

Monday's Commentary

Patterson's stand on capital punishment raked

Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson has snaked a twisted political path these past 10 years, since Irene McCabe, the Pontiac school system and about 100,000 outraged parents inadvertently conspired to bring him to the public eye.

Before then, Patterson was only a tough-talking lawyer, a used-to-be assistant prosecutor with some faint local fame. Most of it came from a publicized series of disputes with his former boss, Thomas Plunkett.

In the anti-busing days, you'd see Patterson on television and in the papers, usually with Mrs. McCabe. Oftentimes they were standing on the broad granite steps of some courthouse or legislative chamber or state capitol. Or, finally, the White House.

This may be a trick of memory, but I recall Patterson to the viewer's left and slightly behind Mrs. McCabe in those pictures. The person on the left in a newspaper photo gets mentioned first in the caption.

BUT PATTERSON was still only a tough-talking lawyer. They must teach courses in tough talking at law schools, because there are literally thousands of tough-talking lawyers.

Patterson improved himself. He became a tough-talking prosecutor.

And more. A man named William Cahalan is the prosecutor for Wayne County. Somebody called George Barris tells the state's lawyers what to do in Macomb County. Both have been on the job so long they may not want to admit they remember their first election.

I mention these gentlemen by way of illustration. Prosecutors normally are about on par with drain commissioners when it comes to public notoriety.

Patterson is different. Partly he's different because of circumstance — the Oakland County child killings and their bizarre trappings tended to bring a lot of normally anonymous law enforcement faces onto Michigan television screens.

BUT THERE'S more to it than that. A lot of prosecutors get involved in heavy publicity-producing crimes and could still qualify for a "Do you know me?" credit card commercial.

Cahalan, for instance, has had a series of prostitution raids giving him plenty of recent exposure. Included in this publicity blitz has been what may be the oldest stock photograph in the world: somebody with a grin and a padlock. But I can't even remember what Cahalan looks like until I make an effort.

So Patterson isn't different because of his job. Mostly Patterson's different because he wants to be. The thing that more than any other has made Patterson different has been citizen initiatives, or drives to amend the state constitution.

Periodically, the United States has been swept by



Mike Scanlon

the chills and fever of a wave of constitutional amendments. Nearly always they are inspired by well-meaning people, but they have the potential of a loaded shotgun.

Most notable is the Volstead Act. Once folks decided they were going to drink no matter what Volstead thought about it, general disregard for the law spread across regional and cultural boundaries in a way it never had before in the U.S.

Patterson has concentrated on crime. Last time out, he championed a successful amendment to the constitution which limits prison use of early paroles as incentives for good behavior.

Now he's out collecting John Hancock's for the death penalty.

PEOPLE ARE hot about crime now and have been that way for nearly a generation. When people are hot they tend to think unclearly, especially when a top criminal justice system figure tells them they're right.

Once worked in a medium-security federal prison in Texas. I found out that 98 percent of the federal prison system's then-25,000 population will eventually be released. I found out that in the federal prisons with the longest-term inmate population, in Leavenworth, in D-Block at Marion, Ill., and especially in Atlanta, inmate violence is extraordinary.

At the time, a murder a week was committed by and against the inmates of Atlanta. And that was the rate of successful assaults. The statistics on half-way mayhem escape me.

There are people in prison today who should never walk the streets again, but elimination of good-time doesn't single them out. Rather, it allows them to prey on other prisoners without risking much.

Inmates, for some reason, dislike testifying in open court and then returning to prison. A much more likely approach toward punishing or deterring violent crime by violent inmates is to hold out the possibility of administratively revoked time off for good behavior, or just plain good-time.

ELIMINATE ALL good-time and you can no longer threaten to revoke some good-time.

It's important to note that relatively few inmates are dangerous in the classic sense. There are 17-year-old car thieves by the thousands in U.S. pris-

ons. Rest assured, however, that many of them will become bitter, violent and definitely dangerous by the time they are released.

You'd be surprised at the changes that can happen to some guys after they've spent five or six years as more or less perpetual gang rape victims.

A wave of unusually hardened, unusually brutalized and dehumanized former convicts seems to be a certainty for Michigan's future.

Will the inmates transformed into hard-core, dangerous criminals by the absence of early paroles be the same people condemned to future gas chambers, or drug injections, or electric chairs?

There would seem logic to it, however twisted the logic might be, if they were. But probably they are not.

Honoring Charlie Browns of the modern-day world

Why's ev-ery-body always pickin' on me?

In every school or group there's always one person who seems to catch the brunt of practical jokes.

So, for all the Charley and Charlene Browns of this world — this column is for you.

There was one such Charley Brown in my high school. He was branded the first week of our freshman year. Mark walked in class one day and another fellow said: "You look like a turtle!"

Within one week, and for the next four years, everyone knew turtle. Few knew Mark's real name.

