

Ex-first lady is happy with life — sans politics

By Pat Murphy

No. Definitely, no. Paula Blanchard says she is flattered when her name is mentioned occasionally as Democrats start musing about possible candidates in upcoming Oakland County elections.

But Michigan's former First Lady says she is not interested. "My years in politics seem so far away," said Blanchard, who moved out of the governor's residence in June 1987, when her 21-year marriage to then-governor James Bligh ended in divorce. "I just can't imagine going back to that."

Paula Blanchard was mentioned as a possible candidate last month by County Democratic Chairman Donald Tucker, a Southfield attorney

who insists Democrats are surging in Oakland.

A POPULAR NAME like Paula Blanchard would have instant voter recognition, said Tucker, who believes she would be a strong contender for the Michigan Legislature or Oakland County Executive.

"Paula's well known, bright and knowledgeable," said Tucker. "She'd be a great candidate . . . even in a Republican stronghold like Oakland."

Except for one thing . . . Paula doesn't want anything to do with politics.

"Public service is an admirable calling," said Blanchard. "But it's a very consuming lifestyle. There's no such thing as a free lunch."

Paula should know. She saw plenty

of politics when she was Mrs. James Blanchard — wife of a U.S. representative who was in Congress for eight years before being elected governor for two terms.

She, too, was surprised when Jim Blanchard — then Mr. Democrat in Michigan — lost to Republican John Engler. "I thought he (Jim) — Blanchard would be governor as long as he wanted," she said.

Those times in Washington and Lansing were indeed heady, Paula Blanchard recalled, hobnobbing with politicians and heads of state. "But I like my life the way it is now," she said. "It's very much focused on my career."

Blanchard joined Casey Communications Management Inc. in May 1989, as an associate vice president. The firm is part of the Shaw-Wick group, possibly the world's largest public relations company with 100 offices worldwide, including one on the seventh floor of the North Park Plaza in Southfield.

Included among her clients are R.L. Polk & Co. in Detroit, G.M. Bus & Truck in Pontiac, McLaren Regional Medical Center in Flint and the Ventures Group Inc. in Houston.

"SOME PEOPLE THINK I got this job because I was the First Lady," Blanchard said. "That was certainly a plus. But my whole life has been involved in communicating."

Paula graduated from Michigan State University in 1968 after which she taught school in Minnesota and Lansing. While living in Washington,

D.C., she spent about five years with the Animal Health Institute, a national trade association for manufacturers of veterinary medicine products.

She has completed the coursework for a master's degree in telecommunications from MSU, although she has not completed the thesis.

"I love the company . . . and the professionals here," she said, referring to her 30 coworkers at Casey Communications. "I really like the challenge associated with my job."

With today's economic uncertainty, many companies — including her clients — are watching the bottom line, she said. "That means a bigger challenge . . . produce or else."

Blanchard has received one promotion with the firm, something she views as affirmation of her job performance and value to the company.

"The ultimate proof of my ability is performance," she said. "Not just (doing) a good job, but a great job. That's how I answer my critics."

Blanchard said she is well on her way toward establishing her own professional credentials and removing any public perception — if it's still there — that she is anything less than a hard-driving executive.

IN TWO YEARS, she expects to be with the same firm, although at a notch or two up the ladder. Over the next decade, however, her plans are more flexible.

"I'd like to own my own company," she said. But that depends on a number of factors, including some that are beyond her control. "I'd have to be ready — personally and

professionally — and conditions would have to be right.

"I'm still learning . . . and I've got a ways to go," she said. "But I'm on my way. I've got control."

Control means keeping a balance between her professional and personal life, Blanchard said. That includes maintaining a close relationship with her son, Jay, now a student at MSU.

She and Jay went to London in 1988, when he graduated from high school, part of a concerted effort to keep close mother-son ties. They're still very close, she said, and do numerous things together.

Over the Easter holiday, for example, they went to a movie, "Guilty By Suspicion."

Reminded that "Guilty By Suspicion" dealt with politics — namely congressional inquiries into alleged un-American activities during the 1950s, Blanchard smiled.

"I LOVE MOVIES and novels about politics" and political intrigue, she said. "I just don't want politics in my life today."

Blanchard said she is happy with a quasi-private life in Birmingham, where she bought a house in 1988. "People still recognize me when I go to dinner or when I'm out riding my bicycle," she said. "But they're nice . . . non-intrusive."

Blanchard said her social life is progressing nicely, even though home repairs cut into her free time.



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Paula Blanchard has a few trappings in her Southfield office that remind her of life as Michigan's First Lady. But that — like politics — is all history, she says.

