

'Rocky' shies away from talking political future

BY MIKE MALOTT
HOMERTOWN NEWS SERVICE
mmalott@hometownnews.net

"Please ..." state Rep. Andrew Raczkowski, R-Farmington Hills, retorted, his voice dripping with disdain.

He was talking about his status as a reservist in the U.S. Army. Having joined at age 17, with the approval of his parents, Raczkowski went to basic training and advanced infantry training at Fort Benning, Ga., between his junior and senior years at Harrison High School in Farmington Hills. He served in Desert Shield, the blocking action in Saudi Arabia prior to the shooting war in the Persian Gulf.

Today, he's a company commander with the rank of captain. He is paratrooper and pathfinder qualified. He goes to training one weekend a month and for one 18-day exercise each year.

So, the question was whether that gave him a sense of kinship with Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield, a fellow reservist as well as a fellow state lawmaker.

"... He's a Navy man," Raczkowski said.

Apparently, some rivalries run deeper than party affiliation.

Raczkowski, "Rocky" to friends and constituents because they have trouble pronouncing his last name, "Ratch-koff-sky," takes obvious pride in his military involvement. His office in Lansing sports a number of army-oriented toys, including a stuffed bear wearing camouflage and a mechanical infantry soldier, which crawls and shoots a machine gun. But he's serious about it.

"The military is boot camp for the body," he explains. "People ask me why I went to law school if I don't intend to be a lawyer. Law school is boot camp for the mind."

The army has also taught him leadership skills, skills he said he is now using in his role as a state legislator. In his second term, he has already risen to the post of House majority floor leader. That puts him second in command in the House Republican caucus, he said, and his job is to manage the schedule as proposals come to the floor for a vote. Essentially, he's in the center of

all the activity, offering up each item up for action to the chair during sessions of the House of Representatives.

Raczkowski says he doesn't like to talk much about his political ambitions, it puts people off, but he does admit he's interested in running for House speaker in the year 2000. He hasn't made a decision, he said. And he won't until January. Rep. Pan Godchaux, R-Birmingham, has already announced her interest in that post.

"I enjoy politics," is his only response to questions about his plans.

Current House Speaker Chuck Perricone, R-Kalamazoo Township, is often criticized for his leadership style, as being too dictatorial. He's been accused of pushing the GOP agenda too quickly at the expense of hearing out the minority view.

Raczkowski won't comment on Perricone's style, or on the criticisms, but he does say his leadership style would be different. He said he believes there is time to hear out all views.

"You don't think of the military teaching you compassion for those you lead, but it does. You have to have their respect," he explained.

Raczkowski is still quite young to be in such a leadership role in state government at 30. Born to immigrants, Raczkowski speaks, reads and writes Polish, although he grew up in Farmington Hills.

"They (mom and dad) achieved the American dream ... They came here with nothing, just the shirts on their backs, and a willingness to work hard. They taught me that," he said.

And that is how he approached campaigning in his first attempt at state office at age 24. He lost to Jan Dolan, but came back as the underdog the next time around and won the seat at age 26.

"Nobody gave me a chance of winning, this young little snit from Farmington Hills. And when we won, it gave me the opportunity to prove to them that young people should not be underestimated. They are a great wealth, if we challenge them. If you don't challenge them, you lose a whole genera-

'You don't think of the military teaching you compassion for those you lead, but it does. You have to have their respect.'

Andrew Raczkowski
—State representative

tion. If you challenge them and expect more out of them, you will get more out of them."

Still, his "first love," he said, is his business.

"I started that in 1993 with \$500 in my pocket and going to an auction in Ohio where I bought one printing press," he said. "An A.B. Dick press, we still have it. It sits off in the corner. It's going fairly well. We are growing it (the business) slowly."

Raczkowski recently moved the business from Eastpointe to

Madison Heights. Called Mainline Communications, it specializes in printing, marketing and advertising, producing everything from business cards to annual reports. The business now has about 3,000 square feet of space and three employees. He's still actively involved in the operation of the business.

Raczkowski has other ambitions. He's quite open about his hopes of starting a family and having kids. But he hasn't met the right woman yet. And how will he do that given all the time he spends working on his business, in the legislature and in the reserves?

"I don't know," is his only answer.

