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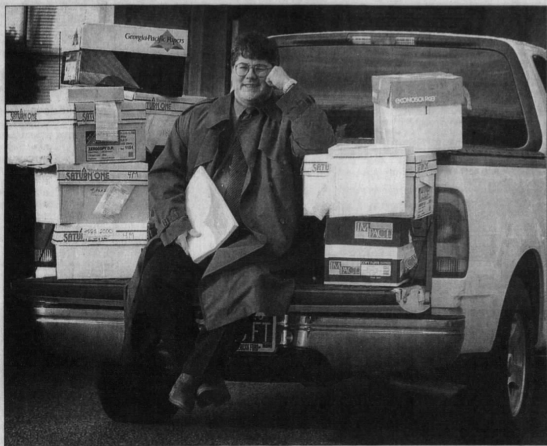
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THE WAY WE LIVE

DETROIT FREE PRESS



MARCIA CURTIS/Special to the Free Press

Outside his Saginaw law office, Gregory Schmid shares truck space with copies of the petition for an amendment to legalize marijuana use. He needs 302,711 voters' signatures to get the measure on the November ballot; he'll begin the petition drive Friday.

WHAT'S GOING ON

SCHOLARSHIP PARTY Museum hosts a fund-raiser

Cobo Center isn't the only place in town where auto-related things are going on. African Americans on Wheels magazine is hosting an event tonight to benefit the Edward Davis Scholarship, named for the first black automobile dealer. The Millennium Celebration for Diversity begins at 8:30 p.m. at Detroit's Museum of African American History, East Warren at Brush.

Each of the museum's rooms will have a different theme, complete with food and music. One is dubbed the reggae room, another the blues room. Look also for the jazz, Latin calypso and African rooms.

Tickets are \$150 per person and can be reserved by calling 313-963-2209.



HEART BENEFIT Party has purple prize

Henry Ford Health System's Heart and Vascular Institute probably isn't a place you're eager to visit. But the people there throw a mean party. And now's the time to buy tickets for the Institute's "Red Heart Blues ... and all that Jazz!" benefit at 6 p.m. Jan. 28.

The event raises money for research and treatment of cardiovascular disease. Last year's do brought in nearly \$140,000.

There will be music, awards and a silent auction that features a glitzy, one-of-a-kind Judith Leiber purse.

It takes place at the Somerset Inn, 2901 W. Big Beaver, Troy. Tickets are \$200-\$300. Call 313-876-9259.

O MAGAZINE Queen of all media

Oprah Winfrey's new magazine finally has a name: O.

The publication, which expects to reach 850,000 people a month, will emphasize spirituality and self-improvement, according to the Hearst Corp., which will handle the publishing end.

Look for the first issue April 17.

Compiled by David Lyman, including news reports

RAISED TO RAISE A FUSS

Like his father before him, Saginaw lawyer Greg Schmid enjoys the battle of the ballot box



NEAL RUBIN'S PEOPLE

GREG SCHMID HAD HIS DRUG test results laminated and strung on a leather cord.

He understands that drug tests are about as accurate as \$20 pistols, but he also understands the value of symbolism. If the founding father of the proposed Michigan amendment to legalize dope can hang a negative drug test around his neck, maybe he's in this for more than a homegrown high.

Then again, this is a homegrown high for Schmid, a 39-year-old Saginaw attorney.

Not the marijuana part, that's simply a matter of philosophy, of trying to find "peace with honor in the drug war." And not the \$20 pistol, either, though he's also pushing an amendment that would immunize gun makers from lawsuits.

The love of the battle, however — of hauling a snarling dog of an issue into the public arena and getting voters to rub its tummy — has been ingrained in him since he was old enough to vote.

Schmid was raised to be a lawyer, a Republican and as contrary as necessary. Allan Schmid, 71 — "my pa" — is a former chairman of the Saginaw County Republican Party and a two-time loser in symbolic runs for the Michigan House. More nota-

▶ A brief biography of Greg Schmid **4C**

bly, he's a political agitator who helped give Michigan term limits and the Headlee tax limitation amendment.

"He brought me up to look beyond political correctness and do what's right," Greg Schmid says. "If it's unpopular, do it all the harder."

For 2000, that means the Personal Responsibility Amendment to the state constitution.

The PRA would allow adults to grow as many as three marijuana plants in their homes, out of the reach and sight of minors. Adults could keep three ounces of marijuana on hand for personal use. The amendment would also permit the medical use of marijuana for minors, while holding onto all the standard prohibitions against selling the drug or driving under its influence.

As director of the Personal Responsibility Amendment, Schmid is also pushing the Litigation Culture Amendment, making the world safer for tobacco and firearms companies.

The petition campaign for both begins Friday. But it's the marijuana initiative that has drawn the

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SCHMID | Lawyer-activist enjoys jabbing the body politic

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most attention, putting a but-toned-down, slightly gray-ing conservative in the pages of *High Times* magazine and prompting people who like and admire him to defend his rationality.

JERRY NISSLEY, a Republican elder statesman and former Saginaw County party chairman, says he knows Schmid well. "He is no book."

State Sen. Mike Goschka, R-Brant, says with admiration that Schmid takes after his father. On the sensibility issue, Goschka sides with Nissley: "He's no book."

Schmid is driven and impassioned, but he's also good-humored and reasonably well-rounded.