Art on the Avenue

A FINE ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR

Saturday, May 11 10-6 p.m.
Sunday, May 12 12-5 p.m.

GARRISON AVE. at MILITARY - WEST DEARBORN

Sponsored by the West Dearborn Business Association • For information call 594-6100

A Great SALE for MOM!!!

250 Warm-up suits
marked down to **\$99 and \$129**

HEAD • TAIL • SERGIO TACCHINI • IXSPA

Shop now for Mother's Day,
get our free gorgeous gift wrap
and SAVE! SAVE! SAVE!

tennis time
Maple and Lahser 646-4475

LENNOX

\$250.00 OFF until 5-24-91

AIR CONDITIONING SALE

- Quiet operation
- Compact size
- Efficient cooling
- Attractive styling

S&M HEATING SALES COMPANY
23262 Telegraph • Southfield, Mich.

20% OFF any spring air conditioner check-up.
Service maintenance agreements very affordable.
Complete 24 hour service company.

352-4656

PARIS ALLERGY CENTERS
Specializing in Adult and Pediatric Allergy

- Bronchial asthma
- Chronic coughs
- Recurrent colds and middle ear infections
- Lung disorders
- Hives
- Insect Reactions
- Eczema
- Hayfever

14555 Levan • Suite 404
Livonia 591-6660

609 W. Main St. Brighton 229-2887

27970 Orchard Lk. Rd. Farmington Hills 851-6655

EARLY BIRD SPECIAL

ALL FIRMS
Need Dittich's
Expert Care.

Repairs or
Remodels
SAVE 20%
On All Labor
Excludes Cleaning
Leaves 5:00 PM

Dittich
Since 1945

Call Today For Free Pick-up
873-8300 or 642-3003

WALL-TO-WALL CLEARANCE
ALL NEW MERCHANDISE
EVERYTHING MUST GO!

SATURDAY MAY 4th
10 AM - 5 PM

FABULOUS SELECTION OF LEATHER ON SALE FOR UNBELIEVABLE PRICES!

SECTIONALS • SOFAS • LOVESEATS • CHAIRS • DINING ROOMS
BEDROOMS • WALL UNITS & MUCH MORE!

Large Selection of ALPA LEATHER at UNBELIEVABLE PRICES!	ALL DINETTE SETS 50% OFF	CENTURY & STANLEY BEDROOM & DINING ROOM SETS ALL AT 50% OFF
--	---------------------------------	--

SHERWOOD WAREHOUSE
24760 CRESTVIEW CT
FARMINGTON HILLS
MI 48334

ALL SALES FINAL
NO RETURNS

UGLY KITCHEN CABINETS?

DON'T REPLACE... 'REFACE'

MODERN & EUROPEAN STYLES

FORMICA Solid Colors and Woodgrain
SOLID WOODS Oak, Cherry and Birch

SERVING WAYNE, OAKLAND & MACOMB

- FACTORY SHOWROOM
- FREE ESTIMATES

1642 E. 11 Mile Rd., Madison Hgts. 591-1989
1 Block W of Dequindre Daily 9-5, Sun 10-4

Cabinet Clad... 541-5252

LAWN-BOY MULCH-R-CATCH

SAVE \$416.50 NOW \$319.95

DOES MORE THAN MULCH
WILL SHRED AND BAG LEAVES TOO!

- 4 H.P. ENGINE
- BLADE BRAKE CLUTCH
- CAST ALUMINUM DECK
- OPTIONAL REAR BAG \$20.

Other Models with Similar Savings

MODEL 4656
W/ OPTIONAL BAG AS SHOWN

"WE SERVICE WHAT WE SELL"

MANUS POWER MOWERS

3116 N. Woodward Rd.
2 Bldgs. S. of 13 Mile
549-2440
Hours: M-F 8-8; Sat. 8-4; Sun. 10-2

Mitchell Makes It

ON CUSTOMER AS CELEBRITY
The professional designer must be able to understand the client's needs and desires and translate them into a design that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

ON PERSONAL STYLE
The designer must have a personal style that is unique and expressive, and be able to communicate this style to the client.

ON CHALLENGING PROJECTS
The designer must be able to handle projects of all sizes and complexities, and be able to adapt to changing requirements.

ON WHAT DESIGNERS CAN DO
The designer can help the client create a more comfortable and functional living space, and can also help the client express their personality through their home decor.

ON USING MICHIGAN DESIGN CENTER
The Michigan Design Center is a place where designers can find the latest in design trends and products, and can also receive professional advice and support.

John Mitchell, A.S.D., Interior Designer

DESIGN CENTER
3131 649-4777