

Local Democrats fondly recall Ferency's fire

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Don Tucker of Birmingham and Jeanne Havstad of Plymouth might have different professional backgrounds. Tucker is a lawyer and Havstad works with computers for EDS at the General Motors Tech Center in Warren.

But Tucker and Havstad have at least two things in common. One is a respect and affection for Zoltan A. Ferency, the outspoken champion of civil rights who was buried last Saturday in East Lansing.

The second is a love of politics, although each practices in a different way. Tucker is chairman of the Oakland County Democrats. Havstad describes herself as "politically burned out."

"I'm still very interested in politics," she said. "But I realized we were losing because we didn't have any money. So now I send a check instead of walking the picket line."

Havstad attended Ferency's funeral out of respect she said she developed during the days when they helped organize the Human Rights Party.

"Zoltan loved the Constitution," she said, explaining at least part of how Ferency came to be known as the champion of unpopular causes.

Tucker was in Hawaii when Ferency died on March 23 and wasn't here for the funeral. "I was shocked when I read about his death in the New York Times."

Ferency, who was a candidate for governor five times and for the state Supreme Court three times, died in Sparrow Hospital from complications following a massive heart attack.

'Omnipresent gadfly'

"Zoltie was an omnipresent gadfly," said Tucker. "And I mean that with all the respect and admiration I could muster."

Another person who expressed respect is Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, a self-



Zoltan Ferency

described conservative Republican who often crossed ideological swords with Ferency.

"He was a warrior, and a good one," said Patterson. "We often

debated... Once, in Lansing, I remember we debated on capital punishment."

Ferency would plummet you with facts... then turn on the charm. He could tell a joke or make a quip that would prove a point as well as away the audience."

Some of those quips were also irreverent. In the late 1960s, for example, Ferency triggered belly laughs—except from the Michigan attorney general—when he said something like, "Heaven forbid something happen to Leon Cohan (then the attorney general's chief deputy) and Frank Kelley, really become attorney general."

Cohan, a Bloomfield Township resident, is now senior vice president and general counsel of Detroit Edison.

Ferency had such a penchant for alienating other Democrats that Bernie Klein, then a Farmington Hills resident, once introduced him with a reference to the

Zoltan Ferency wristwatch.

Mythical watch

"Put it on, and it cuts your wrist every hour on the hour," Klein said of the mythical Ferency watch at a dinner sponsored by the liberal ADA, Americans for Democratic Action.

Jerry Tobin, public safety director in Southfield, remembers Ferency for his penchant for see-

ing things differently than others. Their paths crossed occasionally, Tobin recalled, but most often at Wayne State University where he studied criminal justice and Ferency was often a guest speaker.

"We would look at the same law," Tobin said. "But his interpretation was usually very different."

See FERENCY, 8A.

Friday benefit aids child with bone disorder

A benefit concert for 4-year-old Jimmy Case, who needs medical care for a rare bone disorder, is set from 6-9:30 p.m. Friday, at the Community Education Building in Holly.

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