

# Five seek prestigious Oakland court seat

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

IT'S A normal election year for the Oakland Circuit Court. Four incumbent judges are unopposed.

There is one vacancy — Frederick Ziem decided to retire at the end of this term — and five candidates are scrambling for it.

It's a prestigious bench if one isn't superstitious — 13 judges who preside over some of Michigan's brightest lawyers and most challenging cases. Winner of the open seat will join a club that campaigns as a team. It's almost as good as a lifetime appointment. Almost never is an incumbent defeated.

In the Aug. 5 non-partisan primary, voters will winnow the field down to two, who will face off on Nov. 4.

Here, in reverse alphabetical order, is what they're saying in campaign biographies and in interviews with *Chive Searchlight* attended by this newspaper.

Our question was: Other than present sitting Oakland Circuit Court judges, who was the best judge you ever practiced in front of, and why?

**WILLIAM ZIEM, 32**, Milford resident, associate in the law firm of Jacques & Ziem in Walled Lake.

His legal practice includes "extensive trial work in district court. I'm now in the general practice of law. I've handled some municipal cases. I'm most qualified in criminal law."

In 2½ years on the Oakland prosecutor's staff, he did the bulk of his work in preliminary exams at the district court level, handled drunk driving trials and tried three murder cases in Circuit Court.

Best judge: Marvin Frankel in Oak Park District Court — "most knowledgeable in law."

Education: Olivet College, bachelor of science in 1976; Cooley Law School, law degree in 1978.

The son of the retiring judge, Ziem got into the race because "I think I'm best qualified. There's not an outstanding candidate."

Comments on court efficiency: "More research attorneys should be hired up there. Generally you see two clerks; I don't think you need more than one. . . . If you do your job the way you should, things will get done on time."

**JOAN YOUNG, 39**, Birmingham resident, administrator of the Circuit Court since 1982, a position requiring a lawyer; deputy administrator, 1979-82.

"The circuit court administrator functions as a house counsel for the court. It's a business operation, with a \$10 million budget, 200 employees and labor negotiations. It's responsible for the Friend of the Court, jury clerk, schedule clerk and now the pre-trial services unit," she said.

From 1974 to 79 Young was in private general practice in Troy — domestic, juvenile and criminal, litigation and real estate closings.



William Ziem  
private attorney



Joan Young  
court administrator



Lawrence Ternan  
city attorney



Martin Krohner  
assistant prosecutor



Jessica Cooper  
district judge

Best judge: Former Circuit Judge Robert Webster — "decisive, bright, worked very hard, cared about the impact of his decision, wonderful sense of humor, never took himself too seriously. That's the kind of judge I would try to be."

From 1979 to '83 she chaired the state Teacher Tenure Commission, which tried teacher firing cases.

A native of Allegan, she majored in Spanish, with a minor in psychology, at Michigan State ('69) and studied a year in Spain. She put her Spanish to work as a social worker and in a job-development program for Hope College in Holland. The job involved matching workers to employers and giving non-English-speaking workers enough English to perform on the job.

Young settled in Oakland County after marriage and earning her law degree from the Wayne State University Law School in 1974.

**LAWRENCE R. TERNAN, 46**, Rochester Hills, city attorney there, principal in a Bloomfield Hills law firm.

He started practicing in 1965 in Ferndale, handling "divorce, criminal defense, bankruptcy — anything that would come in the door. I continue to do criminal defense work, and personal injury work, primarily defense."

His early work involved many child custody cases.

In his municipal practice, Ternan

has specialized in zoning suits, has been retained by other municipalities in such cases, and has written on them.

Best judge: Clark Adams, retired from the Oakland bench — "he had an understanding of the law, a wonderful temperament, he was able to control his courtroom." He also admires a Potosky judge who is "able to take the emotion out of an issue and try them fairly and impartially."

Education: Western Michigan University, bachelor's degree in business administration, 1961; Wayne State University Law School, 1965.

On closing courtrooms: "I'm a firm believer in open courtrooms; a firm believer in the Open Meetings law — that's how I feel. Most of the things they want closed sessions about don't need to be."

On court efficiency: "Set deadlines, and see that cases aren't delayed by attorneys. . . . We should screen cases more for cases that lack merit."

**MARTIN KROHNER, 42**, Farmington Hills, assistant Wayne County prosecutor.

After teaching school 2½ years in Detroit, Krohner spent a year as a staff attorney with Michigan Consolidated Gas Co., clerked for a probate judge and was a family law attorney for the Oakland Legal Aid Society.

For the past 13 years, he has been

on the Wayne prosecutor's staff. He does much legal teaching: trial techniques to new staff lawyers, spouse abuse seminars, rape crisis center staff members, volunteer probation officers in district courts.

His avocation has been helping to found, and serve as a lobbyist for, Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Best judge: George T. Martin, a former Dearborn district judge and a Wayne County circuit judge — "It was like practicing at the turn of the century. He demanded you stand at the podium; he demanded you ask permission to question a witness and to make an objection. Everyone was treated with respect, everyone dressed in an appropriate manner. . . . Even when it was 107 degrees in July, we kept our jackets on."

Education: Michigan State University, bachelor's degree; University of Detroit Law School, law degree.

On court efficiency: "This county needs a lot more judges. Delays are too long."

**JESSICA COOPER, 40**, in second term as district judge in Southfield. Noting that many Circuit Court

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cases are remanded to District Court, Cooper said, "Since I've been working as a circuit judge, I may as well be on the circuit bench. . . . The circuit bench is a challenge. That's the trial court."

There's a second reason: The state Court of Appeals borrows circuit judges for appellate work, and Cooper started her career in 1973 as an assistant defender in the state appellate defenders office. She would like to put her background to work on the appeals bench.

In private practice 1975-78, she handled criminal and juvenile cases, divorce, discrimination, real estate

and personal injury cases.

Favorite judge: "I have to give you three. Horace Gilmore (Wayne circuit) — he knew his law. Jim Ryan (former Wayne Circuit judge, state Supreme Court and now U.S. Court of Appeals judge) — no nonsense; he expected you to know the law and the rules. John O'Hair (former Wayne Circuit judge, now county prosecutor) — even-tempered, easy going."

On court efficiency: "The fact that I'm known as a trial judge helps me settle cases."

Education: Wayne State University, bachelor's and law degrees.

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**SPECIAL ENTERTAINMENT**

- Jazz Concert with Larry Nozario - Fri, July 18, 12:00 to 1:30 pm
- Dixie Derby Trio - Sat, July 19, 1:00 to 2:00 pm
- Master Magician Avery Gordon - Sun, July 20, 1:00 to 3:00 pm

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