
Reminiscences and Celebrations

Al Quie: My Boss

Esther H. Allen

Little did I know when newly elected Governor Al Quie asked me to become his personal secretary what an incredible journey we would take together. I was completely surprised by the opportunity so I told him I would need to think about the offer. “Good,” he said, “I’ll call you in the morning.” He did. I did. Two days later I was accompanying the governor to an elementary school in St. Paul to visit classes. Thus it began...

The biggest part of my job was to keep Governor Quie on a schedule, which was prepared by his scheduler and given to me at four p.m. the prior day. It was then my responsibility to “find time” for legislators, commissioners, visiting dignitaries, etc. who wanted to see the governor, but were not on the schedule. Alas, the schedule did not always go as planned. Some days it hardly went as planned at all.

As guests would arrive, I would usher them into the governor’s office, then step out to my desk, which was just outside his office. When the allotted time was up I would step back into the office with my clipboard. If the

governor was not ready to have his guest leave, he wouldn’t look at me and I would step out without saying anything. If he was ready to move on, he would look at me and I would tell him the time was up. I usually tried to do this with great decorum.

However, one day one of the commissioners was taking more time than allotted and I had stepped into the governor’s office three times and neither of them paid any attention to me. The next time I went in I had a rose in my mouth—they paid attention. The governor has a great sense of humor.

In Governor Quie’s heart he felt anyone in the state should be able to meet with the governor if they wished. It didn’t take long for the receptionist and the rest of the staff to realize that was not going to give the governor time to take care of important things he needed to accomplish. Many times when a “drop-in” would not accept the fact he/she couldn’t see Governor Quie the receptionist would call and ask me to come out to visit with the person and take a greeting or question or whatever back to him. I did this often.

One day I was in the governor’s office taking dictation when the receptionist came in and asked if I would

come out to talk with someone. Knowing she had someone who was not taking “no” for an answer, I assured her I would be right out. The governor jumped into the conversation, saying, “Send her in. You don’t need to protect me like that.”

In she came in a long, flowing white gown, shawl over her head, and sandals on her feet. I knew he had gotten a prize. She pulled her chair up close to the governor and confidentially shared a message God had given her to give him. He listened carefully. She continued to talk. He listened, but maybe not quite so carefully. She continued to talk. He got up and thanked her for coming. She continued to talk—and to sit. Ordinarily, it would be my job then to go into the office to end the appointment. What was it the governor had said? Oh yes. “You don’t need to protect me.” OK, governor, whatever you say. Eventually, I got myself under control and went in and gently guided her to the door. When I came back to my office, the governor, between whoops of laughter, acknowledged he “had a new respect” for me.

This particular day had been especially busy—the schedule was changed several times and it was completely full. An important St. Paul official called to see if he could bring a Norwegian visitor to meet Governor Quie. In my stress I said, “Amos, I am so sorry, but the governor’s schedule has been so erotic today, I just can’t work in another appointment.” Immediately I knew I had used the wrong “e” word. Erratic—yes. Erotic—no. I did not correct

myself, hoping the gentleman would think he had heard wrong. The governor stepped out of his office into mine when he heard the staff laughing uproariously after the phone call. Did he think it was funny? Yes, thank goodness.

God greatly blessed me when He gave me a chance to work for this wonderful man and his wife. I can’t think of strong enough words to describe how much I admire, respect, and love the both of them. I wish for both of them much joy, peace, and laughter.

Esther H. Allen was personal secretary to Governor Al Quie from 1979 to 1982.

Al Quie: Man of Integrity

Robert C. Andringa

“I will work for you for one year, Congressman.” That’s how I responded to Al Quie’s surprise invitation in 1969 to help his U. S. House Committee on Education and Labor review the Higher Education Act. Eleven years later I was still working with Al Quie. Why? Al Quie taught me many life-long lessons that I’ve tried to practice and pass on to my children. Here are some:

- **Do your homework.** I soon learned that this Republican got his way so many times by studying the facts, talking to people of various views, testing his ideas before the vote, and coming to the committee room and House floor prepared.
- **Talk to the opposition.** People have a harder time deliberately portraying someone falsely if they have sat down together for honest dialogue.

Al Quie invited his opposition to meet with him. He listened to organized labor leaders even when he and they seldom agreed on anything. He showed respect for them as persons even when he loathed their ideas. His wisdom: Don't ever demonize your opponents.

