



Gene Henry



Hans Veit

Veit vs. Henry

Newcomer takes on old timer

By LUCY DOGGETT

This past year the state legislature created a new judgeship for Geauga County. This position is a full-time job paying \$32,000 a year. Hans Veit of South Russell and Gene Henry of Bainbridge are running against each other for Judge of the Court of Common Pleas.

A lifetime resident of the area, Gene Henry graduated from Hiram college and Western Reserve University. He was assistant Attorney General of the state of Ohio in 1957-58 and he has been active in Geauga County as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Prosecuting Attorney, and President of the Geauga County Bar Association.

"I believe that I would very much enjoy the responsibilities of being a judge," said Henry. He feels that the years he spent working in state government enabled him to see many different judges and gain from the experience. He also cites the large amount of trial work he did as Geauga County Prosecuting Attorney as valuable. He has worked with many county and local officials in the past. "I feel there's a number of officials with whom I have worked who would remember me and speak favorably of me," Henry remarked.

This is not Henry's first campaign and he quite frankly finds it tiresome at times. He mentioned his frustration at the thievery and vandalism of campaign signs. "I did not look forward to the ordeal," he says of campaigning, "but I find that when I am caught up with the enthusiasm of my friends and family and when I actually set out and talk to people I enjoy it."

HANS VEIT has lived in South Russell for 18 years. A native of Germany, he arrived in the United States as a teenager. He graduated from the University of Michigan and was summa cum laude at Cleveland Marshall Law School. "Being a judge is the ultimate in the practice of law," says Veit. He feels well qualified for the job as he is experienced in all phases of the law. The fact that he has never held a public office should not be a liability, since previous public experience is not necessary for the position. "As a native of a foreign country that during my childhood and teens was under totalitarian government, I have a real appreciation of the values of our system. Just being a candidate is an honor," said Veit.

The exhausting and exhilarating campaign trail is a new experience for Veit, but he's glad he tried it. "Basically this has been one of the best experiences in my life," he said.

Here are the candidates' remarks on issues:

ZONING CASES IN COMMON PLEAS COURT: Since the Court of Common Pleas is the next step up in the appellate ladder after the local zoning boards of appeal the position of the judge concerning local land use and zoning is important. However, neither candidate felt it was appropriate to take a stand on the type of development that will be best for Geauga County. "Judicial candidates should not take a stand on hot political issues," said Veit, adding that when a case comes up he'll decide it in accordance with the law. Henry commented, "I don't think we should be put in a position of having to indicate any feelings we might have on a particular subject that we might have to rule on as judge."

Both candidates did have some comment on zoning. Henry, along with other members of this family, owns 170 acres in Bainbridge Township near Geauga Lake. Is that land to be rezoned? If so, wouldn't there be a conflict of interest if Henry were the judge deciding a zoning appeal? Henry said that he and his family had tried unsuccessfully to rezone the property in the past. They are not "pursuing an attempt" at re-zoning his land from residential to commercial now, although he does believe that portions of his property might be more attractive to buyers if commercially zoned. If he were the judge, Henry said, he would avoid conflict of interest by "not participating in any way" in a zoning decision involving his property.

Veit's only property in the country is the 2 acres on which his home is located. He commented that as far as zoning was concerned, a judge should "uphold local regulations because they were passed by the trustees elected by the people. He added that he would not substitute his judgement for that of the trustees unless the local resolution was "clearly unconstitutional."

POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: Viet's campaign literature stresses that he is not tied to any political or economic group in the country because he has never been in public office before. He sees this as a plus because he can deal impartially with the cases that would be set before him as a judge. Henry resents the inference of Veit's literature that he (Henry) would owe favors to special interests. He cited his 20 years of involvement in county government and said that "if there is anything detrimental then it would have been brought out." He also criticized Viet for not participating in local government in the past. "He showed no interest in his own South Russell village affairs even though he's lived there 18 years," Henry said of Viet.