

IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE OLD PADDY BAWL

By Basil Talbott Jr.

When I didn't find any of the usual Democratic campaign clutter under my door in the 43rd Ward, I was shocked. I rushed to the new ward committeemen's office on Lincoln Avenue to find out what lay behind this first omission in more than four decades of living in the domain of the likes of Paddy Bauler and his successors. In the ward office I found an Andy Warhol portrait of Muhammad Ali and a Vasarely, but no precinct captains.

"We don't have precinct captains anymore," conceded the new committeeman who was having a ball dashing around the Lincoln Park area Tuesday. Captains went the way of pterodactyls after the defeat last March of devilish Danny O'Brien, the 43rd Ward's last Paddy Bauler. In their place are "precinct representatives," explained his successor.

When Paddy Bauler was credited ages ago with the memorable critique, "Chicago ain't ready for reform," he hadn't met Ann Stepan. Stepan and her Yuppie *precinct representatives* are reform Old Town style. Years ago Bauler tried to stop the first the Old Town Art Fair, now a bourgeois institution for suburban oglers. Bauler even flailed to no avail to keep the Old Town School of Folk Music off North Avenue east of his saloon.

First the beats came in droves. Bauler survived with his precinct captains. One folk music teacher, Win Stracke, even immortalized the original cigar chomper. Hippies and flower children followed, but Bauler held his ground.

When Bauler's health failed, Bill Schoeninger moved in and took over as a genteel general of the captains. Young O'Brien, passing out daisies, kept trying to take over and eventually did—moving in as a captains' Queeg.

Over the years when garish china lamps in front win-

ionable ferns, the captains stayed. Precinct captains stuffed literature under doors and took careful canvasses of each three-flat. A note telling each voter the address of his polling place was taped in each foyer. Republicans had their ups (Ald. Barr McCutcheon, a math instructor at Francis Parker) and downs. But the GOP never had many captains, while Bauler, Schoeninger and O'Brien did.

The regular organization's captains survived reformer Jack Ringer and ex-Ald. Bill Singer, who went from a lawyer in pinstriped suits to shiny sharkskins in the fashion of Ald. Eddie Vrdolyak (10th), the county party chairman who bridges the Baulers and Stepan. Former state Rep. Jim Houlihan, Dinnie Brackett and Bill Bove, the bright promise of the '60s, all had a go at defeating O'Brien and his captains, with no success.

When O'Brien was defeated by a corps of professionals, many of them women, he had 300 precinct captains. Many were city jobholders. O'Brien, who had been a state senator, a state representative and is now a county commissioner, was not beloved. "Letters were sent to the captains and only three or four stayed on," Stepan said. "There is no more patronage."

Now the glitter group has moved in. Precincts were put in the care of volunteers and their co-ordinators. "The title precinct captain has a bad connotation," Stepan said. No thorough canvass was done this year. Literature was dropped erratically. Many foyers lacked polling place address cards.

Stepan conceded that Vrdolyak gave her \$2,500 in Election Day money; Stepan is an example of Vrdolyak's reform-style politics.

Maybe Vrdolyak's cash will go for another Warhol or a Rothko reproduction. Stepan apparently carried Walter F. Mondale over Ronald Reagan. *Tin a glass of white*