

It's the student vs. the prosecutor

By Judith Doner Berne
staff writer

In one corner, Oakland County's aggressive prosecutor — I. Brooks Patterson.

In the other, a spunky West Bloomfield High School youth leader — Jay Tapper.

The battle — capital punishment. Assigned a paper on capital punishment for his honors social studies class, Jay sought and got an interview with the state's No. 1 advocate of the death penalty.

Patterson punched out his points in the one-on-one confrontation:

- The death penalty is a deterrent to murder.
- It's an appropriate punishment.
- The courts' appeals system provides protection against a verdict by a prejudiced jury or judge or sentencing an innocent person to death.

JAY PROVIDED some standard arguments against Patterson's position — and some not so standard:

- Even one innocent person suffering the death penalty is too expensive.
- The appeals process is expensive and takes years.

• Juries and judges don't always mete out sentences fairly.

Jay drew on the Ten Commandments — thou shall not kill — and the U.S. Constitution — isn't it cruel and unusual punishment? —

"Murder is the unlawful thing," Patterson responded. "Corporal punishment is the legal taking of a life. One is sanctioned by the law."

The cruel-and-unusual-punishment point sent Patterson scurrying for his law books.

Jay pushed for life sentences under maximum security instead.

"They still value their life," Patterson said. "They could kill a fellow prisoner, or if paroled, they could kill again."

"Have they killed again, do you know?" Jay zoned in. Most of the time they're too old when they get out, Patterson suggested.

JAY THEN took a more personal tack.

"If your son committed a murder would you want him to die for it?" he questioned Patterson.

"Would I want my son executed? I'm telling you no," the prosecutor said. "But I would recognize the state's right

to do so. I wouldn't like it."

But these people all have families too, Jay persisted.

"I expect that family to resist corporal punishment. In that instance," Patterson replied.

PATTERSON, who makes it a point to be accessible to high school and college students, said Jay "put me through the grill."

"Out of a hundred or so interviews, this young man came in the best prepared and ready for a hard-hitting solid interview," Patterson said.

But this young fellow was armed to the teeth. He was super. He didn't give me any wiggle room."

Discovering Jay was only 14, "made my knees even bluer," Patterson said. "If he goes to law school, there's a

place here for him."

Jay also was impressed with Patterson. "He could have just covered the questions and given the facts," he said. "He explained it well."

"Knowing that he was for capital punishment, I was prepared to respond to his answers."

The winner: Jay gives the nod to Patterson. "He convinced me on some points."

"He was knowledgeable about capital punishment — but maybe he can now understand how another parent might feel."

Madonna conducts student open house

Open house for prospective students of all ages will be at Madonna College, Livonia, at 2 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 23.

The open house, which will highlight academic programs leading to associate and bachelor's degrees, is scheduled for the new lecture hall of the main academic building at the corner of Schoolcraft (1-96) and Levan Roads.

A counselor will also be present to discuss the graduate program which offers a master of science in administration degree with emphasis in either business administration or nursing administration.

Special information will be available on scholarships and financial aid, and faculty members will be present to answer specific questions regarding departmental majors and courses. Tours of the campus will also be provided.

For additional information regarding the open house, call the admissions office, 591-5052.

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