

Leib: Staff shouldn't be eunuchs

Thursday, June 9, 1988 O&E

(Wb.T.Ro-8B.S-7B.F-11A)O/8A

Third in a series

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Jeffrey Leib, 46, is promising to be a tough law-and-order candidate in his bid for the Republican nomination for Oakland County prosecutor in the Aug. 2 primary.

A Southfield lawyer who lives in West Bloomfield Township, Leib was the third candidate to announce.

You were an assistant prosecutor in 1968-70. What kinds of cases did you prosecute?

A. We had a very small staff at the time — 17 or 18. I was head of the civil division — all the paternity, dependent parent, all the drivers' restoration cases. Matter of fact, Brooks Patterson (retiring prosecutor) was under me in the civil division.

In addition, I handled district court cases and all criminal cases before Judge William Beasley.

Q. When you were with the City of Orchard Lake Village, what legal work was involved there?

A. All of their ordinance prosecutions. I also did some ordinance work for West Bloomfield a couple of times, filling in.

Q. In '71-72 you were with the Probate Court. What did that involve?

A. I was legal advisor to the probate judges — full time. I was the second lawyer on the 300-member staff of the Probate Court.

As legal adviser, I used to oversee the estates division, the mental health division, adoptions division, all of the conservatorships.

Q. You were a mediator for Circuit Court?



Jeffrey Leib
get along with peers

A. The circuit courts in Oakland County have the highest caseloads per judge of any circuit in the state of Michigan. In an effort to expedite the system and dispense justice as efficiently as possible, the Supreme Court authorized a mediation system whereby, once a case was assigned, the lawyers appear before a panel of three disinterested mediators. . .

Each side is given 5-10 minutes to present a summary. They're excused from the room. The panel makes a recommendation as to what value the case has and communicates it to the lawyers. In a great many cases, mediation helps people settle the case.

It only applies to civil cases, not criminal. . . I've served as a mediator maybe 20 or 25 times.

Q. Where'd you grow up?

A. Northwest Detroit; Mumford High School; Michigan State University.

Q. How'd you decide to become a lawyer?

A. Osmosis. I always wanted to be a baseball player.

My father was an esteemed lawyer. My uncle was a lawyer, and my father-in-law was a lawyer. . .

As an undergrad, I was a zoology major, and I ended up getting a degree in business administration so I would have something to fall back on.

That was a great law school (University of Detroit). I was class secretary.

I was privileged enough to get an appointment to the prosecutor's office following law school. Those were real sought-after jobs.

I drove a beer truck and taught school while I was in law school, and I clerked for my father. (In Detroit) I would always be looked at as Sam Leib's son. So I moved to Oakland County.

Q. The firm of Leib & Leib — what kind of work do you do?

A. It's a general practice firm. We represent a lot of people in their own businesses. . . plaintiffs' personal injury work, a lot of probate work, estate planning. Some criminal work. . . Domestic relations matters. . . other than patents and tax work.

At the present time, we have four lawyers.

Q. A prosecutor has to hire a staff. . .

A. And keep a staff.

It's easy to hire a staff. The prosecutor's office ought to be one of the most desirable positions in public life — experience in trying cases right away, a career-making job, build your credentials.

Once you hire them, it's important to give them the dignity and confi-

dence. One of the problems in the prosecutor's office today is the extreme turnover of assistants. They're given little discretion and no authority. . . To hold a noose around their neck and rule them by intimidation, and fear of being fired for making a mistake — that's one reason why there's such a tremendous turnover.

Q. Your kit lists a lot of people who endorse you — Dick Headlee, Dick Chrysler, several state reps. I hear you have a lot of support from Brooks Patterson's present or former staff members.

A. My candidacy should stand or fall on its own merits. I have been forced to seek out great endorsers because. . . Brooks has endorsed Dick Thompson.

This position is to be earned, not inherited from Brooks. I'm a far better candidate than Dick Thompson. The fact that his (Patterson's) own secretary (Fel Brown) has endorsed me says something.

There's not one former assistant prosecutor — 16 years — who has worked for Dick Thompson who has endorsed him. Virtually every single former assistant prosecutor who has worked for him has endorsed Jack McDonald or myself. That's got to tell you something.

I can get along with people (and my peers). I was president of the Southfield Bar, and in another month I hope to be elected to the lowest officer rung in the Oakland County Bar.

I've been bearing a figure of \$350,000 for the campaign bouncing around. Do you have a campaign budget, and how much?

A. The figure of \$350,000 is a little high. The last figure was closer to \$250,000.

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