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tends to make people run out and buy guns. If there is a high-profile crime or mass murder, there is a little hysteria and people will buy guns."

In 1989, when stricter gun safety laws and restrictions were before legislators, both in Washington and Lansing, there were 50,000 new gun permits issued in Michigan. That figure dipped to 85,054 in 1990 and 84,229 in 1991, she said.

To obtain a handgun in Farmington Hills, the applicant must be a resident over the age of 18, a U.S. citizen and have no felony convictions. A written test is given, and police run a background check of the applicant. The applicant must buy the weapon within 10 days of picking up the permit to purchase and then register the gun.

State gun statistics bear out Dwyer's contention that although tougher gun registration laws can help avoid domestic tragedies, their overall effect on crime is debatable. A New Jersey gun law, which requires a waiting period, helped authorities track down about 40,000 outstanding warrants. But because many states have laws that are less strict than those in New Jersey and Michigan, illegal weapons often make their way here.

Of the weapons police confiscate in Michigan, about 30 percent have been legally registered in the state, but 70 percent came from states like Ohio, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Kentucky, where registration laws are not as strict, Welton said.

Judge from page 1A

Schaefer and her sisters after his wife's death.

"I was 11 when my mother died. My father raised us during the depression and never made us feel that there was any limitation on what we could do."

And for the most part, the Redford High School graduate did not encounter as many obstacles as she did a "climate" where women were expected to stay in the home. Schaefer, who graduated from U-M law school in 1945, said her sister's attempts to find legal work after the war were met with some resistance.

"They said, 'We were hiring women, but the war's over,'" she said. And in the 1940s, a woman planning a career could face some social handicaps. For that reason, Schaefer wouldn't exactly brag about her plans for a legal career.

"I'd say I was in graduate school because I was afraid boys wouldn't date me."

Fortunately, Schaefer began her career at a firm where her sex was not a barrier: her father, Elmer H. Groffman, hired her in 1946. She also worked with the Detroit firm of Markle & Markle for 21 years before then-Gov. William Milliken appointed her to the Workers Compensation Appeal Board.

In addition, she has compiled an impressive record of public service, including a term on the Farmington Hills City Council and the Michigan Metro Girl Scout Council Board.

One of the most memorable cases to come before Judge Schaefer involved prostitution at "health spa" about five years ago, she said. Schaefer said five Korean women were convicted after a five-day jury trial where one of the chief obstacles involved translation.

"Some of them could not speak English," she said. "It was a difficult case to try. I felt sorry for some of the women, because they were being exploited."

Another incident is a reminder that judges make decisions that can involve considerable personal risk.

"About 10 years ago there was a prelude for an armed robbery," she said. "He (defendant) threatened to get the judge and the police. He escaped that night."

The judge said the man was captured two weeks later, but she took his threat seriously.

View from the bench

There will be problems for new Judge Marla Parker, including a large docket, sometimes made worse in cases where plea bargaining is restricted or not allowed.

But more than any single factor, alcohol abuse adds to the court's burden. It accounts for about 80 percent of the cases coming to district court in cases including drunk driving, theft, criminal sexual conduct, spouse abuse and assault, she said. Despite the increasingly heavy docket, Schaefer only recently started to look forward to retirement.

"Because of mandatory retirement, the state has made that decision for me," she said. "Last year I had to take off six weeks because of surgery. I decided that it wasn't so bad."

Schaefer, 73, whose husband Marvin is a retired electrical engineer, has four children. The idea of seeing more of her children — two of them practice law — and doing more traveling, entertaining and gardening has become more attractive.

"I'm looking forward to it," she said.

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