

# Forum

## Sharpe talks about district court

**Q: Why do you feel that District Court is important? Which of its subdivisions is most important? Why?**

**A:** More citizens have contact with the District Court than Superior or Appellate Courts. District Court may be their only exposure to the court system. I feel that the criminal and family law divisions are the most important subdivisions: criminal court because of the number of cases involved and the opportunity to reach a final judgment at this stage without resorting to the appeal process; and family law division because of the great need for the awarding of support for spouses and children in a timely manner as well as the quick disposition of pending

with driving while impaired cases?

**A:** The judicial code prohibits any discussion by a judge or judicial candidate of policy matters in the courts or of pending cases. From my experience as a criminal defense attorney, I would demand that the state meet the burden of proof in any case before conviction of a defendant.

**Q: How would you as judge deal with a party to a civil case who does not have an attorney? Would you treat such a person any differently? Why?**

**A:** The judge cannot represent a non-represented party, but he or she can explain the law to the person -- and that I would do, with some instruction as to proceed-



Margaret L. Sharpe  
Candidate, District Court Judge

demeanor and conduct of a judge is most important in achieving respect from members of the legal profession and the public, inside and outside the courtroom. Most important of all is a judge's attitude toward the members of the public who appear before her or him.

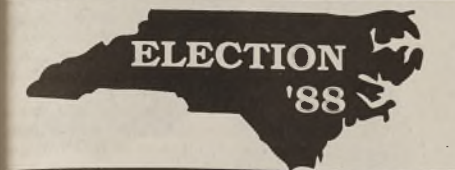
**Q: Are you satisfied with the current selection process for District Court judges? Why or why not?**

**A:** I believe that selection of judges should be non-partisan and should involve both merit selection and election at a later time, such as the South Carolina plan. It is extremely expensive to run as a judge in a contested race (as it is in other races). I have some problem with fund raising for this type of office, but regrettably feel it is a "necessary evil." Under the present system it is very difficult for a minority member or a woman to win this office. Once appointed to the office, however, experience shows that these persons can be elected for subsequent terms.

dures to follow -- if appropriate. I would refer the party to the Legal Aid Society for aid. All persons who come into our courts are entitled to be treated with dignity and fairness, regardless of their station in life.

**Q: It's been said that a judge is a public servant, yet must command respect and possess a great deal of authority. How would you approach the job to achieve a balance between those two things?**

**A:** I would apply myself to the law by study and diligent service and carry out the duty of my office to do justice. The proper



family cases.

**Q: What do you feel you could do as judge to reduce the recidivism rate?**

**A:** Courts should use all available resources to rehabilitate criminal defendants who have been convicted in addition to active sentences. Some examples are court volunteers, community services, counseling, community penalties program, treatment facilities, probation, work release and others.

**Q: What, if any, policy would you intend to follow in dealing**

## Efird discusses school board race

**Q: What do you think the Board of Education should be doing to recruit older school bus drivers?**

**A:** Over the past several years, our school system has been recruiting school bus drivers over 18 years of age. Our personnel department will comply with the law in all cases.

**Q: It has been reported that the leading school discipline problems are drug and alcohol abuse and teen pregnancy. What can be done to alleviate these problems?**

**A:** This year our school system appointed a coordinator to head programs dealing with drug and alcohol education. Large numbers of students are presently participating in school-sponsored programs to combat drug and alcohol abuse.

Many fine programs have been presented to our high school students, utilizing outstanding athletes and others in combating this very serious problem. Pregnancy is dealt with in health classes.

**Q: What can the school board do to encourage parents to become actively involved in their children's education?**

**A:** This is a very fine question -- one which is being addressed constantly through such programs as parent-teacher conference days, outstanding parent volunteer programs in each school, as well as the citizens advisory committee. I, as a member of the Board of Edu-

cation, consider parent involvement a priority. This year, in order to gain experience, a Home-School-Parent Coordinator was employed at the new Petree Middle Optional School for under-achieving students.

The entire role of this coordinator is to interest and involve parents in the education of their children becoming partners. A parent support group has also been organized.



Grace C. Efird  
Candidate, Board of Education

**Q: What, in your opinion, is the cause of the increasing incidents of racial clashes on school campuses? What can be done to remedy this?**

**A:** In my opinion, the societal pressures run the gamut -- from seeking employment to drug and alcohol abuse, as had been stated

before. Therefore, the school system must make every attempt to see that each student views himself or herself as a worthy individual where he or she is in control of himself and not controlled by outside forces.

Good education is the answer to this problem. The implementation of the 3-year "thinking skills" program is aimed at helping students perceive consequences of attitudes and behaviors beyond consequences of the immediate present.

**Q: What do you think are three major problems facing our public school system and what are the solutions?**

First, dropout prevention -- the school system is doing an excellent job at the middle and high school levels of dropout prevention. More study and programming is needed for early intervention.

Second, underachieving students -- a 51-member committee from the community has studied this problem and has made its recommendations. These recommendations are being carefully implemented in stages. It is called "Project RISE."

Third, implementing the Basic Education Plan, or BEP -- this plan should offer greater opportunities for all students. It should be monitored closely to see that all students have access to areas identified by the local and state Boards of Education; i.e., art, foreign language, Writing-to-Read, etc.

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