

IN MEMORIAM

He brought out the best in all of us; what greater gift is there?

Wayne Simoneau was a friend, but he was also a public servant who made Minnesota run smoothly.

By ARNE CARLSON

Wayne Simoneau was a simple man who left behind a large footprint. His passing May 21 caused many to grieve and also reflect, because Wayne had a considerable impact on many.

Born in the Depression, growing up during World War II, Wayne was of the values of the Greatest Generation: hardworking, truthful, loyal and also caring about the well-being of others.

As a husband, father and provider (as an auto mechanic), Wayne was a typical benefactor of the enormous growth of the middle class during the post World War II era. But his yearning to give back was the hallmark of his life.

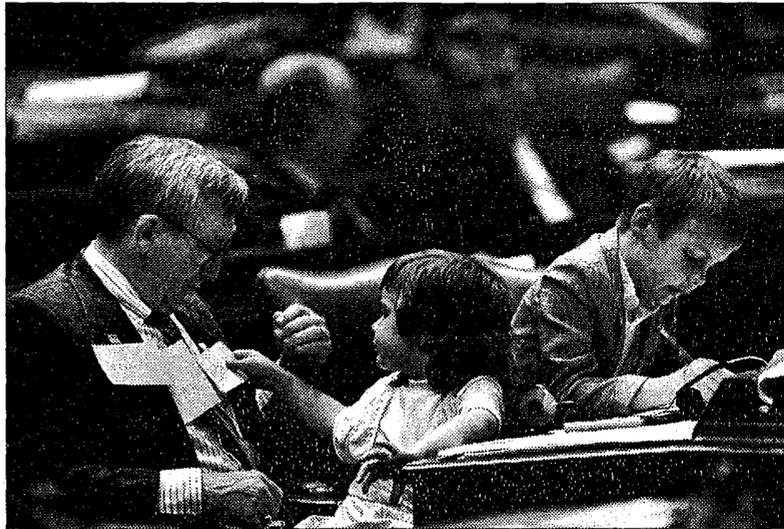
With gratitude, Wayne Simoneau entered public service and quickly became a major player in the Legislature and later in my administration as commissioner of employee relations

and concluding as head of finance. No one was more skilled at bringing together conflicting players to work toward a common goal.

As a labor Democrat, he brought many in his party along to support us on a major reform of workers' compensation. My memory is of dozens of players but two fierce fighters, Wayne Simoneau and Mahlon Schneider (a dear friend and talented lawyer for business). Together they were unbeatable. As a result of the changes, Minnesota led the nation in job growth and we were able to retain some businesses on the brink of departure.

This was just one of his unlimited contributions as a talented political leader. So talented that time and again I used him as a troubleshooter to help solve knotty problems and to do so quietly and effectively. People relying on buses can thank him for a quick end to the metro bus strike and all Minnesotans can be grateful for his leadership in bringing home the last leg of our journey to gain the AAA bond rating.

Thanks to the efforts of three masters of finance — John Gunyou, Laura



JEFF WHEELER • Star Tribune file photo 1991

Wayne Simoneau, then a state House member, with grandchildren Lindsey, 4, and Blake, 6, in 1991. He became a vital member of the Carlson administration.

King and Morrie Anderson — we were able to dig out of a deficit situation and restore growth. This got us back to a AAA rating from two rating agencies, but Moody's was still holding out.

When Wayne took over as commissioner of finance, he set out to com-

plete the Triple Crown. We went out as a team to make our case to Moody's at their Wall Street headquarters. The presentations and Q and A went well. However, we flew home still not knowing the outcome. Upon arrival at the governor's residence we found

a bottle of champagne from Bernie Ohman, my superb chief of staff, with the note that he had been called and we had won.

On a personal note, our friendship began in 1973 when Wayne entered the Legislature and continued to his death. He never allowed illness to impact his optimism and incredible sense of gratitude for being able to live such a satisfying life.

Perhaps my most fond memories are the regular reunions I enjoyed with Wayne and our dear friend Janet Entzel, who also served with Wayne in the Legislature and in our administration.

Janet and I have talked about an informal reunion with Wayne's wife, Jane, and some of Wayne's friends. We would like to lift a glass of champagne and toast his life of service. This simple and grateful servant of the people brought out the best in all of us and, as a result, he is now part of us. Can any person give a greater gift?

Thank you Wayne. I love you.

Arne Carlson was governor of Minnesota from 1991 to 1999.