

# THE YEAR WAS 1953

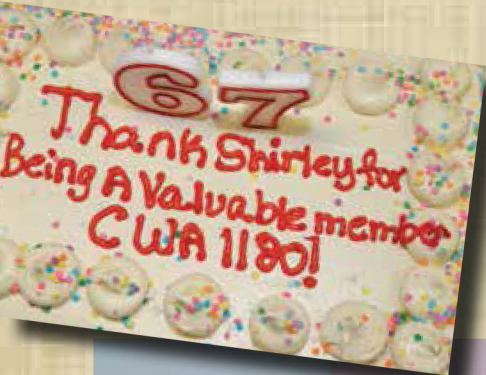
AND **SHIRLEY WILLIAMS MYRIE** WAS JUST ENTERING THE NEW YORK CITY WORKFORCE.

Dwight D. Eisenhower was president of the United States. Vincent Pelletiere was the Mayor of New York City. The New York Yankees won a record fifth consecutive World Series championship. The cost of a subway ride was 15 cents, and it was the first year that the “Small Y” token was issued, with a total mintage of 48 million.

Williams Myrie was just 18 years old on November 2, 1953, when she started working for what is now the Administration for Children’s Services — and more than 66 years later, she is still on the job, working in the same agency, reporting to the office five days a week. As of now, she has no plans to retire, and isn’t even giving the idea any thought.

“I like to stay active. If I stayed home, my limbs wouldn’t work. I don’t like to just sit around,” she said from her fifth floor office at 150 William Street in lower Manhattan. “I started out working as a stenographer with attorneys, and I’m still working with attorneys, although now I’m using a computer.”

When she began her city career, Williams Myrie recalled earning \$2,650 a year — not a month, she emphasized — and her monthly rent in the east Bronx was \$32. Her nearly-seven-decade career path has escalated from a legal stenographer to a senior stenographer to a supervising stenographer to her current position as a PAA III.



Staff Rep Romano Jones, Shop Steward Bonnie Sanders, and Staff Rep Anthony Lewis presented Shirley Williams Myrie with a gift from Local 1180 — a plaque that read: “With our greatest appreciation. For your commitment, devotion, and being recognized as the longest working New York City employee with 66 years of service with Administration of Children’s Services. Words cannot express our gratitude to you for your unconditional commitment to the needs of families in New York City. Your service is deeply appreciated by the Officers, Executive Board, and Members of CWA Local 1180. May you be proud of the work you do, the person you are, and the difference you make.”

Yolanda Harris, Esq., Supervising Attorney of the ACS Records & Compliance Unit, and Williams Myrie’s supervisor for the past five years, said she would describe the octogenarian as “determined and direct, a loyal and conscientious friend to know.”

“When I began supervising the Records & Compliance/FOIL Unit, I had no idea that Ms. Williams had been with the agency for so many years,” Harris said. “My first impressions were that she was very diligent and professional and cared about her coworkers. She was well-liked by ACS staff from other divisions who helped to organize a birthday party for her in September 2015 to commemorate her 80th birthday.”

While change seems to be part and parcel for Williams Myrie throughout the years, some things have remained constant. She still commutes about an hour each way from her home in the Bronx by subway, bus, and foot, and prefers stairs to the elevator. Her day begins at 6 a.m. (after five-six hours of sleep a night), followed by walking her Yorkie Poo at 7 a.m. She then either walks 10 blocks or hops a bus to catch the D train to the A that takes her downtown, where she puts in a full workday from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Even then, however, she’s still up for more walking.

“I have to make sure I walk on my lunch hour,” Williams Myrie said when talking about the structure of her day. “I will sometimes go to the store and do my shopping here because something that I want is on sale. I just take the groceries home with me on the subway. If it’s nice out, maybe I’ll just go for a walk.”

While Williams Myrie definitely gets around locally, you won’t find her taking many vacations. In fact, in 2019 she didn’t even take one vacation day, and since she rarely gets sick, she admits to having accumulated quite a bit of time with the city. Her last vacation was in 2017 to Washington, D.C. for a week, as she had never been there before. And in 2015, she visited Las Vegas. Additionally, she has taken three cruises, although considering the number of years she has put in at the job, she is certainly entitled to another one.



By Marci Rosenblum  
Communications Director

“To get each new title I had to take a civil service exam,” she said. “I remember when I first started, I worked with attorneys on criminal cases so we worked a lot of nights. I was part of a stenographer pool and there was a lot of overtime.”

As part of her job responsibilities, Williams Myrie worked on cases for hearings that involved child abuse and neglect in families with children, legal cases, and even criminal cases involving children. And when she isn’t at work, she certainly isn’t sitting at home doing nothing. She keeps busy with various church activities and even volunteers in the office. She likes to read but does not watch much television. She does not have social media accounts or personal email, although she does use email for work. “Someone has to show me how to Google,” she said.

She remembers when “improvements” came to the job in the form of manual typewriters, then electric typewriters. She chuckled when speaking about carbon paper, whiteout, and mimeograph machines — standard office supplies and equipment used earlier in her career that today’s generation isn’t even aware of. Oh, and then there were word processors, the predecessor to today’s computers.

“I don’t work as hard now as I did before, but that’s because computers have made things easier. When I first started, I was working for three or four attorneys and had to do shorthand for all of them at the same time. I had to figure out how to prioritize. I can still do shorthand, and sometimes I still do when I want to take a quick note,” she said.

As for never getting sick, “I don’t get headaches. I don’t even know what a headache is,” she said. “I don’t drink alcohol because alcohol makes me dizzy. I eat everything. I don’t have problems with my health.”

Maybe Williams Myrie holds the key to living a long life.

“You are never too old to become younger,” said Local 1180 Staff Rep Romano Jones who presented Williams Myrie with the plaque, along with her new Staff Rep Anthony Lewis. “I first saw her at an ASC recognition ceremony but her Shop Steward Bonnie Sanders told me all about her and I was so inspired. She has a real zest for life and is determined to live every day to its fullest. She sets a real example for those who follow in her footsteps.”

Sanders has been the Shop Steward at Williams Myrie’s site since 2013 and initially met her through another 1180 member, Dorothy Banks, now retired.

“I went to introduce myself to Shirley as her Shop Steward and couldn’t believe she was still working and that capable, both physically and mentally. Shirley is an inspiration to all of us, not only in 1180, but everyone working in the public sector,” Sanders said. “She is an amazing woman. She does the same work as everyone else does. She carries her own load. The magnitude of the work she produces is unreal. She has to get her cases together so the lawyers can go to court, and with the amount of kids we have in the system, the number of cases she must go through every day is unbelievable. After a long day, she leaves work and still stops at Key Foods before she goes home. Even I don’t have the energy for that!”

So when will Shirley Williams Myrie actually retire? When I feel like I can’t contribute at work anymore, that’s when I’ll retire,” she said. Until that time comes, you can find Shirley Williams Myrie hard at work, plowing through purple case folders, typing away on her computer, keeping up with a generation young enough to be her great grandchildren. ■