

## POINTS OF VIEW

# Victories hard won in 2 messy judicial scrapes

Seen hanging from a Marlo Parker sign on Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills is a hastily scrawled "Thank you."

Nice touch. Parker was victorious in the hard-fought scrap for an open seat on the Farmington District Court bench.

Races for the lofty position of judge are by law non-partisan. But at least this time around in Oakland County, the campaigns weren't always lofty.

In two of our communities, campaign tactics for district judgeships took on a less than judicial flavor.

In both cases, the candidate employing the tactics lost.

In Troy, Judge Bristol Hunter became only the third sitting district

judge in history to fail to win re-election.

And in Farmington, Jack McDonald, the odds-on favorite to win a vacant district court seat after running first in the primary, lost to his former office mate, Parker.

Parker beat out McDonald 21,120 to 17,595. And attorney Michael Martone topped Hunter 14,220 to 10,530.

No, it wasn't all that close. So it's hard to know whether or not the questionable tactics actually backfired, or whether Martone and Parker just ran the better campaign.

Indeed, all candidates came highly qualified and all campaigned extensively in their communities.



JUDITH DONER BERNE

In particular, Martone went door-to-door with his idea of adding night sessions and taking programs into the schools, while Hunter opined that the status quo was working.

Here are the scenarios — you be the

judge.

In Troy, fellow Oakland District 52-4 benchwarmers, Judges Dennis Drury and William Boile sent out letters to jurors who had served that court, courting their vote for Hunter.

Martone had no access to these lists, which certainly had a different intent than to be captured for political purposes.

In Farmington, Parker's cable television ads depicted her in magistrate's robes in a courtroom-like setting. In

fact, she is a magistrate. Instead of responding with a solid rebuttal of his own, McDonald took to the courts to try and stop the ads, contending that they made her appear as if she already were a judge. The court

disagreed.

It's unfortunate that even in races for judgeships, we have political shenanigans which only work to demean the office.

A raised bench doesn't make one's judgment suddenly lofty. But running a positive campaign emphasizing solid legal credentials rather than inappropriately using power or the courts is essential to keeping the judiciary as untainted as possible.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric. To leave a voice mail message for Judith Doner Berne, call 644-1100 mailbox 242.

## Recent events trigger some childhood memories

Last night, night before 24 robbers at my door, I got up to let 'em in, hit 'em over the head with a rollin' pin . . . all hid! Last night . . .

The hypnotic refrain of the game we loved to play in childhood has been clattering around in my head lately with disturbing frequency. Many are the memories, mostly fond, of playing outside with friends after dinner, while the waning days of summer brought on the dark with alarming speed. Of all the games we happily played — Tag, Red Light, Kickball and Red Rover — none held the excitement of a thrilling yet scary hour of Hide and Seek.

We would begin just as the last of the sun was obscured by encroaching night. After deciding which one would first be it (through a complicated process of one potato or equally arcane method known only to us) the players would then dash for their favorite hiding places. Hearts hammering, eyes flashing, we silently climbed, crawled or burrowed over, under, around and through. Feeling secure, we would crouch low, holding our breath until our eyes bulged, lest the person who was it hear our panting and find us.

While the players of the game darted

first here, then there, looking for that perfect hiding place, the seeker would begin the rhythmic warning chant which signaled that the hunt was about to begin.

"Last night, night before . . ."

Those of us who had experienced the game knew that the seeker would only repeat the phrase three times before changing into a boogeyman and racing off to find his first victim. Once caught, the victims became seekers until, finally, there were more searchers than hiders. The supreme satisfaction of the game was those rare occasions when you had hidden so well or run so far that the boogeyman couldn't find you. But that didn't happen very often.

The first stirrings of that childhood memory began with General Motors' announcement of the imminent demise of the Willow Run Plant. At the same time, a six-year-old girl was fire bombed to death as she slept in her bed, a victim of a retaliatory strike for a crack cocaine deal gone wrong. This murderous outrage, obscured by the economic uncertainty fanned by GM's announcement, overlooked as just another monstrous happening in the ghetto, caused my memory to begin the search for those words:

"Last night, night before . . ."



JEFFREY MILLER

The flashes of remembrance became more insistent as the months wore on. News accounts of serial killers stalking young girls in the suburbs and destitute women in the city amplified the chant and brought more of the words to mind.

"Last night, night before 24 robbers at my door . . ."

The atrocity of an 11-year-old girl's abduction and murder in Oakland County, followed by the wanton killing of a young Korean researcher in Wayne, prompted the flashes of recall to change to an active memory search. I was compelled to complete the refrain of a childhood game, though at the time I didn't know why my mind groped to put it together.

"Last night, night before 24 robbers

at my door, I got up to let 'em in . . .

When former Detroit Chief of Police Bill Hart was sentenced to 10 years in the federal penitentiary for looting the secret drug enforcement fund, the full phrase popped into my head, unbidden. At the time, busy trying to make a living, intent on forgetting the horrors that befall other people, I blocked the intrusive thought.

Then I learned that the punk who tossed a chunk of concrete from a highway overpass, taking the life of an innocent young woman in the process, was identified by the punk who killed the young researcher as she walked home from her job at Wayne State. At once the entire experience of Hide and Seek in the dark came back to me and, with a sense of dread, I remembered the full beginning of my favorite game:

"Last night, night before 24 robbers at my door, I got up to let 'em in, hit 'em over the head with a rollin' pin . . . all hid!"

Now as I write this, I cannot get those words out of my head. It's as if my subconscious has seized on the refrain like a mantra, warding off approaching disaster.

The past week's reports of 11 shootings in one day of Detroit school kids,

the further economic devastation caused by GM's restructuring, the terrorist invasion by three malcontents of a West Bloomfield home and the alleged savage beating death of a drifter named Malice at the hands of the city's protectors, reverberates the play time ditty throughout my being with all the fervor of a nun clutching rosary beads, endlessly murmuring Hail Mary's.

My reaction upon saying those words now is much like it was when I heard them through the black night more than 30 years ago. Run! Hide! Don't let the boogeyman find me!

If the game of life is anything like the game of Hide and Seek I played as a kid, then I am filled with a sense of foreboding. Once I ran so far that the seekers couldn't find me, another time I hid so well that the seekers gave up. Most of the time, though, the boogeyman caught me, turning me into a Zombie just like him.

Jeffrey Miller, a Southfield resident, is executive producer/host of Transition, seen locally at 8:30 a.m. Saturdays on WXON TV 20. To leave a voice mail message for Jeffrey Miller from a touch tone phone, dial 953-2047 mailbox 1872.

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