

Sheriff, opponents grapple over record

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

If looks could kill, Gerard Carlin of Rochester Hills would be dead today, rather than a candidate for the Republican nomination for Oakland County sheriff.

Incumbent John F. Nichols plied at him with obvious disdain Monday as Carlin repeatedly attacked the incumbent's handling of the sheriff's department during a candidate's night sponsored by the Bloomfield Republican Women's Club.

"Carlin - who said Nichols had once groomed him as a possible successor - accused his former boss of mismanagement and of glossing over accusations of wrongdoing within the department."

"Nichols responded by citing some of the innovations he'd made during his three terms, such as the Sheriff's Boot Camp - which he said saves the county as much as \$65 per day on each inmate.

He had also initiated a system that enabled prisoners to be arraigned by video camera while in jail, thus saving the time and resources needed for officers to physically escort them to court.

As for the highly publicized investigation into the sheriff's department - that resulted in 71 indictments against Carlin, then Rochester Hills Mayor Billie Ireland - Nichols was philosophical.

Most of those charges have been dismissed, and Nichols said what was characterized as the "serpent of corruption" within his department "turned out to be a little garden snake."

But the probe showed one thing, he said, "if that's the worst (investigation) could come up with, we're in pretty good shape."

Nichols and Carlin were the main attractions in the sheriff's race, although candidate Paul A. Molin, who ran against the incumbent in 1992, also shared

the podium.

"Some people call me a supporter of Sheriff Nichols," said Molin, a Farmington Hills resident. That might be accurate when he's not running against Nichols, Molin said, "because I respect him and the job he's doing."

Molin insisted Oakland County needs a forward-looking sheriff who would lead the department in the 21st Century... a sheriff who can deal with trends such as the aging of inmates. As the general population gets older, Molin explained, so too will inmates, creating new challenges in the process.

Molin also served as a buffer between Nichols and Carlin.

Here's an example: Nichols has endorsed incumbent prosecutor Richard Thompson over his Republican challenger David Gorceyca. Carlin, who has Gorceyca fund raisers, said if Republicans don't nominate Gorceyca in the primary, "our next prosecutor might be a Democrat (in reference to Steve Kaplan)."

Molin seemed irritated, almost incensed, at the suggestion and the implication incumbent Thompson might be weak. If he had any influence, said Molin, "I'd endorse Mr. Thompson."

There are six Republican candidates in the Aug. 6 primary. Not present at Monday's candidate's night were William A. Goodfellow of Pontiac, Raymond B. L'Esperance of Davison and Michael L. Odette of Clarkston.

The winner of the GOP race will face the winner of the Democratic primary where Waterford Township police officer Scott C. Good of Auburn Hills is running against State Police Capt. Matt Hogan of White Lake.

Nichols is considered the odd-on favorite in the Republican race, particularly with five pri-

mary opponents. At Monday's forum, the crusty Nichols seemed to be irritated by challenges, especially from Carlin.

The 77-year-old incumbent seemed particularly irritated when Carlin used a quote he said was from former undersheriff Billy Nolan. Insisting the quote was from district court records, Carlin cited Nolan as saying, "If Nichols and others only told the truth, no charges ever would have been filed against Carlin, Ireland and Keylon (Doris Keylon, Ireland's aide who was also indicted - and subsequently cleared)."

Nichols didn't dispute the accuracy of the quote. But he said Nolan had been an ineffective under sheriff "who didn't know what was going on."

Carlin retorted, "then why did you keep him as under sheriff - at a salary in around \$70,000 - for 10 years?"

Jill Wagner, president of the GOP women's club, summarized her view of the evening with an understatement. "We wanted a neutral forum for Republican candidates," she said. "I think we did it, and I think we stirred some interest."

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Reporter is award finalist

The local Society of Professional Journalists chapter will select metro-Detroit's 1996 Journalist of the Year today, June 6, at the group's annual awards banquet.

Among the three finalists is Tim Smith, reporter for *The West Bloomfield-Lakes Eccentric*. He was nominated for his insightful reporting in a series on activities in the West Bloomfield and Walled Lake schools, and especially for his stories on "Micropreemies."

Smith, 39 and a Livonia resident, had first-hand knowledge of the anguish micropreemie parents go through when his find his wife's own daughter was born prematurely.

Smith, a Wayne State University graduate, joined the *Eccentric* staff in February 1986.

Also under consideration are: Jeff Green, a reporter for *The Oakland Press*; and Rod Hansen, an investigative reporter at WJR radio.

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