He was the born loser type. For example, someone would put a tack on his seat during English class. Turtle sat down, then shot up, mouth open, eyes bulging — but he didn't scream.

Since everyone knew about the caper, we were all watching. Our laughter filled the room at the spectacle Turtle made.

Mark, get out of here, you're causing a commotion," said the teacher, who wasn't in on the joke.

ONE ALL-TIME great practical joke happened to another Charley Brown character in my class. One fellow figured out his victim's class schedule. Not only did he know the classes, but he knew who sat near the person.

Our practical joker arranged with everyone who sat near the victim to say, "I smell dog crap." By the end of the day the poor fellow was so self-conscious he wiped his feet everywhere he went.

Whether you were the coolest person in class, or the dunce, you had a nickname in my school. This included our principal (Scratch), teachers (Biggie Nun and Stretch) as well as students (Duke of Earl, Hooter, Strawder and Herbies).

One fellow set a record for the most nicknames. He was known as any of the following: Rodney, Day Off and Bernard.

Origins of nicknames are interesting. One transfer student received his nickname during his first class.

"Terry, how do you spell your name?" asked Brother Jeff.



The Duke of Earl, always quick on the draw with a joke, spoke before Terry.

"N-E-W-K-I-D," said the Duke.

Terry was known as new kid from that day on. He wound up being our valedictorian. After the speech he gave during graduation week, the whole class spontaneously gave him a standing ovation and chanted, "New Kid! New Kid! New Kid!"

NEVER ONE to perform a practical joke, I've been the victim of a few.

Ron Garbinski, former Redford Township resident and past editor of the Redford Observer, played the most imaginative trick.

It happened when I was sports editor for the West Bloomfield Eccentric, working for Ron, who is now our West Bloomfield editor.

One day a letter arrived. It was an official West Bloomfield School District stationery. Inside was a letter signed by West Bloomfield's superintendent of schools.

In the letter I was thanked for all the support and recognition given to women's athletics in my sports pages. A token of appreciation, the letter stated, was included in the envelope.

When I reached inside the envelope, I pulled out a bra. Everyone in the newsroom roared with laughter as I nervously showed the bra back inside the envelope. A few people were so hysterical they had to leave the room.

For my part, I turned around and said with all the severity I could muster, "I don't like practical jokes or practical jokers."

It didn't have much effect. Today I found a large box, the type a folding table might be packaged in, sitting on my chair. A typewritten note was taped to the box.

"John, here's the large box you ordered." Of course I had ordered no box. Our copy desk is full of laughs.

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SHOWTIME

Daisy Mayne revival of comedy hit by George Kelly, starring Jean Stapleton and featuring Rex Robbins and Polly Rowles, through March 16 at the Birmingham Theatre. Ticket information at box office, 642-5553.

A Life in the Theatre Detroit premiere of David Mame's New York comedy play hit through March 23 at Meadow Brook Theatre on Oakland University campus near Rochester. For ticket information call box office at 377-3300.

Angel Street mystery by Patrick Hamilton presented by Farmington Players on Thursday-Saturday at barn theater in Farmington Hills. Ticket information at 477-1066.

Cheaper by the Dozen comedy presented by the First Theatre Guild at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday and March 14-15. Senior Citizen matinee at 2 p.m. March 15. Performances in Knox Auditorium, First Presbyterian Church, Birmingham. Tickets at the door; group rates available by calling 642-5036.

Vanities comedy-drama presented by Stagecrafters on Thursday-Saturday and March 13-15 at Stagecrafters Playhouse in Clawson. For tickets call 585-8437.

South Pacific musical by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II presented by Troy Players at 8 p.m.

Friday-Saturday at Troy Community Center. Ticket information at 879-1285.

DINNER THEATER

Butterflies Are Free drama presented by Jimmy Launce Productions on Fridays and Saturdays at Somerset Dinner Theatre, Somerset Mall, Troy. Buffet dinner prepared and served by Alfred's Restaurant at 7:30 p.m.; show at 8:45 p.m. Reservations at 643-8855.

Sweet Charity presented by Musical Dinner Theatre at the Sheraton Pontiac-Bloomfield in Pontiac. Performances Fridays and Saturdays with dinner service starting at 6:30 p.m. and curtain at 8:30. Reservations at 338-6131.

CONCERTS

Royal Oak Music Theatre presents Firefall at 7:30 p.m. Thursday. Ticket information at box office, 547-1555.

The Trio Trio and Friends featuring violinist Gordon Staples, concertmaster of the world class Detroit Symphony Orchestra, at 8 p.m. Monday in second floor Jeanne Lloyd Room, of Baldwin Public Library Birmingham. Admission charge; tickets available at the library.

Cranbrook Music Guild presents Young

Artists Concert at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday at Cranbrook House in Bloomfield Hills. Award-winning mezzo-soprano Meredith Parsons and pianist Norman Boehm. Subscription and ticket information by calling 646-6263.

