

Jackson left ^{Sax}mark ^{Sept 18, 1983} of achievement

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The unexpected death of Washington state's Sen. Henry M. Jackson was not only a political blow to the his state and the entire Pacific Northwest, it was also a setback for Idaho.

Jackson was a giant in the U.S. and his close work with former Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, brought many reactor projects to the sprawling Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

Jackson thought so highly of Church that he took time out in October 1980, to come to Idaho Falls to speak in his behalf.

Jackson stressed then that Church was a powerful voice in the nation to further the interest of not only Idaho and those of the nation.

He also took a slap at Church's opponent, Steve Symms, then a congressman, saying bluntly that Symms had commanded little respect and even less influence in the halls of Congress.

It was ironic that after Church's narrow defeat in 1980, Idaho's other senator, James A. McClure, replaced Jackson as chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Jackson got along reasonably well with McClure, but, of course, their relationship couldn't compare with the warm one between Jackson and Church. That's because Church and Jackson both belonged to the Democratic Party and their moderate political views were similar. This contrasts with the rigidly conservative McClure, although Jackson and McClure did cooperate in matters of interest to the Pacific Northwest.

In that same week in 1980, Sen. Howard Baker, R-Tenn., who was then Senate minority leader and now is the majority leader, came as a counter-balance. He underscored the point that Symms does have strong conservative pattern that would better represent Idaho's interests and would lend support to Reagan if he were elected president. He said Symms's voting record came closer to his own views than that of Church, a point that was raised by political critics.

Whether the impact of these two top U.S. senators had any far-reaching results is hard to analyze. From observation of many years, it is this writer's opinion that bringing in outside distinguished speakers generally has little influence on Idaho voters, unless there are some unusual circumstances. They serve mostly as political window dressing.

The appearance of Ronald Reagan, who is personally popular in Idaho, just a week later in Idaho Falls likely had the most impact. This is the case of unusual circumstances because Reagan had political ties with Idaho as a former representative of General Electric Co., which at that time had a contract to build a nuclear airplane at INEL.

He spoke to a rousing crowd some 5,000 at Bonneville High School's spacious gymnasium. There is little question his popularity helped switch the key Bonneville County and eastern Idaho vote and gave the election to Symms by 4,000 votes. In the past, Church had captured Bonneville and most of east Idaho.

Jackson was regaled by Church and his supporters in Idaho Falls by Idaho Falls nuclear scientists and engineers in the new Willow Creek building. Most of the INEL executives felt Church's presence in the Senate was imperative if the INEL were to maintain its operations.

Jackson's absence will be felt in the campaign to ensure functioning of Washington Public Power Supply System nuclear plant No. 3. It is vital to the city of Idaho Falls. Jackson also was a power in the environmental field as he was critical to passage of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Alaska Lands Act.

He was expected to be pitted against McClure in a battle over a bill to allow sport hunting in Alaska Wilderness areas.

Jackson commanded the respect of all his colleagues, even though they may have disagreed with him politically. He often boasted of working 18 hours a day, or as he put it, a "mile a minute," which likely helped lead to his sudden death Sept. 1 from a broken blood vessel near his heart.

Jackson, who served 30 years in the Senate

and 12 years in the House, was highly successful in bringing defense, nuclear testing programs, aerospace and hydroelectric projects funds to his state. In some respects he also helped other states of the Pacific Northwest, including Idaho.

He was a leading champion of civil rights, supporter of organized labor and advocate of strong national defense, helping to form national policies along these lines.

McClure, who attended the Jackson funeral, said he and Jackson worked closely together on northwest issues, sometimes to the effect the Northwest was pitted against some other sections of the country. The present WPPSS issue is one that graphically represents this.

McClure issued a statement in the Senate Wednesday "that often we (Jackson and McClure) disagreed but we were never disagreeable."

Appointing former Washington governor Dan Evans to replace Jackson in the interim is an excellent choice. Evans, of course, is no Jackson but he is a moderate-to-liberal Republican who commands high respect from those who know him.

The departure of Evans as chairman of the Northwest Power Planning Council, automatically elevates an Idaho council member, Robert Saxvik, to acting chairman of that powerful organization. This undoubtedly will help Idaho.

Saxvik lauds Evans as one who has the interest of the Pacific Northwest, including Idaho, close to his heart. Saxvik praises him for his many contacts and his outstanding ability to analyze the situation from all parties.

Evans has been in Idaho Falls several times, including last summer when the NPPC held its Idaho meeting in Idaho Falls. He also has attended gubernatorial and NPPC sessions in Boise and Sun Valley. His congenial personality made him highly popular and won him friends wherever he appeared.

"Scoop" Jackson, as he was affectionally known, left a legacy of achievement that will be hard to match. His influence which radiated throughout the nation and touched even Idaho will be sorely missed in the world's most powerful body - the U.S. Senate.