



ANN HALEY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Chance to chat: At a May 24 luncheon, Jean Chamberlain spoke with Robert Fitzpatrick, president of the Farmington Downtown Development Authority.

## She's out to put South Oakland back in the game

This is another in a series on L. Brooks Patterson's appointees and the jobs they perform for county residents.

By RALPH R. ECHTINAW  
BRYAN WATKINS

Jean Chamberlain is on a mission from Brooks.

During his campaign for Oakland County executive last year, L. Brooks Patterson promised that if elected, he'd appoint someone to his staff who would act as liaison to the South Oakland communities who felt neglected by county government.

Chamberlain, whose appointment the county commission approved in March, is the result of that promise. Her mission is to help cities like Southfield, Farmington, Farmington Hills and the 10 communities clustered around Royal Oak in Oakland's southeast corner communicate with county government.

As county commissioner Donn Wolf, R-Farmington Hills, put it, "Sometimes we feel like we're the orphans over here."

Chamberlain, who is 58, but feels "as good as I did when I was 38," settled in Royal Oak 37 years ago after a peripatetic life as the daughter of civil engineer William Nash, who died 13 years ago. Chamberlain attended 19 schools from New York to Los Angeles to Chicago as she grew up literally all over the place.

Since settling down with husband Jim, she raised four children as a stay-at-home mother before beginning a career. "I stayed home with kids for 23 years, but I had fun," she said. "I loved my kids. I think I'm liberated as hell, but I never looked at (full-time motherhood) as a second-class job. There's plenty of time when the kids are gone to have a career."

### Political leanings

Chamberlain got involved in Republican politics while the kids were still young, then segued into a job as political director of the cable television company Tribune United (now TCI Cablevision).

From there, she became executive manager of the Greater Royal Oak and Oak Park Chambers of Commerce, where after six years the membership doubled and the annual budget rose to \$260,000.

A big-time sports enthusiast, Chamberlain enjoys tennis once a

week ("I'd play every day if I could"), billiards, ping-pong and softball. "I still think I could hit a softball a pretty good whack," she said.

Her daughters, Caren and Martha, earned 11 and 12 sports letters, respectively, at Dondora High School. "The whole family is into sports," Chamberlain said.

Keeping busy at her new job (in a sporty convertible), Chamberlain's itinerary Monday included a planning session on a newsletter she's preparing for south Oakland communities, lunch in Farmington for mayors exchange day, a pow-wow with Farmington city manager Frank Lauhoff and another meeting back at the county building in Pontiac with Economic Development Director Ken Rogers.

Lauhoff, who hadn't known Chamberlain before Monday, seemed happy to have a second ally in county government. "Besides Donna (Wolf the commissioner) I don't know anyone up there," Lauhoff said. "The economic development group, I don't know how hard they push. I mean, I call them. They don't call me. That tells me something. We have to push and push, and it's not easy."

Southfield has the same problem, but worse, according to Mayor Donald Fracassi.

"We get nothing from the county," he said, "never did. The south end has been ignored for a long time and I don't see that changing."

Fracassi said that Southfield, beset by creeping blight, would welcome county aid and cooperation, but hasn't been getting it.

### County no help

"We're in the trenches every day. You can't get help from the state. You can't get help from the county. They're on a different agenda than we are."

County commissioner Lawrence Pernick, D-Southfield, disagrees. Chamberlain's appointment, he said, is a fortuitous sign that Patterson is serious about helping the south-end cities.

"Having a liaison person only reinforces our hope that we can do as good a job as possible," he said. "We don't want a repeat in Oakland County of the rolling deterioration (elsewhere). In the end (Fracassi) has to realize that Oakland County is bigger than the city of Southfield."

### CLARIFICATION

The Proposal A map that ran on the front of Thursday's Suburban Life section should have had the color codes reversed. In our area, Southfield, Walled Lake, West Bloomfield and Rochester

should have been light blue (7-9.9 percent decrease in property taxes) and Avondale, Troy, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills and Farmington should have been lavender (0-6.9 percent decrease).

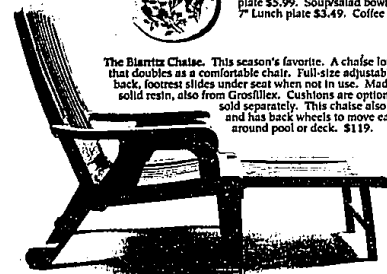
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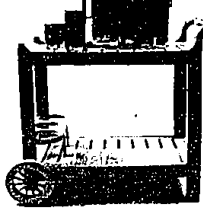


Melamine Dinnerware. Ideal for outdoor gatherings, break-resistant dishes, cups & flatware in such glorious summer colors as hunter green, dusty mauve, pale peach, pure white, or pastel spring floral (shown). Looks like ceramic and is dishwasher safe. 10" Dinner plate \$5.99. Soup/salad bowl \$3.99. 7" Lunch plate \$3.49. Coffee mug \$3.49.



The Biarritz Chaise. This season's favorite. A chaise lounge that doubles as a comfortable chair. Full-size adjustable back, footrest slides under seat when not in use. Made of solid resin, also from Grosfillex. Cushions are optional and sold separately. This chaise also stacks and has back wheels to move easily around pool or deck. \$119.

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