Increasingly chubby since his marriage four years ago to Jodi, a lawyer-turned-homemaker, he says he stopped eating red to "prove that you can be a vegetarian and still be husky." He owns 50 kites, explaining, "Everyone needs a vice." He avoided computer literacy as long as he could, then dived in and created an on-screen simulation of glaciers advancing and retreating across the Great Lakes region.

Ask him whether he has ever smoked marijuana and by way of a yes, he points out that he attended the University of Michigan in the 1970s, "along with most of the other lawyers and politicians in this state." He does not smoke tobacco or own a gun.

"If someone came to rob me, I'd be the most cooperative victim ever," Schmid says. Sitting behind his desk in the law offices he shares with his father and his older sister, Kathy Schmid, he raises his hands in surrender. "What do you need? Look, I'm covering my

GREG SCHMID

- ▶ **Age:** 39.
- ▶ **Home:** A small cottage overlooking the Tittabawassee River, two miles west of Saginaw. He added the second story himself.
- ▶ **Education:** Cooley Law School, Lansing. History and political science major at the University of Michigan. Spent senior year of high school at Leelanau School in Glen Arbor after two long years at a boarding school in Steamboat Springs, Colo.: "I didn't like being around snotty rich kids."
- ▶ **Occupation:** Lawyer.
- ▶ **Avocation:** Political activist. Major force behind the Personal Responsibility Amendment, which would alter marijuana laws in Michigan.
- ▶ **Personal:** Wife of four years, Jodi, is also a lawyer. Daughter Stephanie, 16, lives with her mother in Blissfield.
- ▶ **Background:** Parents are Allan, a lawyer and politician, and Virginia, a teacher. He and his twin, Melanie Schmalz, are the last of five children.
- ▶ **Hobbies:** George Washington, "for being 'a doer and not just a talker'" and American economist Milton Friedman, whose free-market economic policies Schmid credits with killing communism.

eyes! Go ahead, I'll get new!"

Much of Schmid's practice is criminal. He handles "a ton of marijuana cases, not because I get more than other people, but because there are more of them."

The small-L libertarian in him has increasingly recoiled at an "unwinnable strategy" of marijuana laws he views as the modern equivalent of Prohibition. "Prohibition laws," he declares, "make liars and criminals out of people who are neither."

Schmid is good at turning phrases. ("I think the term 'compassionate conservatism' means 'I'm a Republican and I used to smoke pot.'") As a kid — he and his twin sister, Melanie, were the youngest of five — he used to surf the Encyclopaedia Britannica, bouncing from subject to subject.

He came away from the experience with a wide pool of knowledge and an appreciation for the language. Over the course of an afternoon, he quotes George

Washington, Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, George Patton and Monty Python.

The Einstein citation is a favorite: "For nothing is more destructive of respect for the government and the law of the land than passing laws which cannot be enforced."

Fortunately, Schmid says, we live in a country where the people are the fourth branch of the government, and in a state where voters can put proposals on the ballot.

Unfortunately, that means petition drives. Schmid has only six months to gather the signatures of 30271 registered voters. He'll use the Internet — petitions are available at www.ballot2000.net — and what he hopes will be a swarm of volunteers.

"If I can get 3,000 people to get 101 signatures each, there we are," he says, and he laughs. "That sounds a lot easier than 1,700 a day for 180 days."

SAVE THE SMOG. Nuke the Whales. Hand Schmid a petition and he'll sign it.

"Even if I disagree," he says, "let's put it on the ballot and get it over with."

Schmid has spent many long stretches as the earnest figure with a clipboard outside a grocery store, trying to explain complicated issues to shoppers before their ice cream melts. "Boy, your heart breaks those first few days," he says.

Eventually, he developed the tough hide of a salesman and learned a few salesman's tricks as well. "You find things you can agree on: 'You believe in democracy, don't you?'"

That was when he was first helping his dad, back in the early '80s. Some fathers and sons go fishing; the Schmid campaigned for term limits. They did it again in 1986-87. By 1992, the mood of the people had caught up with them and their wild notion be-

came law.

The marijuana initiative might be a tougher sell. Among those lining up against it is the attorney general's office.

"Conservative Republicans aren't supposed to be in favor of legalizing drugs," concedes Allan Schmid. "I guess I'm more of a libertarian sometimes than a conservative Republican, and some of that rubbed off on Greg."

Allan Schmid's main focus this election is on cutting the legislature back to part-time. But their offices adjoin and their interests constantly overlap.

Nissley, the former party chairman, says he was surprised that the Schmid's would campaign for marijuana reform. He has also been surprised at the number of Republicans who support them — conversationally, if not with petition in hand.

"When the Schmid's believe, they believe strongly," Nissley says.

"They're purists," agrees Goschka. "And I think that's laudable I do."

However noble Greg Schmid's intentions, the windmills are still a heavy favorite over Don Quixote. In a dumb-it-down world, the amendment is 800 intricate words. Then there's the matter of getting voters conditioned to "Just Say No" to decide, "Maybe just a little."

Win or lose, Schmid says he will be satisfied to get on the ballot. "If people vote against me, I'm proud to live in a society where they were able to."

But if the petition drive falls short — if the people don't get their chance to speak — Schmid knows where to find them in 2002.

"I'm reminded of Scarlett O'Hara," Goschka says. "For a Schmid, father or son, 'there's always tomorrow.'"

NEAL RUBIN can be reached at 313-222-6510 and rubin@freepress.com.

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