



**RAY M.
LARSON**

ONE DEGREE TWO VIEWS

Crime and Punishment

By Linda Perry

Ray Larson is no stranger to the harsh realities of crime, having 29 years of experience with investigating and prosecuting criminal cases. He started his career in 1972 as the Paducah city prosecutor, and between 1974 and 1985 he served as the assistant deputy attorney general for the state, investigating and prosecuting high profile cases throughout Kentucky.

Governor Martha Layne Collins appointed Larson the Fayette County Commonwealth's Attorney in 1985. Since then, Larson has been elected to four six-year terms, the last three times with no opposition. Over the course of those 16 years his office has prosecuted all criminal cases in Fayette Circuit Court and overseen grand juries convened in the county. The

Commonwealth's Attorney's office also has gained a reputation for its myriad outreach programs aimed at improving the quality of life in the community and protecting victims.

Parents Set Example

Larson, a UK grad who earned a bachelor's degree in history in 1966 and a law degree in 1970, attributes the way he runs his office to the example his parents set regarding honesty, integrity, no cutting corners, and humor. Larson's late father, Robert F. Larson, was a career Air Force officer and the family traveled extensively in the U.S. and overseas, including France, where Larson spent three years at the American High School in Paris, later graduating in Michigan. When the senior Larson retired from the service, he moved his family to Lexington where he worked in the registrar's office at UK.

"I have always been a believer in people being responsible for their behavior and people suffering consequences if they break the law."

With this as a basis, Larson, who also has been an adjunct assistant professor at the UK College of Law since 1988, has established clear-cut guidelines in his career.

"I have three rules that govern the operation of this office — and this is my dad talking to me — you treat everybody the same under the same facts situation and you can expect to be treated the same; you be responsible for your behavior; and if you violate the law or the rules, be prepared to suffer the consequences. That's how we function."

Seeking Justice

Larson and his staff of 26 employees, including 16 prosecuting attorneys, have prosecuted their share of sensational felony cases over the years, some resulting in convicted felons receiving the death penalty. The law sets out the circumstances under which the Common-



Photo by Jeff Rogers