

Through thick and thin, Anderson perseveres

It was nearly 50 years ago that Rep. Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls) won the Air Medal as a U.S. Navy pilot during WWII.

The war's over, but the naval pilot spirit in Anderson isn't. The 18-year DFL veteran says he "feels 29" and is eagerly awaiting the next election and every other challenge that comes his way.

Anderson, the former House majority leader and chair of the powerful Taxes Committee, returned to the Capitol this year following an eight-year hiatus.

Some say Anderson, who is legendary for his hardball style of politicking, has mellowed since 1982, the year that marked the first of four straight electoral losses he suffered. But that's news to him.

"No, I don't think there's been a heck of a lot of change to me," says Anderson. "The old zest to be a legislator is still there. Some say I've become more mellow, but I don't see it."

Anderson dismissed his reputation as a take-no-prisoners negotiator as so much "press rhetoric" and has slipped into his role as chair of the Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee with little ado.

His biggest public splash has been the authorship of a controversial bill that would prevent businesses from hiring permanent replacement workers during a strike.

But other than that, Anderson has burrowed deep into the legislative task before him, and says he's content to do a good job for northern Minnesota and to get re-elected in 1992.

His committee will play a large role in several key decisions for the state in areas such as airport planning, light rail transit, and the many state mandates imposed on local units of government.

That's hardly the stuff of political intrigue, but the rumors still persist about Anderson, who has always generated a strong response both pro and con.

Anderson was the center of a front page political battle in 1980 when several DFLers broke with their party and joined Independent-Republicans in electing former Rep. Fred Norton over Anderson as House speaker. But Anderson says that divisive fight is long since over and neither he nor his adversaries give it much thought.



Irv Anderson

District 3A

Age: 67

Occupation: Legislator

District traits: 3A is geographically one of the largest districts in the state and, with the 1990 census figures, it's destined to become larger. The district voted for Paul Wellstone over Rudy Boschwitz in the 1990 U.S. Senate race by a 54.3 to 45.7-percent margin.

"There are a few of them here, but I find them to be very friendly — not antagonistic. I don't think they even think of that 1980 battle. I don't think of it; I don't see it there at all."

Anderson says it's great to be back but adds that the 1991 Legislature is far different from the one he left in 1982. "There are a great many more special interest groups here than when I was here previously," he says, adding that bills are now "more intensely scrutinized" and there is "more of a professional approach to being a legislator."

With 18 years of seniority, some believed Anderson would insist on chairing a major committee such as Taxes upon his return. But he says he's content where he is.

Anderson thinks the local government committee is a good one to chair. "There are a lot of exciting issues," he says. "It's a good chairmanship for my district and good for me."

One of his top priorities is to make sure legislators are named to sit on a variety of metropolitan area boards such as the Metropolitan Council and the Metropolitan Transit Commission to give them "that extra counsel," a "different perspective," he says.

Despite numerous electoral setbacks, including three losses to former Rep. Bob Neuenschwander and a failed attempt to become a member of the Koochiching County Board of Commissioners, Anderson says he never lost his will to serve people.

"I love the legislative process," he says. "I find it exciting, satisfying, and I have a strong will within me to serve people. Being in the state Legislature, you are able to do more of those things in a

positive manner than any other profession that I'm aware of, except, I suppose, medicine."

When many people his age are well into retirement, Anderson says he has no such plans and intends to argue as forcefully as ever for what he believes in.

"It's never occurred to me when you suffer defeat on a given issue, or in politics, that I have ever desired to say, 'Let's quit.'"



Visitors make tracks to the State Office Building April 12 following a mid-April snowstorm.