

# After 12 years service, public servant bids farewell

Walled Lake's graduating high school seniors have something in common with retiring school board trustee Betty Campion.

"Those kids and I have been on the same path for 12 years," said Campion, who was elected to the Walled Lake School Board in 1971, when students of the class of 1983 were entering kindergarten classes.

"They've been on the receiving end, and I've been on the other end."

A resident of the district for 36 years, Betty Campion first got involved in local education in 1950 when she joined the Walled Lake Elementary Parent Teacher Association. Since then, Campion has observed the transition of three district superintendents, participated in three school boards, and shared in the education of more than three decades of Walled Lake students.

"It's a different world now," said the Walled Lake resident, comparing education to the 1950s with education today. "Everything is at a faster pace.

Students have to learn so much more."

In 1950, for example, the purpose of kindergarten was for young children to learn how to get along with each other in preparation for first grade. But with the advent of "Reading Street" children began learning to read earlier, and public education had to keep up, said Campion, who also is a mother of four.

School boards have changed, as well, since her first tenure, she said. The board to which she was elected in 1971 was a conservative group that frowned on excessive participation from a rookie board member before she had received proper indoctrination.

"I learned more that first year than I've ever learned in my life. You had to become trained. You had to learn about school finance, about policy, about board ethics. The first year there was so much to learn . . . you kept your mouth shut."

Philosophies change over the years

as new board members were elected, and the older, more conservative group retired from the board.

"THE CONCERNS now are completely different," said Campion, who did not seek re-election this month.

"A meeting never passed when the topic of discussion wasn't children," she said of the first school board. "They were always looking out for the children."

"They took great pride in the ethical behavior of board members," she added. "(The board) seems more concerned with the management of schools now than with the education of children."

Campion said she was "brought up on the board" to be a policy maker, not to make what she considers to be the administrative decisions recently handled by the board.

"The dismissal of a school employee would not have been the board's responsibility (12 years ago) . . . I find myself not being able to behave in the

manner I should (on the present board). I'm a policy maker, not an administrator."

TWO DIFFERENT generations of board members account for the change from policy making to management, Campion said. Frustration with the change is one reason she cites for leaving her post.

In the three decades she has participated in Walled Lake education, Campion also has seen a changing of the guards in the administrative office.

Clifford Smart, who served as superintendent for more than 10 years, was a quiet, conservative administrator, Campion recalled. When he left, the district was ready for a change, and change is what it got from Smart's successor, George Garver.

"I always called him 'the White Torpedo,'" Campion said of Garver. "He came in so full of energy. People were hurrying in this district for the first time in years. Thank goodness he only

stayed for five years — people needed the rest!"

DR. DON SHELDON was "the right man for the times," Campion said. He is "a very ethical, decisive man," she said, but he has been criticized "almost to the point of destruction."

"He is cautious, to the point of reluctance."

The boards of education, as well as the superintendents, often have been a target of public criticism in the 12 years she has served in public office, Campion said.

"It's simply because the public doesn't understand. Very few people who criticize come to board meetings. All people know is what they hear from their neighbors. . . they're either not informed, or misinformed."

"When I hear people saying kids are coming out of the schools without being able to read and write, that's totally untrue. There are some — there always will be," but Walled Lake schools are putting out a fine product, Campion said.

district's educational program, she continued.

The vocational education program is a blessing to the students who are "doers instead of thinkers," Campion said. "I love to watch the attitude change in these students. They come out of that program self-confident and employable."

"Still, today, after all these years, it's absolutely thrilling when I see the progress being made. We're managing somehow to keep up with the times."

Continued efforts will have to be made in computer education if the mainstream educational program is to keep up with the times, Campion added.

"I would love to see every third-grade child with a computer."

A whole reworking of the curriculum will be needed to prepare today's children for what they need in the 1990s, Campion said. But this she leaves with those who follow her on the Walled Lake Board of Education.

As for her part, "I wouldn't have missed it. It's been a growing experience for me."

"But I'll still be around. I'll still be working for education, only on a different level."

# Irish will gather at Ford field

The 31st annual Detroit International Feis, a Gaelic festival, will be held Friday through Sunday, July 1-3, at Livonia's Ford Field.

Open to the public, the festival is considered to be Michigan's largest display of Irish talent, entertainment and culture. More than 800 step dancers, singers, musicians and athletes are expected to participate.

The festival will open at 8 p.m. Friday at Ford Field, located at Farmington and Lyndon roads. The opening night entertainment will include Irish

music and cello and an adult cello dance competition.

Beginning at 9 a.m. Saturday, 12 hours of non-stop competition in Irish dance and music will be featured. Contestants, dressed in authentic Gaelic costumes, will compete in traditional Irish stepdancing, solo dancing, vocals and instrumental, figure dancing, choreography and dance drama.

At noon Sunday, Gaelic football and hurling matches will take place, and the festival will close with a presentation of traditional Irish folk music.

Irish food, beverages and other items

will be featured throughout the three days of the festival. Entertainers scheduled to perform include Brian Bonner, Ed McGilneay, Charlie Taylor, Jim Perkins, Will Derry, Henry McCannan and Tendri.

Further information may be obtained by calling 464-1119.

WALLED LAKE's vocational education program, which came into existence the first year Campion served on the school board, is a hallmark of the

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