

'Precincteers'

Partisan foot soldiers march not for perks, but for parties

By Louise Okrutsky
staff writer

Precinct delegates are the foot soldiers of grass-root politics. Like their military counterparts, they're relegated to often unglamorous tasks.

Some do it out of commitment to a political stance. Others do it hoping for a future shot at glory. Some do it because no one else wants to bother.

In the Aug. 2 primary, retiring state Rep. Wilbur Brotherton, R-Farmington, won a spot as one of the GOP delegates in Farmington's six precincts. Farmington Hills has 27 precincts.

Aside from the opportunity to attend district, state and national party conventions, delegates distribute their party's campaign literature. Their arena is usually the pavement, not the podium.

The primary for precinct delegate was probably Brotherton's easiest race. He ran unopposed. "Because, frankly, no one else wanted the job," he said.

"Two years ago, the Pat Robertson people, they didn't understand the process. They thought they'd be delegates to the national convention. When they found out few go to the state convention and even fewer to the national, they weren't prepared to put the time into the job."

Brotherton sees the post as a way

to keep his hand in local Republican politics. "It's a way to keep involved in the process. I kind of enjoy getting out and pounding the pavement."

ON THE other side of the political line, Democrat Marion McCracken of Farmington added precinct delegate to a list of responsibilities that includes president of the Michigan chapter of National Organization of Women (NOW). "If you're a good Democrat, what do you do is run for precinct delegate," said McCracken, who has served about four two-year terms as precinct delegate.

McCracken holds no illusions about the position. In the days of big-city machine politics, precinct delegates may have been privy to such perks as being the first on their block to have their trash collected. McCracken holds a different distinction. She's Michael



one of the few, if Breshgold not the only, card-carrying Democrat on her block. "Actually, it's a lot of fun (being the only Democrat on the block)," said Michael Breshgold, Farmington Democratic Club president and a precinct delegate.

Democrats may be small in num-

ber, but they're hardy in spirit, according to Breshgold. "There are a lot of activists out there."

Humor thrives for the side that generally finds itself on the losing end of a local campaign. "The Republicans take their politics very seriously," Breshgold said.

"Hopefully, our job is to educate the voters," said the Farmington resident. "We try to keep non-partisan races non-partisan."

IN THE world of Farmington-area politics, where even stalwarts cross party lines to vote for a candidate, partisan politics can rear its head. When a recent public access cable program featured only the Republican candidates for state representative, Democrats were charged their two hopefuls weren't included.

John Akouri, a Farmington Hills resident considering law school, hosts the program. A staunch young Republican, Akouri was elected as a first-time precinct delegate. He says the Democratic ticket for office on the last possible day, too late to be included in the local program.

Akouri is looking forward to his stint as precinct delegate. "I don't think the job is unglamorous. It's my first run for political office. (The post) needed to be won back by certain members of the Republican Party," he said.

Farmington Democrats Arthur



Mae and Art Lanski review Democratic Party materials in their Farmington home.

and Mae Lanski both ran for precinct delegate, believing two would be chosen from Precinct 5, the Longacre Elementary School area. "We both ran, not knowing one would be elected," said Mae Lanski, who lost to her husband by a 37-19 tally. "I knew he was going to win. When people don't know who's running, they tend to vote for men," she said.

MAE LANSKI said she and her husband, both retired school teach-

ers and six-year Farmington Democratic Club members, wanted to contribute to the party. She's still hoping to be a delegate if it's determined her precinct really was supposed to elect two.

"It's a low position on the totem pole, but you have a bigger say as your seniority develops," said Farmington Hills Republican Terry Sever.

Sever, a Farmington Hills city councilman, wants to continue to have a say in his party. "Last time,

there was only a one vote difference in Farmington Hills. It made a difference on whom we sent to the state conventions," Sever said, recalling the close win by evangelist Pat Robertson's forces.

"It stresses the importance of me vote and of staying in there," said Sever, a precinct delegate for eight years.

"If nothing else, I'm on the mailing list and I get all the political propaganda free," he said.

Precinct delegates bask in obscurity

Who represents the Farmington area as precinct delegates, those seemingly obscure folks who recruit political volunteers, pass out campaign information and go to county, state and national party conventions?

A rundown of the Aug. 2 election results follows:

DEMOCRATS Farmington

Precinct 1. William Liba.
2. Marian McCracken.
3. Edward Lewandowski.
4. Michael Breshgold.
5. Arthur Lanski.
6. Jane Reichel.

