

Roeper grad finds the net with Archer lineup

BY JUDITH DONER BERNE
STAFF WRITER

"At age 37, Cliff Russell's life has already come full-circle in two respects."

"As press secretary to recently elected Mayor Dennis Archer, he is now a city of Detroit employee — as was his father Clarence, who headed the public works department under former Mayor Roman Gribbs."

"As father of five children, he has the pleasure of seeing his daughter Kristen, 8, as she goes through her first year at Bloomfield Hills Roeper, from which Russell graduated and twice earned all-state basketball honors."

"But Russell has little time these days to contemplate such things. One night he was announcing University of Michigan basketball for WWJ radio. The next day, he was fielding telephone calls and interview requests on behalf of Archer from Russell's former colleagues — the media."

"You have heard Russell. Besides doing color commentary for U-M basketball, he was all over Detroit and the suburbs as a street reporter for WWJ. Plus he hosted the weekly half-hour Detroit Black Journal show for Channel 56 for the past two years."

High on Roeper

The sum of those experiences — the quality and scope of his journalism, a deep-seated love for the city, his Roeper education — are what got him his new job, he believes.

"Roeper was my first experience with white people — with

people who were affluent," Russell says. "It was where I learned to get along with different types of people."

Besides providing him with "an excellent education," it also stressed "caring and community service. It gave me a lot of idealism I was able to retain."

And, "It allowed me to see that the city and suburbs are in this thing together."

Roeper has fond memories of Russell, whose school archives chronicle his academic, social and athletic success.

Both librarian Helen Strauss and administrator Mariann Hoag remember his student days very well.

At first, "I knew he felt strange — but it didn't take him long to get over it," says Strauss.

"He was popular. Everybody liked him." When he saw her after many years, "he picked me up and gave me a great big hug."

"He's a lot like he was then, except there's more of him," jokes Hoag, who has been at Roeper for 44 years.

"I don't think they could have chosen a better person. It's like seeing your children succeed."

Asked to apply

Russell sees the job of press secretary both as protecting the mayor and facilitating the needs of the media.

But it is not a job he sought. "Someone from his (Archer's) campaign asked me to apply."

"I jumped through all the hoops," he says, lapsing into basketball lingo. "I understand media. I can anticipate what journalists will be asking."



STEPHEN CASTRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Like father, like daughter: Cliff Russell said he and wife Jacqueline picked Roeper for Kristen, 8, because she's "clearly Roeper material."

When he got it, "I had a week of initial exhilaration." Then, there was "a lot of self-doubt, some soul searching until I got over the fear of the unknown."

The hardest part was giving up

the basketball broadcasts, that "the mayor very graciously said I could continue. But I needed to make a clean break."

"Sports did wonderful things for me. I appreciate that much more since I'm older."

Russell is committed to helping young blacks who don't have the advantages he had growing up — which include having great parents.

"I can remember being young and trying to aspire to some of

those negative things. They let me know that wasn't going to be tolerated."

And, "I loved basketball so much. It would have been hard for me to stray from that discipline."

Leaders hope to free parks from state budget tyranny

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Fans of the state parks have their political team together.

Financially, however, they have yet to map out how to build a \$700 million endowment fund that will free state parks from depending on the legislative budget process.

"I am heartened that our Legislature is providing the necessary leadership in this state parks initiative," Joey M. Spano, a member of the state Natural Resources Commission, said at a State Capitol news conference last week.

"I have been very concerned about the lack of general fund budget support for state parks. Ten years ago, the general fund provided 80 percent of the support and park revenues 20 percent," said Spano, of West Bloomfield Township.

"Now that's exactly reversed — 20 percent from the general fund and 80 percent from revenues. Last April, we were begging for more money. I am concerned about our fees — we're pricing people out."

Spano, the suburban township's parks and recreation direc-

tor, has been on the NRC for two years as an appointee of Gov. John Engler.

If approved by voters next November, Senate Joint Resolution E would send \$10 million back to the land trust, put \$5 million into a parks endowment fund and send \$5 million into the parks budget for repairs and infrastructure improvements.

See STATE PARKS, 10A

Bill would create adopt-a-park plan

Other parks bills would:

■ Create a State Parks Foundation for parks projects (SB 952). It would be similar to college foundations and the Oakland Parks Foundation.

■ Allow income tax payers to use part of their refunds to buy annual state park vehicle entry permits (SB 951).

■ Start an adopt-a-park program in which businesses and civic groups could volunteer to work on projects at parks they select (no bill number yet). It would be similar to the Transportation Department's adopt-a-highway program.

■ Provide liability protection for volunteers (no number yet).

Deterioration

Some argue that state parks should be funded only by user fees or sold off.

While the prevailing view in Lansing is that state parks have been financially and physically

neglected, parks attendance has been on an up trend from 20 million to 25 million over the past 15 years, with some variation due to weather.

Refer to bill numbers if possible when writing to your state senators and representatives, State Capitol, Lansing 48909.

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