Of course, with term limits in effect, he has only a term and a half left to serve. That will force him up or out, he said.

Raczkowski campaigned for term limits and he still strongly supports them. He believes



State Rep. Andrew Raczkowski

they've changed the way the legislature operates. There is less pressure on members to vote with the party line. Vote trading, which Raczkowski said is dis-

tinctly different than compromising, is something he considers unethical. The result is that there is less party discipline and members have only a few years to push for their agendas. That means they act more often according to their conscience.

Even though he has limited time left in the House, Raczkowski explained his desire to shy away from conversations about future political ambitions. "It makes you a target," and he said he already tries to be open to residents of his district. Since he is in a statewide leadership post, he also tries to be receptive to residents seeking to express a view from all across the state.

"I've made myself extremely accessible," he said. "My phone number is listed and I take calls at home. And for that there is a price. The price is that when I mow my lawn, people stop by to talk. And it takes me about four hours to cut my lawn."

B Footwear B

new balance new balance

54⁹⁹

NEW BALANCE
Women's W6258 Running Shoes

79⁹⁹

NEW BALANCE
Men's W6258 Running Shoes

ONLY 30⁹⁹

special purchase!

NEW BALANCE
Men's W840N Running Shoes

54⁹⁹

NEW BALANCE
Women's W6258 Running Shoes

74⁹⁹

NEW BALANCE
Men's W6258 Running Shoes

54⁹⁹

NEW BALANCE
Men's W6258 Running Shoes

64⁹⁹

NEW BALANCE
Men's W6258 Running Shoes

Apparel Values!

NOW

ADIDAS, NIKE

Men's T-Shirts

12⁹⁹

2 for \$10

SOFFE

Cotton Gym Shorts \$4.99 each

NFL

Replica Jerseys

32⁹⁹

Team Logo Hats Buy One & Get the 2nd 50% off

14⁹⁹

ADIDAS, NIKE

Men's Jersey or Nylon Shorts

2 for \$30

DANSKIN

Women's Scoop Neck Tops or Relaxed Fit Bike Shorts \$21.99 each

34⁹⁹

EVERLAST

Women's Jogging Leggings

20⁹⁹

EVERLAST

Women's Jogging Leggings

The Sports Authority

...means just that! If you ever find a lower competitor's price on any in-stock item, we'll match it! Hassle Free!

7 GREAT LOCATIONS!

FLINT • (919) 226-6160
CLINTON TOWNSHIP • (919) 791-0400
LYONIA • (734) 822-2776
MADISON HEIGHTS • (248) 589-0123
WATERFORD • (248) 734-0023
UTICA • (919) 254-0000
DEARBORO • (212) 334-0025

THE SPORTS AUTHORITY

To find The Sports Authority nearest you, dial 1.888.1.mak.4.TSA.
For gift certificates, dial 1.888.375.GIFTS.

Limited time offer! Free Tuition*

Want to **crack** the tax **code**?

We cover everything, from completing a basic 1040 to the skillful handling of complex schedules. Learn about recent changes in tax laws, as well as proven tax-saving strategies. Once you've graduated, you may even have the opportunity to interview with H&R Block.** Call for the flexible course times and convenient locations in your area and enroll today!

*There is a \$58 fee for books and materials. Free tuition offer is good at participating H&R Block locations.
**Completion of the course is neither an offer nor a guarantee of employment.
©1999 H&R Block Tax Services, Inc. 1180/5/99 AA LEAD/MS/20/21

H&R BLOCK 1-800-TAX-2000
or visit our Web site at www.hrblock.com/tax

Relax in a setting of warmth and friendship.....

Caring is an integral part of our success. We adhere to providing luxurious amenities and quality service - exactly what we would expect for our own parent or grandparent.

INDEPENDENCE LIVING:

- Dinner served daily
- Bi-weekly housekeeping
- Weekly flat linen service
- Planned social activities
- Scheduled van transportation
- Heat, electric and water
- Apartment maintenance
- No buy-in fees

INDEPENDENCE PLUS:

- Three meals served daily
- Medication reminders
- Daily housekeeping
- Assistance with bathing
- 24 hour staffing
- Planned social activities
- Heat, electric and water
- No buy-in fees



(810) 229-9190
833 E. Grand River
Brighton, MI 48116