- **Make family a priority.** I recall many wonderful family picnics, dinners (and, yes, horse shows) with Al, Gretchen, and their kids while we were all in D.C. and even when he was governor. He often said, "I need to get home," when one of the kids had an important event. So many politicians fail the course on family. Not Al.
- **Always tell the truth.** Sometimes, when I was staffing his legislative ideas or managing his gubernatorial campaign, he could be "too truthful." But I learned that Al never had to ask staff what he told some other group because he always told the truth as he knew it. Good for consistency, accuracy, integrity.
- **Love your enemies.** I will never forget returning to Congressman Quie's office at 4:30 a.m. after a brutal conference committee in the capitol. He had just surprised a Democrat leader by swinging enough Dem votes to win a huge program (now called Pell Grants to students). We won! I was elated after two years of hard work. Even though bone tired, Al said "Let's take a minute and pray for (the defeated Democrat). She is probably hurting right now." Love in action.

- **Be stubborn now and then.** Al's Norwegian stubbornness was well known in D.C. and in the governor's office. It challenged me more than once! But I learned that a leader cannot move with every wind that blows his way. Once you think you have a handle on something, stick to your guns. You're probably right. And most of the time Al was right.
- **Honor God in all you do.** Al does not wear his faith on his sleeve. Yet, he honors God in all his ways. And he does not offend those of different faith or no faith. Just the way Jesus moved through his days. That's the source of his great integrity. That's why I want to be more like my friend, Al Quie, when I get to be 80.

Robert C. Andringa is a former Quie congressional staffer, gubernatorial campaign manager, and senior governor's aide. He is president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities in Washington.

Character and Philosophy Admirably Integrated

John Brandl

Back when Al was governor and I a junior member of the state Legislature, a constituent told me of having been approached by a government employee who described to her a temporary experimental program. At the time the woman's child, a boy with profound mental retardation, was living in a state hospital. Under the new program the state offered the woman and her husband \$150 a month if they chose to have their child move back home. The

choice was indeed theirs; if they determined that the burden of having him with them was beyond bearing, the child could continue to live in the hospital at state expense (that ran to thousands of dollars monthly). They decided to bring him home, and used the funds to fence in their back yard, buy a helmet to protect the child's fragile head, and occasionally to hire someone to stay with him so they could go off for some respite.

Upon hearing of this I checked with the governor to determine the prospects of making the program permanent. He and his administration had already thought of that and had had legislation drafted. I happily accepted the opportunity to carry the bill in the House. It eventually was incorporated into omnibus health, welfare, and corrections legislation, passed easily, and became the Family Subsidy Program. Al probably doesn't even remember these events and I get to be called the author of the bill and the program.

There you have Al Quie: empathetic, fiscally conservative, generous, self-effacing, respectful of the wishes of individual citizens, deeply concerned to protect the family as the central institution of the society, accomplishing government's responsibilities through the family (and through religious organizations, but that's another story). And it's all of a piece. Minnesota has never seen another politician whose character and political philosophy are so admirably integrated.

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Minnesota Has Good Judges Because of Governor Quie

Carl "Buzz" Cummins

Since the nineteenth century, Minnesota's judiciary has generally enjoyed a reputation for competence and cleanliness. Scandals have been rare and our judges have been considered of good quality. As in most professions, however, some judges have been of greater quality than others.

Under the Minnesota Constitution, judges are to be elected. In reality, most sitting judges leave office, either by retirement or death, during their six-year terms and their successors are appointed by the governor. More than 95 percent of the state's judges initially reach the bench by gubernatorial appointment. Before Al Quie took office in 1979, governors tended to look to lawyers they knew—and particularly to lawyers who shared their political persuasion—to fill these positions. While this informal, usually partisan process worked reasonably well in most cases, a certain number of appointees proved to be better political supporters than judges. A few were simply incompetent.

By 1979, more than half the states had eschewed such purely political appointment processes and had adopted some form of judicial merit selection. Minnesota somewhat uncharacteristically lagged behind this national good government trend, and governor-elect Quie concluded that it was time to change that.

After consulting with such legal advisers as Paul Magnuson and David

Doty (both of whom became federal judges), Quie decided to create an open judicial selection process for the Minnesota trial courts by establishing ten judicial nominating committees, one in each of the state's judicial districts. With the support and cooperation of Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Sheran, Governor Quie issued an executive order creating Minnesota's first judicial merit selection system. He asked the chief judges in each district to appoint two judges to their district's committee, and asked the presidents of the district bar associations to appoint two attorneys. The governor then appointed four members of each committee, including non-lawyers, and named the chairs. He believed that a combination of judges and lawyers who knew who the best potential judges were and local citizens who would be served by those judges would produce the best nominees for his consideration for appointment.

