

Legislative limelights

Legislative comradery has disappeared

Undated

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

After 40 years on the political scene, perhaps the most marked impression this year is the missing comradery among legislators, say, compared with 15 and even 10 years ago.

The business in the Statehouse is done much as usual, maybe even more efficiently, but the socializing after hours is virtually gone. It has left a void that many old-timers miss and hope might return.

The present-day lawmaker takes his job more seriously, is less inclined to fraternize with his fellow man, and much of the humor prevalent in session debates has disappeared, although there is some horseplay now and then.

After the campaign financial reporting law, known more commonly as the Sunshine Law, was placed in effect some four or five years ago, there was a drastic reduction in the dinners, luncheons, receptions and socials sponsored by the lobbyist for the legislators. This fear has largely dissipated now and there are just as many functions as ever.

The legislators are usually guests for two or three

such functions a week for at least the first half of the session when their ears can be bent by the lobbyists on certain bills. As the session progresses and time is short for enacting legislation, these get-togethers taper off until there are few if any the last two or three weeks.

For the legislators, it brings them benefits because it means free meals and refreshments. They feel their expense of \$44 daily in many cases is hardly enough.

The vast majority voted against raising the legislative expenses from \$44 to \$60 daily for those living outside of Boise and needing to maintain a second home while in Boise during the 70- to 80-day session. Those living in Boise also rejected the increase from \$25 to \$35 daily.

The vast majority privately say the expense hikes were needed but feared the wrath of the voters during these critical financial times.

This is deplorable because no taxpayer expects lawmakers to pay from their own pocket the privilege of serving in the Legislature.

In the old days after the daily sessions, most of

the legislators used to congregate at the old Boise Hotel Lamplighter room for socializing. It was often said with good reason that more legislation was concocted during these socials than was ever done at the Statehouse.

The question most frequently asked is where do the legislators now go after their day's work?

"They go home" is the frequent reply, although many do have small dinners or socials at the various restaurants and bars around town, but not like the Boise Hotel.

The Boise Hotel, of course, went out of business a decade ago and has been converted largely to professional offices. In fact a decade or more ago, a vast majority of the out-of-town lawmakers roomed at the nearby Boise Hotel. Now they usually are scattered in the various motels or rental units around the city.

It's with certain sorrow we see politics turning more serious, and in so many cases, downright vicious. Party lines, and especially philosophies, sharply divide many of the lawmakers. So much of the good-natured bantering has gone among the Republicans and Democrats. Like so many things, it appears the good old days are gone forever.

Williams won't seek another Senate term

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register staff writer

Sen. J. Marsden Williams, R-Idaho Falls, announced late Friday afternoon he would not seek a 10th term.

Michael D. Crapo, Idaho Falls attorney, said Saturday he would try to replace Williams.

The Senate, racing to a Saturday adjournment, took time out to honor Williams late Friday afternoon.

Undated
"It's been 18 years now and two heart attacks later," the Idaho Falls Republican told the Senate on Friday. "I feel like maybe I'm pushing my luck . . . We've decided we will not run again for the Senate."

Williams and his wife Phyllis, who, like other legislative wives, has filled in for her husband in the Legislature, got several standing ovations.

Williams is Senate majority caucus chairman.

Williams, 67, told The Post-Register he had been planning on running again until this week, deciding after consultation with his family that he would relinquish the position.

He has been Senate majority caucus chairman two terms, and before that chairman of the Resources and Environment Committee 16 years. He also was a member of the Joint Finance-Appropriation Committee for 12 years and sat on the Senate State Affairs Committee.

"It has been a choice experience and I have made some choice friends," he said.

His father, Elmer Williams, had previously served in the Senate six terms, four of them as the Senate

president pro tem.

Williams said he plans to spend much of his time operating a farm at Milo, northeast of Idaho Falls.

Crapo, 32, said he had talked with Williams Friday afternoon as the Legislative District 29 chairman, and decided he will run for the position.

He is an Idaho Falls native, a graduate of Idaho Falls High School and Brigham Young University and a graduate cum laude with a juris doctor law degree at Harvard University.

He served as law clerk with a U.S. appeals judge in California a year, and has practiced as an attorney with the Idaho Falls law firm of Holden, Kidwell, Hahn and Crapo since 1979.

He has been active in Republican Party politics, and besides being legislative chairman, is county vice chairman.

Crapo said the main three legislative points he stresses are education, water rights and maintaining budget controls.

"I think we need strong leadership in the Senate," he said.

He said he will file in District 32 under the latest reapportionment plan which Williams said appears due for approval. District 32 provides for election of two state senators and four state representatives in Bonneville and Teton counties, plus a senator and two state representatives for a flatorial district made up of Bonneville, Teton, Madison and Fremont counties.