

Your honors, don't run as a 'team'

LET'S HOPE, as another year of heavy election campaigning dawns, we will not see a repetition of one particularly silly practice that has made a farce of the election process.

It is the Oakland Circuit Court's practice of judges pretending to be a team and running their campaigns as such.

You recall it from past biennial elections. Judges A, C and E must face the voters. Their judicial philosophies may have nothing in common. For all we know, they may not even like one another.

Yet they run as the A-C-E Team. Balderdash.

THE IDEA is to discourage other candidates from entering the field.

The A-C-E Team holds a single fundraiser and sells a single batch of tickets. It produces common advertising, which is larger, slicker and more impressive than the ads an individual candidate could produce.

Such a forceful front could scare off other candidates, and it does. That is exactly what it is designed to do.

Any chance of raising meaningful public issues is shot down very quickly. The campaign becomes one of platitudes about hard working, fair, prompt, efficient, respected incumbents.

The judges already have something going for them because their ballot designations describe them as "judge of the Circuit Court."

Their campaign photos show them in judicial robes, naturally.

IN MICHIGAN, judges are supposed to be elected by the people.



Tim Richard

Far-thinking people have talked, both in the 1961-62 Constitutional Convention and the Legislature, about a system of appointing judges, perhaps as in the "Missouri plan," where a judge runs only on his/her record after appointment by the governor.

The reform plans, no matter how good, have always been shot down. Like it or not, voters have to elect their judges.

So, in order to frustrate the intent of the Michigan Constitution, Oakland judges have put together the mythical team approach.

Well, perhaps 1984 should be the year for a straight-forward election of judges in Oakland County.

Five judges are due to face the voters: Steven N. Andrews, George LaPlata, Fred M. Mester, Gene Schmelz and Robert L. Templin.

Let's ask them to run a fair, above-board, open, honest election campaign, each on his own record.

Your honors, don't run as a "team," using your collective incumbencies to sandbag other candidates.

- Don't do it, Judge Andrews.
- Don't do it, Judge LaPlata.
- Don't do it, Judge Mester.
- Don't do it, Judge Schmelz.
- Don't do it, Judge Templin.

A shocking visit to the old home town

IF YOU haven't been back to the old home town for quite a spell and plan to return for a holiday visit, be prepared for a shock.

You will find many things have changed. The places that were your favorites when you were a lad growing up have passed from the scene — even the old swimming hole.

The Stroller knows because he tried it some years ago, and he was disappointed almost beyond belief.

It all started when the Black Diamond Express, once the pride of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, didn't stop at the old home town anymore. He had to ride into the city four miles away and hire an automobile to get the rest of the way.

WHEN HE arrived at what long ago had been called the "Iron Borough," he found that even the old railroad station, once the pride of the town, had become only a memory. Only the brick walls were left, and the passenger service was long gone.

As he looked around, he found the iron furnace, which once was a special sight for visitors as it poured the molten slag into what was called pig iron, was lying in rusty bits. Another pride of the valley was gone — and the old center tip that drew hundreds of eightseers when the slag was poured each evening now was growing weeds.

Mind you, this was all before he got to the main street.

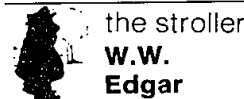
AS HE crossed the bridge that connected the two parts of the community, he looked down and gulped. The old canal had dried up.

This had been a favorite sight in the old days, for it was the waterway where mules pulled the old canal boats which brought coal from the anthracite fields to the Delaware River and then onto the ocean freighters.

It always was a treat to go to the head of our town, get on one of these boats and ride a mile to the lower end. And at times, we were allowed to steer the boat, heading the owner's call to "push the tiller the way the bow goes."

But this wasn't the biggest disappointment.

THE OLD swimming hole was gone,



the stroller
W.W. Edgar

too, and nothing was left in its place but the remains of an old lumberyard.

And so went.

The little newspaper office, where The Stroller got his start in journalism, had been replaced by a larger office building and moved to another end of our little town. The Stroller just stood at the old spot, and tears came to his eyes as he recalled the morning he was invited to sit at a typewriter and report a news item of the day.

The old blacksmith shop, just off Front Street, was missing. So was the carriage shop. The site of the old merry-go-round was now the home of a large garage.

AT THE TOP of the Pine Street Hill, where we young folks used to gather, the little white church was still standing. But somehow it didn't look the same because the steeple had been painted a different color.

It was shocking to stand there and look down the hill where we spent the winter nights sledding.

For several days, The Stroller walked about town looking and looking for the places that once were favorites when he was a young lad.

Finally, the trip back home ended, and the only things he found that hadn't changed were the Soldiers Monument in the cemetery, where lightning had struck and erased his grandfather's name, and his mother's Pennsylvania Dutch cooking. But sitting at her table again made the trip worth while.

discover Michigan by Bill Stockwell

DID YOU know that the Michigan State University Agricultural Experiment Station has nearly 500 continuing basic and applied research projects under way? Its sole responsibility of agricultural research in Michigan is aimed at helping every resident of the state.



Legislators, don't panic

A **TAX REVOLT** started in suburban Detroit is having national ramifications. In the past weeks, two suburban state senators have been recalled in protest over a 38 percent hike in the state income tax rate. They were Sen. Phil Mastin, whose district included Avon Township and Rochester, and Sen. Dave Serotkin of Macomb County.

