

Clerk challenger up against a legacy

By RALPH R. ECHTINAW
STAFF WRITER

Election '92



He's the clerk: Oakland County Clerk Lynn Allen (at left) explains the new system whereby legal records for 16 circuit courts are catalogued by using the bar codes that you normally see in supermarkets.

Oakland County Clerk Lynn Allen is going for his dad's record. Martha Blom hopes to stop him, but doesn't expect to.

Lynn Allen Sr. was the clerk of Oakland County for 26 years from 1932 until 1958 when he died in office.

Lynn Allen Jr. has held the same job for the last 24 years and hopes to exceed his father's record if voters reelect him Nov. 3.

Blom is Allen's Democratic opponent. "This might be the year of the woman," she said. "But it isn't going to help me because half the people think (Lynn Allen) is a woman."

At 67, Allen looks very fit, still holds a pilot's license (that he earned in 1941) and flies his Rockwell Commander on weekends. A doctor of optometry since 1950, Allen continues to practice, albeit infrequently, with a partner in Waterford.

Currently a Waterford Township resident, Allen was born and raised in Pontiac. In World War II he joined the Army Air Corps and handled one of the Browning .50-caliber waist guns on B-24 Liberators during 17 bombing missions over Europe in 1945. He left the Army soon after the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan and attended college at the University of Detroit, Central Michigan University and the Northern Illinois College of Optometry.

Since he was appointed to his current job in December 1968 to replace a dead incumbent, Allen has been re-elected five times.

How long can he go on? "As long as I'm healthy and as long as I'm able to contribute," he said, but almost in the same breath Allen agreed that he probably won't run for re-election in '96.

As county clerk and register of deeds, Allen gets \$80,000 a year and is responsible for keeping records of births, deaths, marriages, business and professional registrations. His staff of 120 also provide clerking service to the

county's 16 circuit court judges, the board of commissioners and other boards. And of course, the clerk's office helps to administer about 50 elections in Oakland County every year.

"A lot of people think it's a dull job, but it's really not," Allen said.

Blom, 67, grew up in Illinois, but has lived in Michigan for 30 years, most recently in Orchard Lake. She has a bachelor's degree in Spanish from the University of Illinois.

Blom has been a counselor at the Women's Survival Center in Pontiac, a program coordinator at Oakland University and a program consultant and trainer at Cranbrook.

Blom's only prior campaign experience came in 1988 when she ran against former state Sen. Richard Fessler and lost.

She decided to run for clerk this year because the Democratic party people in Oakland County



Martha Blom

asked her to. "My chances are slim, there's no question about that," she said. Ergo, "I told the party I'm not going to spend a lot of money."

Blom's main goal is to make the clerk job an appointed position under the county executive as opposed to the elected position it is now. "That's really the thing I'm mostly interested in," she said. "It should be a professional position, not political, and should be eliminated through home rule and writing a county charter."

Allen opposes this: "No way," he said. "Because then (the clerk) is beholden to whoever appoints (him or her). You take the old days of Adolf Hitler. The first thing he did was eliminate all the elected officials."

On Allen, Blom said, "I think he's just been coasting, and it's a cushy job."

Then a few minutes later she said, "I don't think (anyone) can do a really bad job (as county

clerk). It's just records, you know. It's a great big filing cabinet. It's just a matter of keeping records efficiently. I don't have anything against Lynn Allen at all. I just feel there should be some fresh blood."

OCC near accord on faculty pact

Oakland Community College teachers are expected to ratify a new labor contract Sunday.

A tentative agreement between the college and the OCC Faculty Association was reached on Sept. 30, said college spokesman George Cartsonis. The contract language was approved Saturday and the union is having a preliminary meeting tonight.

"It's been a very civilized

process all the way through," Cartsonis said. "It's nice to have closure finally."

Should the union approve the contract Sunday, the OCC board of trustees will likely give its OK at the Oct. 29 board meeting, Cartsonis said.

The teachers have been working without a contract since Aug. 31.

The terms of the contract have not been released.

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