Quie's first opportunity to test his new system arose immediately after he took office when a vacancy occurred in Carver County. The general public and the organized bar took a cautious wait-and-see attitude toward this new approach, and many were skeptical that anything would really change the political nature of appointing judges. Three names were submitted to Quie; he personally interviewed all of them; and he appointed a bright young attorney, Thomas Howe, to the Carver County bench. The fact that Howe had recently served as the Carver County DFL chairman irritated some

Republican partisans but convinced the state that the new governor was, indeed, committed to appointing judges on the basis of merit.

During his four years in office, Governor Quie appointed forty-four trial court judges. He had personally known fewer than five of them before he interviewed and appointed them. The majority had not been active in either major political party. His process had opened up the possibility of judicial service to many outstanding, accomplished attorneys who had no political ties and would not likely have been considered under the old system. Thirty to fifty attorneys would customarily apply for vacancies in the Twin Cities area, further attesting to the public perception that the governor was interested in objective legal merit, not just Republican merit.

In the second half of his term, Quie extended the merit selection process to Supreme Court appointments. Of his four appointees to the high court, Quie only knew one of them personally. In 1982, he submitted a bill to the legislature to put his nominations process in statute. While it did not pass that year, it was the foundation of the law that was later enacted creating the Minnesota Commission on Judicial Selection that is in place today.

Near the end of his term, Quie, as a non-lawyer governor, was honored by the American Judicature Society and the Minnesota State Bar Association for his contributions to improving the quality of the American and Minnesota systems of justice.

Carl "Buzz" Cummins is president and CEO of the Workers' Compensation Reinsurance Association.

Not Your Sound-Bite Governor

Cathryn Kennedy

In the past twenty-five years the role of media and the governor's office has changed a lot—and not much has changed.

Roll back the clock to 1978 when Al Quie was elected governor and you quickly see what's vastly different. We used typewriters. There was no Internet, no World Wide Web, no URLs, and no e-mails. There was no CNN or "Headline News."

The Twin Cities had four daily newspapers—the *Minneapolis Star*, the *Minneapolis Tribune*, the *St. Paul Dispatch*, and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. The disciplines of sound bites, key messages, media training, and reputation management were in their infancy.

In the following years, we saw newspaper consolidations, technology advancements, and an almost insatiable appetite for consuming information on all subjects. But one thing remained constant throughout the decades: the tone set by the chief of state in dealing with the media permeates every aspect of each administration.

For Governor Al Quie that tone was dominated by openness and honesty. Here are some of the ways he demonstrated those qualities:

- **Access.** While Governor Quie's predecessor, Rudy Perpich, created headlines by inviting reporters to

look through his desk drawers, reporters covering Al Quie noted that he was always available to them through news conferences, individual interviews in his office, or impromptu comments between meetings.

- **Relaxed protocol.** There weren't a lot of rules for covering the Quie administration. The governor trusted his staff to do their jobs and if that included talking to reporters, that was fine with him. Reporters recall sitting down with legislative staffers such as Bob Renner and Buzz Cummins asking hard questions and receiving direct answers.
- **Straight talk.** Governor Quie may not have been the answer to a reporter's prayers for a pithy, punchy sound bite, but no one questioned whether he was telling the truth. One reporter commented that at least once, the governor's directness and honesty resulted in him saying someone in his administration had made a "stupid mistake" in miscalculating the budget shortfall.

It was a different time. We were besieged by budget shortfalls and tough economic times. I don't recall spending much time discussing key messages or "staying on message," rather we worked hard at getting our facts straight.

From my vantage point as press secretary, I'd add the attributes of **respect** and **accountability** to describe the Quie administration's relationship with the media.

To someone like Al Quie, who had been a member of Congress for twenty years before becoming governor, the media were the fourth estate. He knew and respected the role of the media in being the eyes and ears of the public. And, I believe, he truly enjoyed reporters as human beings with families and lives that extended beyond their days in the subbasement of the State Capitol. This personal respect showed in his daily interactions with reporters.

Al Quie also believes the role of the media is to hold public officials accountable. He is a true public servant. In choosing a public life, he has accepted that the media would be a natural part of that career.

