



STAFF PHOTO BY DAN DEAN

Settling in: New Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorecyca faces plenty of hot-button issues in the days and weeks ahead.

On the job

Gorecyca can't forget pledges

It was a job he desperately wanted and relentlessly sought. And in the end, it was his.

But former assistant prosecutor David Gorecyca, 34, of Royal Oak, had to overcome stiff odds to become Oakland County's new prosecutor on Jan. 1. First, he had to defeat an entrenched incumbent, Richard Thompson of Clarkston, in the GOP primary despite virtual anonymity. Then, he had to replenish the campaign coffers for a tough general-election run against Democrat Steven Kaplan of West Bloomfield, who nearly beat Thompson four years before. In the wee hours of election night, Gorecyca was declared the loser in a tight race until a vote-counting error surfaced — and the newly counted votes gave him the victory.

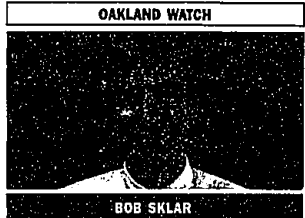
Gorecyca's demeanor, focus and drive offered voters the promise of a young, relatively inexperienced but nonetheless strong prosecutor whose administrative approach to key issues like assisted suicide, plea bargaining and staff management would satisfy public consensus.

Time will tell whether Gorecyca fulfills the pledges he made to voters.

His chief campaign pledge was to promptly deal with West Bloomfield resident Jack Kevorkian, who Oakland County Circuit Court juries twice acquitted of assisted suicide, once under statutory law and once under common law. Those resounding acquittals angered Thompson's fate and gave Gorecyca the high-profile issue he sorely needed. Nineteen county charges are still pending against Kevorkian and two associates. On the stump, Gorecyca called for the Legislature to adopt an enforceable law that either bans assisted suicide or carefully regulates it.

Gorecyca also pledged to build a dedicated, experienced staff. He's on the way, based on his strong, trial-seasoned choices to serve as top aides — John O'Brien of Royal Oak, chief assistant; Ronald Covault of West Bloomfield, director of litigation; Mary Larkin of Birmingham, director of administration; James Halushka of Sterling Heights, director of warrants and investigations; Michael Modelski of Royal Oak, director of appeals; Joyce Todd of Rochester Hills, Child Sexual Assault unit chief; Lisa Tomko of Clinton Township, Juvenile Court division chief; John Stevin of Howell, District Court division chief; and David Case of Troy, Family Support division chief.

Only three members of Thompson's 102-lawyer staff lost their jobs in the new administration — two top aides to Thompson plus assistant prosecutor Pamela Mass, an Orion resident who Gorecyca squared off against while a defense attor-



BOB SKLAR

ney after he left Thompson's staff in 1990.

To slow staff turnover and boost morale, Gorecyca promised to instill an office environment that encourages latitude, training, authority and incentives. The upshot: he would consider plea bargaining in selected cases other than homicide investigations to keep the criminal justice system moving and to better manage resources, but he would maintain the "tough justice" policy introduced by County Executive L. Brooks Patterson when he was prosecutor.

Another campaign vow was to speed investigations and decisions on behalf of law enforcement agencies without compromising the rights of defendants and victims. Given that backdrop, it wasn't surprising many police officers supported his candidacy.

Gorecyca served in virtually every division while serving as an assistant from 1988 to 1990, prompting his campaign pronouncement that he was well versed in the inner workings of the prosecutor's office. He pledged to create two new units, if elected: a homicide unit, a gang violence unit and possibly a computer crimes unit. He said those kinds of investigations required specialized training.

Other defining issues of Gorecyca's first term will include not only his leadership capabilities but also his approach to dealing with young offenders, drug trafficking, grand jury use, crime prevention and domestic violence.

The campaign's over and David Gorecyca is now prosecutor. But it's the duty of the press as well as voters to keep vigil over how well he, as well as other elected Oakland County leaders, meet the responsibility of holding public office. It'll be interesting to see how closely the Gorecyca's actions parallel his campaign.

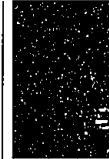
Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What is your favorite TV show?

We asked this question outside T.J. Maxx in the Downtown Center in Farmington.



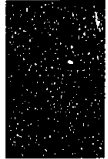
'I like the nature show on Channel 56 on Sunday at 8 a.m.'

Malcolm Milne
—Farmington Hills



'I mostly watch C-SPAN when the legislature is in session. I also watch Jeopardy'

Joyce Sterling
—Farmington Hills



'I think probably it's the Bob Vela Show on at 7:30 a.m. on Channel 7. I usually tape it ...'

