

Consultant eats, sleeps, lives and breathes politics

BY MARY MCCONOUGH
STAFF WRITER

Alan Feuer drinks his coffee black, speaks loudly and leans in just close enough to make you a little uncomfortable.

His words, like bullets, are quick and often of the four-letter variety. And his conversation is peppered with obscure political references and quotes from people like Winston Churchill and Ralph Waldo Emerson. It's hard to keep up.

It's clear the 49-year-old political consultant from Southfield still believes there are courageous leaders and even heroes in public office. Talking to him, you are almost inspired to believe it, too.

But there's no sentimentality in Feuer's in-your-face views.

Consider his take on last week's defeat of incumbent Bryan Levy in the 46th judicial court race:

"(Levy) should have his signs

retired for the worst political

signs in history. As far as I'm

concerned, the consultant who allowed that committed malfeasance and the judicial candidate who agreed to representing himself as a Kung-Fu master should be out of office."

Of course, Feuer was not an objective observer of that race.

He represented Nida Samona, who lost in the primary for the 46th District Court race. He won't talk on the record, about why she lost. But he says this past election season is reflective of his professional scorecard; he won four out of five.

This season, there were four winners out of five. Among them were: Paul Condino, elected to the state House, Gilda Jacobs, elected to the state Senate, and Michelle Friedman-Appel, elected to 45th District Court.

"We won Gilda in the year before the election," he said, explaining, "She had four opponents who dropped off."

Feuer claims to have run his first campaign, that of a Detroit city councilman, at age 8.

At age 12, he joined the

Committee to End the War in Vietnam and at 18, he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

The son of refugees from the Hitler regime, he refers to Hitler as a mentor.

"I learned as a small boy that politics rule the world. When I was young, I had two questions of my parents, 'Why do you speak a different language?' and 'Why don't I have any grandparents?' The answer to both was politics. That suggested to me that nothing else in the world was more important."

His hero, whom he recalls fondly with emotion, is slain New York Congressman Allard Lowenstein. Why? He says because Lowenstein believed the way to stop the Vietnam War was to find a presidential candidate who would end it. He approached the pavement, approaching six candidates who shared his views, until the seventh, Eugene McCarthy said "yes." McCarthy was ultimately replaced by Robert Kennedy, who initially

turned down the request, but later reconsidered.

And like Kennedy, Lowenstein was assassinated before his time. "I went to New York to work for him because he literally went door to door and I admired him for that. And he became a good friend. I miss him terribly."

REALITY OF POLITICS

"There's no magic in politics," Feuer says. "It's all about hard work, a year before the race. Pounding the pavement, early mornings and late nights."

"The best politics is a good government. If you work at your job and at finding out what the community needs and being a good legislator, that's politics. It's hard to take off if the incumbent who does his work."

The clients that appeal to Feuer are those that challenge the status quo. He sought to end the "name game" in Wayne County Circuit Court.

He represented the first HIV-positive candidate ever elected to



JERRY ZHONSKY/ECOCRATIC

Political consultant Alan Feuer keeps in close contact with his clients, especially on election night. He runs political campaigns for several local candidates.

public office. His client, who was elected to the New York City Council, is still healthy and now serving in the New York state legislature.

"I've never seen my role as sucking up to my clients. Most candidates don't have a clue what a campaign does to your life. You don't have time to grocery shop and you don't get enough sleep. You get really cranky."

He knows Southfield's 50 precincts like the back of his hand. And he rejects any attempt to explain election results based solely on racial demographics.

The answers never come that easily, Feuer says. They are always more complex.

"In no city in America will you find a more diverse set of leadership than in Southfield. I think the next thing in Southfield will be a Chaldean judge. I know her name," he said with a smile.

POWERFUL IDEAS

Asked to respond to the defeat of long-time incumbent Southfield Mayor Donald Fracassi by Brenda Lawrence, he offered his typically complicated, thought-provoking answer.

"I think Don Fracassi was a Republican masked in the clothing of an independent and he masked as best he could, and very skillfully, what was essentially a Republican agenda. In

the end it was his eagerness to follow his own agenda at any cost."

"He is an example of someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. His view of this community was utterly cynical. In this city, we have a large black population, a large first-generation Chaldean population and a large Jewish population. You can't name me three groups of people more interested in the idea of education and a library and the freedom it represents. Don Fracassi didn't know the value of a library book."

Ideas prevailing over names, race and gender in politics? Absolutely, says Feuer. He sounds so certain, you almost believe it, too.

Once residing in both Southfield and New York City, Feuer now takes only local clients. Never married, he enjoys hunting for antiques and traveling in the political off-season.

"I have a strong need to be active in things that are interesting. It's stronger than my need to get enough sleep or be financially secure ... I want to be plopped down in another country and walk the streets and find out how you get a paper and lunch and I want to watch the people dance."

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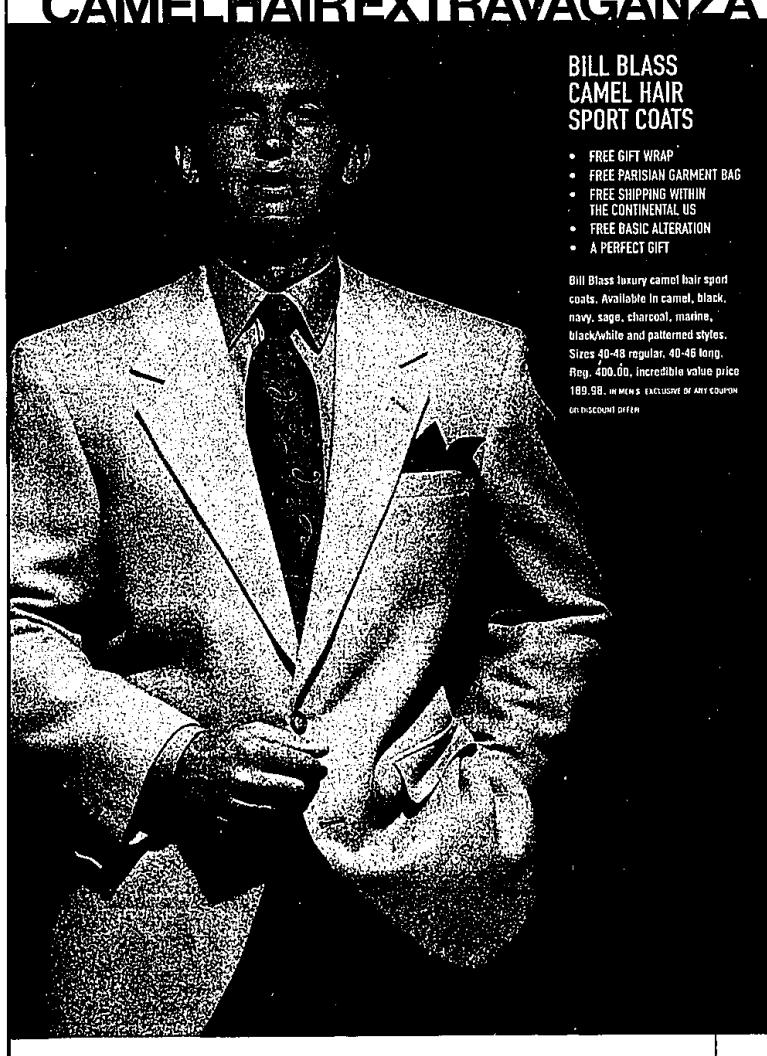
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