In the book *God Is My CEO* by Larry Julian, Quie tells the story about making his decision not to run for a second term as governor in 1982. Betty Wilson, *Minneapolis Tribune* capitol reporter, was a key individual in that account. She had asked for an interview to talk to the governor about his plans for re-election. As the governor wrestled with his decision, he kept putting off the interview. He knew he couldn't face her without knowing the real answer to her question. That week he was saved by a blizzard that cancelled the interview and gave him time to come to his decision not to run. When the storm cleared he went back to the capitol and faced the media with a clear conscience and an honest answer.

Finally, *grace*. This word was used by WCCO-TV capitol reporter Pat Kessler to describe Al Quie. It was grace that Kessler witnessed when Gov.

Al Quie took himself out of the race for re-election. Kessler saw that decision as one that was made for the good of the state, rather than for the governor's career.

It is the grace, openness, honesty, respect, and accountability that were the hallmarks of the Quie administration's relationship with the media—attributes that will serve any governor well in administrations to come.

Cathryn Kennedy formed Cathryn Kennedy Consulting, Ltd. in January 2002 after more than twenty years in public relations, politics and journalism.

The Quie Legacy: Stronger Public Schools

Joe Nathan

Without Governor Al Quie's leadership, Minnesota's pioneering public school choice laws might never have been adopted. At critical moments in the mid-1980s, Quie ignored partisanship and joined with Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich, a Democrat, in promoting these ideas. Here's what happened.

- Early in January 1985, Governor Perpich proposed what came to be known as Post Secondary Options: allowing high school juniors and seniors to attend colleges and universities, with state funds following them, paying tuition, book, and lab fees.
- Open Enrollment: allowing students K-12 to move across district lines to attend public schools outside their district of residence, as long as the receiving

district school had room and the movement did not harm integration efforts

This was an enormously controversial proposal. No other state had given students and families these opportunities. Most of the major groups vigorously attacked the proposals. A newspaper poll done about a month after Governor Perpich first proposed these ideas found that 33 percent of Minnesotans favored these ideas, while 60 percent opposed them. Perpich found that although some members of his party supported his proposals, it was not going to be possible to move these ideas through the Minnesota Senate, which was controlled by the Democrats.

Governor Quie and House majority leader Connie Levi, both Republicans, stepped into this difficult situation. Republicans controlled the Minnesota House, so they could have a huge impact on legislation.

Both notified Governor Perpich that they supported his efforts. Levi made adoption of the Post-Secondary Options portion one of her highest 1985 legislative priorities.

Quie joined a group that Governor Perpich created to discuss his legislative proposals. Quie made many public statements explaining that he strongly supported Perpich's school choice recommendations. For more than year, Quie attended periodic meetings with this group, continuing to lend his insight—along with patient, diplomatic prodding—to the school choice proposals.

Quie used his considerable prestige to meet groups around the state, and to write newspaper columns explaining why public school choice would strengthen public education, and would be very helpful to many students.

Quie's involvement helped encourage a number of undecided Republican and Democratic legislators to support Post-Secondary Options and Open Enrollment. And Quie's strong record of supporting improvements in public education while in Congress helped convince some education groups that they should back away from their initial vigorous opposition to the school choice proposals. Quie and Levi easily could have stood aside as Perpich's proposals were attacked. With a majority of Minnesotans questioning Perpich's proposals, there was no political advantage to joining with him.

However, Quie and Levi decided the ideas were good, well worth supporting. Post Secondary Options was adopted in 1985, second chance choice laws in 1987, open enrollment in 1988, and the charter idea in 1991.

History has been kind to the vision and courage of these ideas. A poll conducted in early 2003 found that Minnesotans now strongly support these laws. By margins of between 2 and 3 to 1, Minnesotans endorsed the various choice laws, the laws that through leadership and bi-partisanship, Governor Al Quie helped make possible.

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A Remarkable Gift of Vision

Mitchell B. Pearlstein

Of all the news clips I read in preparing for Center of the American Experiment's salute to Al Quie on his eightieth birthday, my favorite headline is from a 1965 *Minneapolis Tribune* story that declared, "Quie Helps Lead GOP 'Rebellion.'" The text itself is a historical treat.

"The rebellion of younger House Republicans continued on Wednesday," correspondent Nick Kotz wrote, "and at the center of it as a rising leader was Rep. Albert Quie of Minnesota."

The young Republican "inner group" of about seven, Kotz went on, "achieved its initial success Monday when Rep. Gerald Ford of Michigan defeated Rep. Charles Halleck of Indiana as House minority leader."