Milton Aptekar
—Farmington Hills



'I really don't watch TV. I like to read.'

Aldana Chew
—Redford

LETTERS

Great big thanks

Thanks for being a part of my life. Whether you volunteered in campaigns for the Farmington Hills City Council for State Representative, served in an official or other capacity in our mutual interest civic or education service organizations, a great big Thank You.

My 22 years in an elected position has been both challenging and rewarding. In looking back, there have been very few life experiences I would care to repeat or decisions I would change. I'm now looking forward to the "Springtime" of my third adulthood and already making travel plans for 1997 and beyond.

As I've shared with many of you, I never said I was retiring, just changing direction. Again, thank you for sharing in my life experiences.

Jan C. Dolan, Farmington

Stay away from kids

I was debating whether to write a lengthy letter in response to Leslie E. Swanson who identified himself as an ignorant racist in his recent letter to the editor. Instead I would just ask Leslie Swanson to stay away from school aged children and sober up.

If you should receive a lengthy letter addressing the gross inaccuracies and fallacies in Leslie Swanson's letter, please publish it. I do not have the time nor the patience to address this halfwit.

Wayne A. Shuey, Farmington

Viewer robbed

The following is written in support of the comments made by David and Jeannette Sharpe, Letters to the Editor section on Dec. 26, 1996, regarding the removal of CICO Channel 21, TV Ontario, from the recent Time-Warner rescheduling.

This removal robbed the viewer of intelligent TV programs, plus providing a window to our Northern neighbor.

The many programs that CICO had available to the viewer were of a superior nature. My own favorite was Saturday Nights At the Movies with Elwy Yost.

Let's build on the Sharp's letter and flood the Time-Warner office with our protest letters.

Jerome G. Trojanowski, Northville

Cuts endanger seniors

President Clinton has promoted the enforcement and enhancement of regulations and inspections to control air pollution, to avoid meat poisonings, to reduce airline accidents. However, his administration is now

proposing to scale back inspections to many nursing homes that care for elderly people under Medicare and Medicaid.

Federal and state health officials already have received the proposed changes, which would narrow the scope of reviews, reduce the number of residents interviewed, reduce the number of medical records and other documents that must be examined. Inspectors would have fewer opportunities to observe the dispensing of medications.

Obviously, this weakening of the inspection program would significantly reduce the protection of nursing home residents.

The American Association of University Women, Farmington branch, is holding an open meeting dealing with this issue. The speaker will be Michael Connors, Project Director of Citizens for Better Care, an advocacy organization for nursing home residents. The time and place: Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 7:30 p.m. at the Farmington Downtown Library. Concerned citizens are invited to attend.

Lydia Rizzo, Farmington Hills

Serve the consumers

I just finished reading Philip Power's column entitled "State Board's Free Market School Fantasy Off The Mark." I was very moved by it. I thought it was excellent, also the column by Tim Richard on private schools. Both of you, excellent, excellent jobs on that.

I think one thing the state school board has missed the point on is that all schools need to be working toward developing a consumer orientation. I think that would be of great benefit to everyone.

Like you, I'm very nervous about shareholders and the whole idea. Especially when you look at what happened in Chicago and some of their schools there that have local school boards where the schools have revolving doors for everyone who works there because they're at the whim of someone on board who doesn't like someone else. I'd like to applaud you on your article. I thought it was very well done. Thank you very much.

Richard Wood,
Principal

Jane Adams Elementary School

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 810-477-9722.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

40 Years ago — Jan. 3, 1957 (Enterprise)

Nine Republican candidates had filed in the primary election for four seats on the Farmington Township Board of Trustees, despite the fact that three incumbents had also filed. In all, 26 candidates filed for board, justice of the peace, supervisor, clerk, treasurer and board of review seats from the two parties.

None of the eight candidates filing on the Democratic side faced any primary election opposition.

25 Years ago — Jan. 5, 1973

A Drake Road resident was organizing a petition drive to halt rezoning plans to allow a 22-unit cluster housing development adjacent to his property in Farmington. "I am going to get this turned down for my kids' sake. I promised them a home in the country and they'll have one," said Robert Tilley.

Two years ago — Jan. 5, 1995

Farmington city officials were facing some tough choices 10 months after voters' approval of Proposal A, the tax cutting measure. The choices included cutting police, fire and maintenance services or finding new sources of income.

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power