Apparently, the next object of a recall effort will be Sen. Patrick McCollough, whose district includes Garden City. A committee pushing for McCollough's recall claims it almost has the required signatures to force a recall election. Mastin and Serotkin are the first state legislators recalled in Michigan history.

NATIONAL MAGAZINES, newspapers and television programs have discussed the suburban Detroit recalls. Typical among these is the Wall Street Journal, the influential national business daily newspaper.

Last week Martin Feldstein, chairman of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, suggested that taxes be raised to reduce the federal budget deficit. This position is strongly opposed by President Reagan, who has promised no new taxes.

The Wall Street Journal, in an editorial, rushed to the president's defense, citing reaction to the Michigan income tax hike "where the voters have just cashed two



Nick Sharkey

state senators who supported Governor Blanchard's sharp increase in state taxes."

The implication of the editorial was clear: Don't raise federal taxes to reduce the national debt because of what has happened in Michigan.

A LITTLE CLOSER to home, the recall campaigns are beginning to paralyze the state Legislature. Last week legislators agreed to delay action on a mandatory seat belt law. Proponents argued that the law would save up to 300 lives a year. But it was strongly opposed by some lobbying groups.

"(Delay of the bill) is mainly due to the recalls and their fallout . . . Some legislators have identified this as a recallable issue," said Secretary of State Richard Austin, a leading campaigner for the bill.

The state Senate voted last week to override Gov. James J. Blanchard's veto of a bill that would ban state Medicaid money for abortions for the poor.

It now goes to the House where action

could occur this week. Although it will require two-thirds approval in the House to override the veto, some observers believe 74 votes could be collected. Once again, it's because of the recall campaigns. House members fear a strong "Right to Life" contingent in their districts will start recall campaigns against them.

THREATS OF A RECALL cannot bring government to a halt. A legislator's views of the federal debt, seat belts and abortion must not be determined by a small group of disgruntled persons in the home district.

It was good to see Gov. Blanchard not rush to accelerate the planned reduction of the state income tax last week, despite urgings of some state senators. The income tax rate will be reduced to 6.1 percent on Jan. 1 (from the present 6.95 percent). It may drop to the pre-Blanchard rate of 4.6 percent in 1985 if unemployment drops to 9 percent.

In the meantime, Michigan legislators should not panic. This state is only beginning to get back on a sound financial base. Many important issues still need to be resolved. They should be decided on the basis of the merits of the issues, not out of fear of a potential recall.

A relatively small number of voters in the Detroit suburbs who have recalled their state senators should not chart the course for our government.

Lansing ducks wrong issues

REPUBLICAN and Democratic leaders are now urging the state Legislature to go home. The Legislature obviously is incapable of doing anything this year, they say.

Go home, wait for your \$2,000 pay raise to take effect in January and come back fortified to deal with life's vexing problems.

Gov. James J. Blanchard is trying to get the Legislature to shut down until January lest lawmakers in his own party do something rash, like pass a bill that would cut the unforgettable increase in personal income tax they engineered in Spring.

Two of those involved in efforts to come up with a tax relief formula are Sen. William Faust, D-Westland, and Sen. Patrick McCollough, D-Dearborn. Both figure to be likely targets if recall fever continues unabated.

THE GOVERNMENT is caught in a period of "confusion, emotionalism, disappointment, fear, retribution and downright panic from moment to moment," Blanchard is quoted as telling a group of newspaper publishers.

For these reasons, we are told, lawmakers are unable to deal with the tough problem of deciding whether we should be ordered to wear seat belts while driving. And the Legislature, for the first time in 12 years, may override a gubernatorial veto of an effort to ban use of state



Bob Wisler

tax money for Medicaid abortions.

The threat of recall by pro-life forces will intimidate legislators into voting to override Blanchard's most recent veto, we are told.

Legislative insecurity may be stronger than I think. I can't imagine anyone getting excited enough about seat belts to spend his afternoons hanging around some shopping center asking people to sign petitions to recall a guy who favors stopping people from being killed in car accidents.

And as emotional as abortion is, and as organized as pro-life forces are, I doubt a recall campaign would succeed in removing a legislator who did not vote for an override.

THE ONLY issues that arouse voters enough to get an effective recall campaign working in state politics are "forced" school busing and higher taxes.

Busing died out as an issue long ago. People will stand for all kinds of mismanagement of tax money without blinking an eye. Wayne County government has been mismanaging money for decades, news-

papers have regularly provided evidence of it, and yet no resident or civic group even whispers "recall."

No, the only thing that will excite residents who are busy trying to juggle a myriad of personal problems is that which they view as a confiscatory intrusion into their wallets.

Legislators should stop worrying about recall on other issues. If indeed they care, and move on with the knowledge that the damage has been done, the tax increase was passed in April, the sleeping giant known as the public has been aroused and enraged.

The only way to mollify the giant is to convince it that government is acting to do something about cutting spending and abating its taste for tax dollars.

During the past year, the Legislature has done little to convince the public that it will take on the spending problem. Quite the reverse: The social services budget, which has been eating bigger and bigger pieces of state pie, continues to expand with no real evidence that the Legislature, or governor, can do anything about it.

It will be difficult for Blanchard and fellow Democrats to enhance their poor images. It has been difficult since April. But becoming involved in a host of projects and programs unrelated to cutting state spending will only prolong the agony.