Farmington Hills

1. Carmel Galea.
2. Nicole Paron, George Poterher.
3. Karl Pall.
4. None.
5. Janet Evans, George Roberts.
6. John Murphy.
7. Barry Brickner.
8. Vicki Barnett, Irwin Steckloff.
9. Marie Mutschall.
10-15. None.
16. Albert Zolton.
17. None.
18. Carl Thornburg.
19. None.

20. Fred Goldberg, Paul Kadish.
21. Mary Foreman.
22. Joyce Oppenheim.
23. Merle Silver.
24. None.
25. Patricia Blackard, William Hatton.
26. None.
27. Lydia Rizzo.

REPUBLICANS Farmington

1. Stephen Bruce.
2. David Baheok.
3. Wilbur Brotherton.

4. None.
5. L. David Stader.
6. Jack Gillary.

Farmington Hills

1. Shirley Hench.
2. Alfred Diebel.
3. Cynthia Beck.
4. None.
5. John DeCatur.
6. Donn Wolf.
7. Mary Buha.
8. Sharon McDonald.
9. Patrick Rogers.
10. Mary Avery.
11. Elizabeth Lister.

12. Donald Noll Jr.
13. Kathleen Brennan.
14. Marlene Elwell.
15. Paul Swoboda.
16. Milton Lichterman.
17. Jean Fox.
18. Sophia Magnotte.
19. Carol Markey.
20. Randall Huffman.
21. Janet Larson.
22. Michael Chekal.
23. John Akouri.
24. None.
25. Terry Sever.
26. Joan Scituro.
27. Kathryn Clark.

Farmington area battles late-summer inclemency

By Casey Hans
staff writer

A storm with winds gusting to 60 mph hit the Farmington area hard this week, playing host to turbulent weather that continued into the week.

Of the 10,000 Oakland County residents who lost power during the violent lightning storm late Sunday and early Monday, many live in this area, according to Detroit Edison spokesman Dan Vecchioni.

"The Farmington area was one of the hardest hit areas in the county," he said.

Farmington Hills firefighters responded to 17 emergency calls involving mostly downed electrical wires, and two houses — one in Farmington and the other in the Hills — were damaged by falling trees.

Another house on Heatheridge in the Meadowbrook Park subdivision caught fire. The fire was most likely



Uprooted during a heavy storm early Monday, this tree fell on a house at Heatheridge and Independence in Farmington Hills. It was one of two house-damage incidents reported in the Farmington area during the pre-dawn storm.

Of the 10,000 County residents who lost power during the violent lightning storm late Sunday and early Monday, many live in this area, according to Detroit Edison spokesman Dan Vecchioni.

caused by a lightning strike, fire officials said.

Vecchioni could not specify how many people were without power, but said the main problem area was "from Eight Mile to 14 Mile and I-75 to Haggerty" — Farmington Hills' boundaries.

"That's how they (Edison employees) described it," he added. "Not everyone lost power, but there were quite a few."

POWER WAS restored to the

Farmington area by 7:30 p.m. Monday, but remained out in other parts of Oakland County.

Throughout the Edison service area, 55,000 homes were without power because of the storm.

The strong winds and lightning also played havoc with trees, downing some totally and snapping branches from others.

Tuesday, Farmington public works crews were still picking up debris at the curb and hauling it away, director Earl Billing said. The city used about 100 man hours to clean up from the storm.

In Farmington Hills, the chain saws were working overtime Monday, as employees removed trees and cut them down to size. Crews were first called in at 12:30 a.m. Monday to remove three-four trees blocking roadways in the city.

"We've definitely had worse storms, but any time you have enough to take trees down, it's a pretty good one," said Hills public services director Thomas Blaisell. "It was definitely a full day's work."

PUBLIC SAFETY employees in Farmington had one major call, when a tree struck a house on Freedom Road causing \$15,000 in damage. Three other large trees had also fallen in the yard, a police report said.

Other calls were logged for false burglar alarms set off by the weather, Commander Michael Wiggins said.

Most of the activity was in the Hills, where emergency personnel waited at 13 downed electrical wire sites for utility workers to arrive. "We don't want people coming in contact with wires, or fences or anything that conducts electricity," said Hills Deputy Fire Chief Peter Balaban.

He said long waits at the scene were "heavy and costly" to the city. "Every hour we wait for the power company to come costs the taxpayers money."

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