Birmingham Musicals presents Benefit Cabaret Concert Thursday-Friday at The Community House in Birmingham. The Potpourri Singers; Ron Houser, jazz pianist, and Prevaling Winds, instrumentalists. Also, two reprieve scenes from "Gigi" and other skits, soloists. Cash bar opens at 7 p.m.; program begins at 8 p.m. Cabaret style (table and four chairs). Tickets available at door or call Mrs. Philip G. Whelan at 645-9312.

Nightcap with Mozart midnight chamber music party presents 1-Pu Wang, violin and viola, John Snow, oboe; Lawrence LaGore, piano, at 11:30 p.m. until 12:15 a.m. Friday at Birmingham Unitarian Church in Birmingham Hills. Complimentary wine, hot spicy cider and coffee served starting at 11 p.m.; stay for afterglow and meet the artists. Call 851-8934 for information.

American Artist Series presents Joann Freeman, piano; Hart Hollman, viola; Maxim Janowsky, doublebass; Bogos Mortchikian, violin; Roma Riddell, soprano; Linda Snedden Smith, violin; and John Thurman, cello, at 3 p.m. Sunday at Kingswood School auditorium, Bloomfield Hills. Tickets in advance only by calling 647-2230.

Oak Park Symphony Orchestra performs third concert of season at 3:30 p.m. Sunday at Oak Park High School under direction of Dr. Morris C. Hebbel. For tickets call 542-4666.

Christ Church Cranbrook presents Lessons and Anthems, pre-Easter, Lenten service rarely heard in the United States, at 4:30 p.m. Sunday at the church in Bloomfield Hills. Concert features Christ Church Cranbrook musicians playing Lessons and Anthems comprising 16th through 20th century music. Free.

Cripple Creek Sandwich Theatre presents Las Tres Vidas with contemporary jazz at 4 and 8 p.m. Sunday at Common Ground, Birmingham. Tickets available at Common Ground; phone 645-1173 for further information.

NIGHT LIFE

Angle's big band sound of the Dick Murphy big band 9 p.m. to midnight Sundays in Farmington Hills. Cover charge.

Comedy Castle presents comedians Wednesday-Saturday at Friday's in Pine Lake Mall, West Bloomfield. Bruce Cum brings his comedy in the absurd Thursday-Saturday. Show times at 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Thursday-Friday; 8 and 10 p.m. and midnight Saturday. Information and reservations at 851-3252.

Downtown Room presents Rick Stahl

through Tuesday; Pilot House Review Wednesday-Saturday at Midtown Cafe in Birmingham. Lounge open daily 8:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Down Under Larin and Mason perform 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. Fridays-Saturdays during March at lounge in The Meatpacking Place, Orchard Lake.

Eden Glen Joe Grande Trio plays for listening and dancing 7:30-11:30 p.m. Wednesdays-Thursdays and 8:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. Fridays-Saturdays at restaurant in Troy. Doug Jacobs and the Red Garrier Band plays for Dixieland Brunch from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Sundays.

Piper's Alley Troy presents jazz with Kozs from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. Saturdays; Sunday brunch with Nicole DeVault, classical harpist, at 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. through March; Charles Green and His Quartet from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. Sundays; jazz with ShooDeeDoo from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. Mondays.

The Raven Gallery presents the magic of Mark Kornhauser and the "down home" music of Mike Cross, Wednesday-Sunday, in Southfield. Show times at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday; at 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday-Saturday. Reservations at 537-2822.

Roma's of Bloomfield presents teen disco entertainment, dancing to the sounds of Roma's Sundown Disco, from 8 p.m. to midnight Fridays and Saturdays in Bloomfield Hills. Somerset Inn pianist Terry Alan plays

at restaurant L'Auberge in Troy from 6-11 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays and for Sunday brunch 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Twenny's Cafe presents Roger Jamison at the piano 7-10 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays (after March 7); Joe LoDuca, guitar, 7-10 p.m. Wednesdays; classic blues singer Slipper Wallace Friday and Saturday (dinner show at 9:30 p.m.; late show at 11:15 p.m.); and Ken Cox, et al, with up-tempo, in-town jazz, from 8 p.m. to midnight Saturdays (after March 8). Phone 644-0050 for reservations.

Dewey's lounge presents RCA recording artist Angela Baccari in Angela Baccari Show from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Monday-Saturday at Michigan Inn in Southfield.

ON FILM

Ethnographic Film Series presents "Dead Birds" at 8 p.m. Monday at Cranbrook Institute of Science auditorium, Bloomfield Hills. Tickets at the door; more information at 645-3225.

Lunch Film Program presents "The Great American Chocolate Factory," a trip into the Hershey factory, and "The Wonders of Michigan," man-made and natural wonders of Michigan, at noon Wednesday at Baldwin Library, Birmingham. Bring your own lunch.