooden fence.

Mayor Jerry Roseberry led a ceremony Friday dedicating Oxford’s maintenance building in memory of Turner, who conceived the project and “worked tirelessly” to see it finished.

“It was 10 years ago that Tom Turner stood before the Oxford City Council and laid out a proposal for the city to build a facility to house the city’s utility departments and public works department,” Roseberry said before a

sizeable gathering at the maintenance building.



Turner, who died last May, was a retired engineer who “worked and thought like one,” Roseberry told the Citizen. “He saved the city of Oxford a large amount of money by working on the design and served as our project manager, watching the quality of construction and costs.”

The late Tom Turner, right, was responsible for Oxford's exceptional maintenance building, which was dedicated to his memory Friday. Turner served the city in many ways, voluntarily teaching computer and management skills to employees and he even took Jody Reid, left, on a New York fishing trip in 2009. (Special Photo)



Sue Turner, wife of the late Tom Turner, and Superintendent of Public Works and Utilities Jody Reid, unveil the sign dedicating Oxford's maintenance building to the memory of Turner. (Special Photo)

"He did most of the engineering on this building," said Jody Reid, the city's superintendent of public works and utilities. "The concept and design and stuff — he did most of that."

Turner spent his career in New York as an engineer for Welch Allyn, a leading producer of medical diagnostic equipment. During that time he loved fishing in New York's lake country.

Turner and his wife, Sue, moved to Oxford after their daughter, Teresa, attended Oxford College and Emory University, married a local man, Jonathan Eady, and settled in Oxford.

The maintenance building, which cost approximately \$1 million and was finished in 2006, includes five large bays for vehicle maintenance and storage, offices, a kitchen, locker rooms and showers.

Those facilities and a backup generator makes it possible for residents to seek refuge in the building if a tornado or ice storm knocks out power in the city.

Turner's wife, Sue, attended the dedication event and cut the string to unveil Turner's name on the side of the building.

Also attending the ceremony were Teresa and Jonathan Eady, and their children, along with Donald Ballard, former mayor and long-time state senator and city attorney.

According to Roseberry, Turner was very detailed and demanding when he took on a project, resisting when someone wanted to do something that he felt would lessen the quality of the project.

"Tom even specified a brand of stain to go on the board fence," Roseberry told the dedication gathering. "When someone said, 'But Tom that is expensive stuff, can't we use something that costs less?' Tom was quick to answer, 'No — you can save a dollar now and spend 10 later fixing what should have be done right in the first place.'"

Roseberry added, "And that was Tom's philosophy — 'do it right the first time.'" Roseberry said the stain on the fence is as good now as it was when the fence went up years ago.

During his stint as mayor, Ballard appointed Turner to a citizens' advisory committee which elected him to coordinate the effort to build a quality facility.

“Over the ensuing months Tom worked tirelessly with Sunbelt Builders to see his dream come true,” Roseberry said.

“But he didn’t stop there. He took it on himself to teach the city’s utility and public works managers how to be better managers.”

One of those employees was Jody Reid, now the city’s superintendent of public works and utilities. Roseberry said Turner took Reid under his wing and even took him along on a fishing trip at his lake house on Lake Oneida in New York, where the Turners spent summer vacations.

“I spent a whole week with Tom and Sue over Father’s Day in 2009,” Reid said. “We were fishing for walleye — best fish I ever ate.”

Reid said that Turner spent two hours a week for about a year tutoring Reid on basic computer skills and did the same with another employee.

“He was very dedicated to helping this city to grow and be more efficient,” Reid said.

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