

Legislative limelights

1983

Legislators star in 1983 session

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In every Legislature there are always a few who stand out because of their ability and leadership.

They are the ones who sometimes are not in leadership positions but nevertheless exert tremendous influence in the less publicized committee meetings, caucus sessions or just informal sessions. Some have less flamboyant styles than others but it doesn't mean they are less effective.

It can be said the 1983 session was no exception but because of its record length, frightful financial problems and deep philosophical schism in both chambers and parties, it was very difficult.

The east Idaho legislators, for example, were probably the most conservative of any section in the state. The group was therefore inclined to be downgraded by veteran observers. Yet, it was their philosophy which dominated much of the legislation enacted, like it or not.

According to an observer of nearly 40 years on the political scene, perhaps the outstanding accomplishment was turned in by the leadership in the Senate of both parties, the House minority leadership, and with some reservations the House majority leadership.

Wednesday's column mentioned the eastern Idaho legislators in leadership and committee chairmen who exerted tremendous influence. Special praise was given to Senate Majority Leader Mark G. Ricks, R-Rexburg; House Minority Leader Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg; House Majority Caucus Chairman Linden B. Bateman; and Rep. John O. Sessions, R-Driggs, chairman of the Transportation Committee.

There were others who performed well in committee meetings and behind the scenes where this is less publicity, including all the eastern Idahoans. Among these were Sens. Israel Merrill, D-Blackfoot; Vearl Crystal, R-Rigby; Dane Watkins, R-Idaho Falls; and J. Marsden Williams, R-Idaho Falls. In the House were Reps. Kurt L. Johnson, R-Idaho Falls; J. F. Chadband, R-Idaho Falls; Gary L. Paxman, R-Idaho Falls; and Rich Orme, R-St. Anthony.

Crystal, one of the staunch con-

servatives, must be admired for having the courage to switch his vote for the sales tax hike to enable the session to wind up. It must have been agonizing for him to do so.

The finesse between Senate President Pro Tem Jim Risch and Senate Minority Leader Kermit Kiebert was perhaps one of the outstanding accomplishments in the session.

The outspoken and inexperienced House Speaker Tom W. Stivers had a much more difficult time but other members of the team, Bateman, Majority Leader Jack Kennevick and Assistant Leader Bob Geddes, R-Preston, functioned well. The House minority leadership under Hammond was extremely effective.

The minority Democrats in both the Senate and House teamed up with the moderate Republicans to get enacted the more progressive legislation. Of course, they were backed by Democrat Gov. John V. Evans whose vetoes were always upheld and gave him and the Democrats a powerful voice in a dominant Republican setting.

Besides most in the leadership and east Idaho, there were other highly respected legislators from other sections in the state.

Those in the Senate included Sens. John M. Barker, R-Buhl; Gail Bray, D-Boise; Norma Dobler, D-Moscow; Roger Fairchild, R-Fruitland; Laird Noh, R-Kimberly; John T. Peavey, D-Carey; William Ringert, R-Boise; and Walter N. Yarbrough, R-Grand View.

In the forefront in the House were Reps. Steve Antone, R-Rupert; Tom Boyd, R-Genesee; J. Vard Chatburn, R-Albion; Larry EchoHawk, D-Pocatello; Kathleen W. Gurnsey, R-Boise; Chris Hooper, R-Boise; Dan Kelly, R-Mountain Home; Lawrence Knigge, R-Filer; Walter E. Little, R-New Plymouth; Patricia McDermott, D-Pocatello; Dwight Horsch, D-Aberdeen; and Mack Neibaur, R-Paul.

But this can be said. Virtually all legislators are dedicated men and women. In their own way they support and vote for legislation they believe sincerely to be in the best interest of the state and representative of the constituents of their district.