Give me an 'M go green' for Dave VanderVeen

This is another in a series of profiles spotlighting appointees of new county Executive L. Brooks Patterson and the jobs they perform for county residents.

BYRALPH R. ECHTINAW STATE WRITER

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When the University of Michigan and Michigan State University play football with each other, Dave VanderVeen is torn apartilko a tract house in a tornado.

VanderVeen, the Oakland Gounty director of central services, attended both schools, getting a bachelor's degree from MSU and a master's from U-M.

"Tim real schize of that game," VanderVeen said. "I'll stand up and yell, 'Hold that line,' and, 'Score a touchdown,' in the same threath. Life is simpler if Just dyn's go to those games."

"As a former three-sport athlete at-Grand Rapids High School, VanderVeen knows a little about sports, having been party to three state championship teams in 1956, his senior year, in swimming, tennis and football. "I wasn't a particularly good atheright teams."

In the same vein, J. David VanderVeen figures he picked the right teams when he went to work for Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson or Jan. I. Unlike most of Patterson's appointees, however, who were new to county government, VanderVeen intendy knew how the phones work.

"Yor 25 years, beginning when he

arready knew now the phones work.

"For 25 years, beginning when he was a mere 28 years old (in 1966), VanderVeen directed the operations of Oakland-Pontiac Airport, that aviation mecca at M-59 and Williams Lake Road in Waterford Taymahip.

Intright place

The path he took to get there.

COUNTY

though, is rife with happenstance and the serendipity of being in the right place at the same time. With a city planning degree from MSU, VanderVeen went to work fresh out of school for Ponti-

With a city planning degree from MSU, VanderVeen went to work fresh out of school for Pontiac as a planner.
While in that position, Vander-Veen concluded that "the things the city manager was doing seemed a whole lot more exciting," so he returned to school part time and pot a mester's degree in public administration, simultaneously supporting a wife and two children.
Then in 1965 Pontiac's airport manager died, and Vander-Veen "heppened to be in the city manager's office when they were looking for a replacement."
He got the job, and shortly thereafter the responsibility for the alrport (and Vander-Veen with it) was transferred from Pontiac to Oskland County. "I liked the prospects of the cunty," he said.
The prospects of the airport weren't bed either. Oskland-Pontiac grew under Vander-Veen's tenure from a busy little field needing many improvements to a modern alreport complete with 6,200-foot runway and Boeing 27s, Learjets and once even a North American P-51D Mustang in the landing pattern along with the usual Cessna kites.
Currently, Oskland-Pontiac is the second busiest airport in the United States with an intenyment landing system, more than 400 hangars, four runways, nine radio frequencies and a restaurant.

Burt and me

VanderVeen's job, he said, was essentially portrayed well by Burt Lancaster in the 1970 movie "Air-

port," based on an Arthur Hailey novel. "I'm looking at the stuff Burt Lancaster is doing, and I and, 'Hell, that's the stuff I do!" Vander Veen also took flying lessons, using his own money on his own time, shortly after taking over the airport reins.

"I fell in love with aviation," he said. "It doesn't take long for that to get into your blood." However, he hasn't flown in some time and his medical certificate has crime and his medical certificate has crimed and veen's new job was a metural next step hecause he's a new in charge of the guy (Ken Patterson) who's in charge of the curnty's radio network, printing, mail, material distribution, mail, material distribution, records retention and the cafetarin. The central services budget is \$25 million, and there are \$25 employees.

ployees.

Next to the airport, Vander-Veen's radio communication system is probably the most high-tech aspect of his department. With a new 800 megahertz operating system and nine transceiver towers, the system will eventual radios used by the sheriff's department, public works, the drain commission and more.

But there's more to life than microwave communications and 10-4 good buddy. Like sports.

10-4 good buddy. Like sports.

When VanderVeen isn't working, which isn't often these days, he likes to hone his reputation as one of the best golfers in Patterson's kingdom.

VanderVeen admits to a handicap of nine, but county clerk Lynn Allen, a sometimes links partner, said "he will shoot scratch quite often." If there are any better golfers in county employ, Allen said, "they work for parks and rec."



Proud dad: J. David Vander Veen's eldest son, D. Scott, is a Clarkston deattst, while number two child Blythe is a deputy director of Macomb County senior services. Youngest son, Ken, is a college student. Vander Veen remarried last October four years after his first wife died of cancer. "A new marriage, a new job," he said. "It's like I'm starting over."

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