Quie was head of a Republican committee at the time that sought "changes in the distribution of power" in the House of Representatives. The group's first objective, according to Kotz, was to "break up the concentration of power now in the hands of a few older men and distribute it among younger, more dynamic men." Of their broader goal, Quie said:

"Republicans are seeking to improve the national image of the GOP from one of reluctant acquiescence or bitter opposition to [Johnson] administration plans to one of constructive leadership."

Now I know why I like Newt Gingrich so much: Quie was Newt before Newt was himself. To be sure, Quie has

always been a kinder and gentler prairie version. But he was rambunctious in a Republican sort of way in his younger years, and he may well have done more to set the stage for the future speaker's rise, a generation later, than history books have heretofore reported.

OK, so the connection may be stretched a bit. But as witness this episode from nearly forty years ago, Quie, like all politicians who serve seriously, had no interest in second-string power. He had a copiously considered and deeply felt take on the world and the role of government, and about the last thing he was interested in doing was wasting time in Washington as part of a perpetually peripheral minority. Politics was his calling, in the most compelling and demanding sense of that term. And as such, he was determined to have his party make a discernible difference, not just an interminable pain of itself.

No more than a few old timers, I assume, remember how Al Quie once put down old congressional bulls (humanely, I'm sure, but down they went). On the other hand, many people fondly recall Al Quie as a superior congressman who represented south-eastern Minnesota for twenty-one years, making his largest contributions as ranking member of the House Labor and Education Committee. And after that, as a self-sacrificing governor who navigated the state through an atrociously tough economic stretch in the late 1970s and early '80s; a rare eagle of a politician who never once bemoaned his election's bad timing. In other

words, I trust that when most Minnesotans think about him now, first words to come to mind are the likes of “honest,” “decent,” and “brave,” along with a corral of variations on the abundant fact that he’s simply a good man.

But in the same way that most people nowadays don’t give Quie sufficient due for his rebellious streak, I would argue that they also fail to give him nearly enough credit for a remarkable gift of vision.

I acknowledge that “visionary” is probably not one of the first words to jump to many minds when summing up Al Quie. I admit it hadn’t been among my own top-ranked tributes, but that was before I started meeting two years ago with colleagues from the governor’s team in preparation for this year’s celebration. Our job was to ferret out main themes of his long life of political and civic service, and it didn’t take long to recognize that beyond a fervent and encompassing confidence in everyday people, his largest contributions could be clustered under three headings that swirl together like a marble cake: education, families, and faith.

Pick a current issue or quest. School choice? Smaller schools? The fatherhood movement? The emerging marriage movement? President Bush’s campaign to take greater advantage of our religious institutions and traditions in order to help people in need? In one way or another, Al Quie has been there, done that, and believed in all of them deeply—for upwards of a half-century or more. (Before Congress, he was a farmer and served in the Minnesota Senate.) And he’s plugging still, as wit-

ness his ongoing work with Prison Fellowship, a Christian organization that has done more to lift offenders than any organization I know.

I first met Al Quie sometime after arriving in Minnesota in 1974, and went to work for him slightly more than half-way through his four-year term of governor, in 1981. It’s fair to say that I had never met anyone quite like him while growing up in Queens or later in college, even though I did my graduate work down the block at the University of Minnesota.

As for Queens, there may have been some Norwegian Lutherans there, but they probably lived at the other end of the borough. And as for school, doctoral programs generally aren’t thick with trail-riding Republicans. But beyond the fact that we were politically aligned, I found myself resonating to him precisely because he was from outside my immediate sphere, and as such, he introduced me to a world I had known superficially. Perhaps most of all, he helped me more intimately grasp our religious—specifically Christian—grounding as a state and nation.

In return, I tried to help him better understand some of the Catskillian contributions made to America by my forebears. There was, for example, the time when he told me get my job title changed, because he didn’t like the one I had been given. I kept on suggesting new tags, but either he or someone else would reject them. Finally one day, exasperated by the exercise, I scratched out the offending title on my business card and typed in “Jew” instead, and showed it to the governor. That’s how I

would be known, as “Mitchell B. Pearlstein/Jew.”

“What do you think about this one?” I asked, trying not to laugh right away.

He stared at it for a moment, taking me loads too literally, before blurting, “You can’t say *THAT*,” and then burst into big-time laughs himself.

