

Garlak faces Allen

Clerk's job: Meet people's needs

By KATHY PARKER

Is the responsiveness of county government lessening as Oakland County grows?

Lynn D. Allen, incumbent Republican clerk, says he has made many positive steps to make government responsive since taking office in 1984.

Mary Ann Garlak, Democratic challenger, says not enough has been done to meet the needs of the people.

Allen points to his primary accomplishment—the creation of the first on-line computerized record system in the county.

I'm very proud of it, he says. It has solved a large number of problems as well as saving on manpower and paper work.

The system was Allen's answer to the problem of an ever increasing number of court cases brought to court in the county.

Although it cost taxpayers \$23,000, Allen says that was a savings of more than \$60,000. The county hopes to recoup the cost by adding changes and selling the system to other communities, states and courts.

**THE COURT** indexing computer locates court records, attorneys' filing dates, judges and other deskwork information within minutes of the request.

This saves 50 percent on personnel pay per case time, Allen says. With the indexing available and present personnel we would grow out of our offices and lag behind in paperwork without it.

The system has been at work 3 years.

Mrs. Garlak, a political novice, says she still believes improvement is vital in voter registration and voting.

Despite some advancement in other areas, voting remains a huge problem, she says. It's a small example, but points a large picture.

Mrs. Garlak says absentee ballots are not readily available and that a large portion of the population is deprived of its voting privileges.

Often when a civic-minded citizen goes to pick up absentee ballots, he's given no more than three. It makes it increasingly difficult for institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes and a large number of senior citizens to get out and vote.

There are not enough women in county government, and at all levels of government, women are viewed as responsible and hardworking, she says.

**GOVERNMENT AGENCIES** have lost touch with the people, she adds. They

are no longer as responsive or sensitive as they should and could be to the man and woman on the street.

A service-oriented position, the clerk post requires charge of the mountains of paperwork stimulated by legal actions. All birth and death certificates, legal documents, deeds, mortgages, marriage licenses and court records are stored in the clerk's offices. Records may be duplicated and retrieved in the county courthouse.

Voter registration is another part of the clerk's position.

Mrs. Garlak charges that registration in its current form is unacceptable and impractical for many residents of the south and west portions of the county.

I hear from them all the time that they are not getting the services they should, she says. It's physical distance that is to blame, but satellite bureaus or offices

should be set up to take care of these people in the areas necessary.

Allen says he has considered placing satellite offices in outlying areas away from the hub of the county, but that it is a question of how much money taxpayers are willing to pay.

People are already paying high taxes for more government, he says. It is desirable to integrate the whole of the county in some manner, and I have several proposals.

**WHEN RESIDENTS** need copies of records or duplicates of any kind, we could send couriers out to these satellite offices with the order, and they could be picked up there. There is the possibility of using a teleprinter and reproducing the item photographically in another office. But these would be quite expensive processes and require additional personnel. How far is the taxpayer willing to go?

Allen says that as the county grows the clerk's office will try to update facilities for duplication and additional satellite offices may be established.

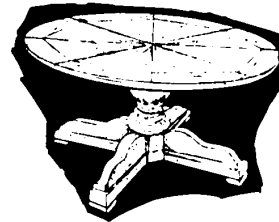
Right now much of the work can be done through the mail, he adds. When they need exact duplicates the mail order made seems to work the best.

Mrs. Garlak disagrees.

Residents of the southern and western portions of the county are treated like second class citizens, she says. We need some positive action toward establishing branch offices at a minimal cost.

The county clerk also serves as clerk to the Oakland County Circuit Court, county board of canvassers, board of commissioners, tax allocation board, gun board, jury commission, election commission, plat board and election scheduling commission. It is an elective position four year post.

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**Trouble** It's a completely unreasonable burden for any family — not just in the money you're laying out, but in the aggravation of storing all those empties, loading them, carting them, standing in special lines. Remember? You

check in the empties. Then you shop. Then you check out and pay another deposit.

**Jobs** This proposal will eliminate skilled jobs. Thousands of Michigan families will suffer the first year.

**A Flop** About the only thing this proposal won't do is stop the litterer. The effect of such a proposal on reducing litter in other states is sadly disappointing. And no wonder. It doesn't even zero in on the litterer — it puts the bite on every citizen in the state, most of whom never litter.

**What to do** Something should be done to penalize the litterer. But Proposal A is unfair. It penalizes everybody.

If we're really against litter, let's enforce laws that penalize the real culprits and not the responsible citizen. Vote No to Proposal A.

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