

The also-rans

Candidates reflect on offices that got away



John Anderson Aldo Vagnozzi David Pickering Alan Feuer

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

For the political candidates who worked body-wracking 18-hour days for months only to lose in the recent primary and general elections, the ordeal of campaigning and losing created a kaleidoscope of unforgettable emotion and experience.

"The biggest feeling was the feeling of disappointment. We really did go all out to win this," said John Anderson, who was the unsuccessful 15th District Senate Republican candidate.

"Closely behind comes the feeling of emptiness. Your schedule has been so jam-packed with activities related to the campaign that particularly the first day or two after the election you come home at the end of a work day and say to yourself, 'Where do I go next?'

"There are no speeches to be made, no public appearances scheduled, no doors to knock on — you find yourself completely lost."

The recently wed Anderson, former business executive with a Farmington Hills manufacturing firm, practices law with an area

firm.

"After a week or two, you work that out of your system. Still, there are some lingering memories of what you might have done differently during the campaign. You indulge in second thoughts."

For Democratic activist Aldo Vagnozzi, who embarked on an ill-fated uphill climb to upstage incumbent state Rep. Sandy Brotherton, R-Farmington, in the 69th District race, there was no letdown.

"I was realistic enough to know that the district was unwinable. But I think it's important that there be opposition even in the toughest race. Sandy, I think, appreciated at least a small challenge," said the Farmington Hills resident.

"Ours was the kind of race that allows the discussion of the issues. In a race such as mine, neither candidate has to be uptight about what is said."

Alan Feuer, the Observer's choice for Democrat in the state Senate primary race who bowed to eventual winner Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Detroit, had prepared for the worst.

"You have some idea of what

is likely to happen. The prospect of losing is clear enough."

The Southfield resident, who attributes his defeat to being a first-time candidate unwilling to take money from special interest groups, is relishing pleasant memories in the election's aftermath.

"The neighbors, friends and people new to the process who believed enough in you to spend their summer campaigning and can't understand why others don't — I'm tremendously honored by their efforts."

"The issues would be there whether you win or lose. It's the nature of the campaign and how proud I felt — the level of effort."

Most of all, Feuer is enjoying the time he has to write, read, putter around his apartment, and see his family on some normal basis rather than at a shopping center on a Saturday morning.

"Novi's David Pickering, unsuccessful in the primary in his bid for the Republican nod in the 15th District Senate race, said "It's very difficult to explain the disappointment, what goes on within one's self."

"You've been in the public

limelight where your thoughts and opinions have mattered. You've become a spokesman for the community. By the end of the campaign, whoever the candidate is, you're basically exhausted. Every meeting and function becomes an emotional strain and drain."

"The day after the election, no one cares what you think. But I'm not bitter. You accept what people say and go on."

Vagnozzi and Anderson entertain thoughts of a second bid for political office.

As of the other day, there's an opening for the Democratic presidential nominee. I might take a look at that," Vagnozzi joked.

Of the interviewed candidates, only Anderson is seriously considering another campaign.

"I wouldn't hesitate to run again if I felt the economic problems currently facing the state have not been resolved or addressed sufficiently," he said.

Though Anderson cannot yet identify which office he would seek, he's trying "to find an opportunity to make myself count. Something that has motivated me all along is the idea of public service."

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Wait till next year could be the rallying cry for losing candidates (from left) John Anderson, Aldo Vagnozzi, David Pickering and Alan Feuer.

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Mike Solan (left), poster child Ben Hill and TV star Dean Butler met in Chicago recently.

March of Dimes volunteers meet

Mike Solan, general manager of WLLZ-FM in Farmington Hills, met with national March of Dimes ambassador Dean Butler and 1993 poster-child Ben Hill during a recent gathering of key volunteers in Chicago.

Butler, star of NBC's "Little House: A New Beginning," and 5-year-old Ben highlighted the meeting held to discuss current efforts in the fight against birth defects — the March of Dimes goal.

WLLZ served as pilot station for WalkAmerica 1992, which raised approximately \$700,000 in pledges to the voluntary health organization in April.

Young Ben was born with "open spine" and symbolizes the 250,000 infants born with birth defects in the United States each year.

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