Yes, I could say what I did, because Al Quie is a dear friend and a gem of a man who lives his faith as tightly as anyone I know—especially the part about forgiving, bad jokes thankfully included.

Mitchell B. Pearlstein, president of Center of the American Experiment in Minneapolis, wrote this piece for the August/September issue of Minnesota Law & Politics, which kindly allowed republication here.

My Friend Al Quie

Chuck Slocum

The first time I recall meeting Al Quie was in 1970. He was addressing a group of Young Republicans at a restaurant in Faribault. He spoke carefully, avoiding political invective. The folks just loved him. I noted that he went out of his way to meet the cooks and wait staff, offering them a “Quie for Congress” button, which each person dutifully pinned on.

Several key political and public affairs assignments and the fallout from the Watergate scandal led to my election as state Republican chair in 1975 at the age of twenty-eight. Though the elephant was humbled, Al had breezed through his Congressional re-elections in 1974 and 1976. The future of the

Republican Party would be determined in large measure, I reasoned, by the success Minnesota’s renamed Independent-Republicans would have in electing a governor. Statewide surveys revealed that Al Quie, who had gone to Congress at age thirty-four in 1958, could make a race of it against the popular but non-elected incumbent, Rudy Perpich.

By this time, people not only liked Al but also trusted him deeply. Lawmakers in Congress had come to respect the fair-minded and independent way he provided policy leadership, influencing dozens of others on critical issues. Minnesotans appreciated the way he conducted himself.

Within days of the 1976 election of Walter Mondale as vice president and the overwhelming return of Hubert Humphrey to the U.S. Senate, I vowed to do what I could to get Al Quie to run for governor. Al had been approached before, most seriously in 1966, but had decided against leaving Congress. I set about calling on people in the state whom I knew he respected, asking them to talk with Al; sometimes I’d share a phone number where I knew my candidate to be and insist that they make the telephone call right then!

One memorable afternoon in 1977, I visited Al in his office at Fort Snelling. At the time, I was considering leaving organizational politics, because of pressing family considerations. Al Quie provided thoughtful counsel, including helpful spiritual advice on setting priorities.

“If you want to run for governor, I will seek a second term as state chair

and do what I can to see that you are successful,” I told him. While Al had not yet made a decision to run for governor, he was well on his way to deciding against spending more time in Congress. “After twenty years,” he told me, “you begin to wonder if you are there for the right reasons.”

Eventually, I stepped down as party chair and, sometime later and on his own timetable, Al decided he would, indeed, run for governor. I plugged into his “Minnesotans for Quie” campaign with many others and, together, we saw a resurgence in the party’s fortunes. Al headed a successful ticket that included the election of two U.S. Senate candidates who had never before sought office—Rudy Boschwitz and Dave Durenberger—and a dramatic comeback in the Minnesota House with thirty-eight additional seats won. It was the Minnesota Massacre of 1978.

When Al was serving as governor, I remained as close as I could to him. He was not a natural as chief executive; partisanship in state government just wasn’t his style. He named good people and conducted himself with decency and fairness, inflation-proofing income tax bracket creep, and creating a new system for merit selection of judges. I was impressed as Al, even as governor, gave 10 percent of his time to faith-based causes. Declining state finances, however, began to unravel his enormous good will.

I headed what was billed as a signature re-election event in early 1982 as former President Jerry Ford came to town. We broke all fund-raising

records. Several weeks later, however, Al Quie decided to concentrate on changing the partisan climate in the Capitol and turning Minnesota around; he declined to seek a second term.

In the years since, Al Quie has been my friend, adviser, and mentor. As my marriage ended in the late 1980s, he invited me to share with him regularly in a small group. One day in 1990, I was between jobs and not in a healthy state of mind. Al invited me to join with him as he trained a new young colt in a country pasture. Watching Al patiently whisper and slowly harness the young animal was a most calming experience on that sunny fall afternoon. Somehow, I knew that life was good.

Since Al left the governorship, I have joined him on a number of community activities: a Minnesota Business Partnership education reform group, a Christian youth training fund raiser, and in a statewide affordable housing push. We still meet, often in small men’s groups seeking insight into God and life. No one speaks with greater insight than Al.

On September 18, 2003, when Al turned eighty, hundreds of us gathered in Bloomington in celebration of a wonderful life well lived. I was honored to chair this well-deserved salute to my friend.

Chuck Slocum is president of The Williston Group, a management consulting firm. He lives in Minnetonka. ■