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brought fundamental change, he said, such as the way the elderly regard the medical community. "The elderly are afraid," Thompson said. "According to polls, the majority of elderly people are afraid they are going to be killed against their will. A lot carry cards in their wallets saying, 'Do not euthanize me.'"

Thompson is aware some people consider him to be a fanatic with no longer acceptable religious beliefs. But he insists legalizing assisted suicide would be bad public policy.

"If people don't take the laws banning assisted suicide seriously," he said, "what makes you think they will take regulation seriously? And who will enforce those regulations?"

For 3,000 years, Western Civilization has held that life is sacred, Thompson said. Regardless of the productivity or non-productivity of that life. Society should be careful about abandoning that principle, he said.

The outgoing prosecutor said he was aware his embrace of an unpopular position could cost him politically. That wasn't obvious back in 1992. Thompson said, referring to the election when he was almost defeated by Democrat Steven Kaplan.

"My political consultants back then told me the voters see two Dick Thompsons," he said. "One is tough on law enforcement, and voters love him. The other Dick Thompson is going after Dr. Kevorkian, and they don't like you at all."

Continuing to oppose assisted suicide — and prosecuting

Kevorkian — was not a stupid political decision made without recognizing the possible consequences, Thompson said.

Nor did he take his primary opponent lightly. "We spent all the money we had in that race," Thompson said. And he knew he was in the toughest political fight of his career.

"It was a matter of conscience," he said. "I could not equivocate. It was important to our society to send a clear signal. I would not do anything differently."

Being at or near the top of Oakland County's law enforcement structure had its exhilarating moments as well as disappointments, the outgoing prosecutor said. "It's always fun to win a case," he said, "especially a murder case."

An ongoing trial in Oakland Circuit Court is particularly rewarding, Thompson said, because it might not have come about without the efforts of his office.

That's the trial of Byron Lee Hoffmeister, 49, accused in the grisly stabbing death of Huntington Woods housewife Marsha Short in July 1967. Hoffmeister was indicted this summer by the Oakland County Citizens Grand Jury which Thompson reconvened in 1990 — with approval of the circuit court judges — after an absence of more than 20 years.

Possibly the biggest disappointment during his tenure, Thompson said, was not being able to bring closure to the infamous Oakland County child

killings.

Four youngsters between the ages of 10 and 12, from Farmdale, Royal Oak, Berkley and Birmingham, were killed between February 1976, and March 1977. Investigators believe the killer is dead, a conclusion Thompson doesn't necessarily dispute.

"But it would have been better," he said, "to bring somebody to justice... to present evidence in the open courtroom. It always feels good to bring someone to justice."

Except for contacting a head hunter, Thompson said he hasn't put much effort into finding a new job.

"The head hunter told me to make a list of the things I'd like to do," he said.

Teaching constitutional criminal law at a law school would be my first choice.

Once choice that is far down the list, according to the 69-year-old Thompson, is returning to private practice.

"I did that for 7 years (2 in Detroit and 5 in Troy) before joining the prosecutor's office,"

Thompson said he couldn't compromise his opposition to assisted suicide in exchange for being re-elected. However, his religious beliefs did not overwhelm his judgement.

he said. "I wouldn't feel comfortable doing that. I wouldn't feel good about myself."

"The description of lawyers being mouthpieces — saying things they don't believe because clients want them said — are quite accurate," he said.

Thompson said he would consider going to a law firm that dealt exclusively with public issues, like assisted suicide. "I'm really concerned about the society that we are leaving for our children. I believe we are in a cultural civil war. Morality and religion have been told to get out of the public square."

Asked if politics — or a judgeship — might be part of his future, Thompson chuckled. "Never say never."



Fieger: Sick of it

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

The attorney for Dr. Jack Kevorkian insists the argument about assisted suicide being unethical "slippery slope" is nonsense.

"I'm so sick of hearing that argument," Geoffrey N. Fieger said Tuesday when informed about the content of an interview with Oakland County Prosecutor Richard Thompson, who leaves

office in about six weeks.

Fieger didn't argue with the contention Thompson lost his bid for a third term because of his opposition to assisted suicide and his prosecution of Kevorkian, a retired pathologist living in West Bloomfield.

Thompson's views on assisted suicide — and the prosecution of his client — are based on the prosecutor's personal religious

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