

# GOP sheriff's candidates take aim at issues

By Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

One of the candidates almost didn't show up for the showdown.

Despite a few tense moments for GOP organizers, all three Republicans who want to be sheriff made it to the party's official "Shoot Out."

About 50 members of the Oakland County Republican Party's prestigious 300 Club got a chance to hear sheriff's candidates John F. Nichols, Bill Ortmann and James Stewart. The fund-raiser was held in the Main Event at Pontiac Silverdome.

Democratic candidates James D. Coote, Henry L. Hansen and Niles E. Olson were not invited.

**BUT THE THREE-MAN "Sheriff's Shoot Out"** almost became a deal when Farmington Hills Police Chief Nichols threatened to pull out because the questions were to be submitted ahead of time.

Candidates were interviewed by newspaper reporters who cover the county for the Daily Tribune, Detroit Free Press, and Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

The journalists were originally asked to submit questions ahead of time so that there would not be duplicates. When Nichols objected, the rules were changed to allow questions to be asked on the spot.



John F. Nichols

"The old rules weren't straight forward," said Robert Anderson, Nichols's campaign manager.

"Prepared questions wouldn't have allowed reporters to get off-the-cuff answers. We just wanted to make sure it was like a standard debate."

**ALL THREE CANDIDATES** were allowed three minutes at the opening and closing of the event. The time was used to quickly extol virtues and outline experience.



James Stewart

Nichols said he's been advised by supporters to "soften up" — and even let his hair grow. But the crew-cut former Detroit police commissioner won't "slip and slide."

"I will do none of those things. What you see is what you get," he told party contributors.

"I believe the issue is not what we think but how each of us is equipped to handle a job that's tough."



Bill Ortmann

Like Nichols — who stressed his experience — attorney Bill Ortmann outlined his background with Ford Motor Co., the Department of Defense and Chrysler Corp. The Farmington Hills resident then went into law practice with his father.

"I've been a lawyer and a good lawyer," Ortmann said. Later, during questioning, he said his legal experience is a plus.

"We're living in the 1980s, and the time has come with a budget of .181 million and 450 employees for a law-yr-manager-to-be-sheriff."

**ALSO A LAW OFFICER**, Huntington Woods Public Safety Director James Stewart outlined his goals. As sheriff, he would establish a table of organization, restore fiscal responsibility, work harmoniously with county commissioners and township officials, and work to "close the gap between north and south Oakland County cities."

During questioning, Stewart stressed his 35 years of Oakland County law enforcement experience. He also sees an advantage in not having been part of the sheriff's department.

"I bring continuity. And I can say I

have no obligations anyone in that department," he said, adding that can candidate has been endorsed by state-ll's deputies.

Countering that remark, Nichols said people in the sheriff's department "have confidence that I can do the job. They know I have the guts, the knowl-edge."

**CANDIDATES WERE** asked questions about their experience, goals for the department, the possibility of townships forming their own regional police force, and whether they would keep the new jail administrator on. All were not asked to answer each question.

All three said they would get rid of the jail administrator appointed by Sheriff Johannes Spreen.

## OCC awards scholarships

Oakland Community College's Southeast Campus System has awarded academic scholarships to 18 students.

Receiving the Dr. Sigurd Ristov Scholarship are: Susan E. Allen, Royal Oak; Michael A. Menthen, Berkley; Dave (Nasanchuk), Southfield; Lynn A. Ruhlman, Birmingham; and Jeannine T. Walters, Hazel Park.

The William Sanders Memorial Scholarship will go to Laura A. Godin, Troy, and Suzanne B. Kaske, Milford.

This fall's Jill Robinson Memorial Scholarship goes to Jim Rink, Royal Oak; Nancy Sweet, Royal Oak; and Nancy Ward, Berkley.

Southeast Campus System Scholarships will be awarded to: Karen J. Borgens, Berkley; Jennifer DeArment, Madison Heights; Geeta Dharis, Troy; Christine Smilacek, Troy; and Susan L. Valentine, Madison Heights.

Karen J. Johns of Royal Oak will receive the Board of Trustees Excellence Award.

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