**52 Year Old “Bessie Sue”**

**Story**

Morton’s Township’s 52-year-old grader “Bessie Sue” has become a personified piece of machinery and valued member of the team, serving an estimated 4,715 hours for the township.

The grader has a long history and has been invaluable in widening every road included in the east Peoria-located township’s 65 miles of roads –from 18’ to 20’, using a shoulder plow mounted on the end of the blade.

The 1965 Caterpillar Road Grader 12 E has been a part of the township’s road maintenance equipment family since 1970, when then Highway Commissioner Ken Elvelsizer purchased her used for $17,000.00 with 1,100 hours on her from Peoria Tractor, quite a difference from the estimated $300,000 it would cost to replace the machine today.

Besides being an excellent example of efficiency in local government, Bessie Sue also represents the history of the community for many. One current employee of Morton Township recalled being rescued during a particularly dangerous blizzard in the 1980s. He was one of 50 students stranded on the road while traveling for school and Bessie Sue led the rescue party to ensure their safe transportation.