

# “THE VOICE *of the* HOUSE”



*Chief Clerk Edward A. Burdick at his podium in the House chamber during the 2003 session.*

# EDWARD BURDICK *and the* EVOLUTION *of the* MINNESOTA HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

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**I**N FEBRUARY 1941, WHEN FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT WAS president of the United States and Harold E. Stassen was governor of Minnesota, 19-year-old Edward A. Burdick rode his first Greyhound bus from his home in Vernon Center to the state capitol in St. Paul to start a \$5.50-per-day, temporary job as page in the House of Representatives.<sup>1</sup> A half-century later, at the dedication of a bust in his honor at the capitol, Burdick—then the chief clerk of the House—said: “The first time I saw this magnificent building I fell in love with it, and with the honorable people working here, and I’m still in awe of this building and its occupants.”<sup>2</sup>

During his long tenure, Burdick witnessed a range of dramatic institutional changes. The House went from being a very part-time, rural-dominated body to a metro-dominated one with longer, more frequent sessions; from having almost no full-time staff to employing many full-time workers; from being collegial and nominally nonpartisan to being outspokenly partisan, if not visibly polarized. Over these years, Burdick developed a broad range of knowledge and experience spanning the different legislative eras, all of which proved extremely helpful to the legislators he served.

Architect Cass Gilbert’s stately white marble capitol building hosted its first session in the House chamber on January 3, 1905.<sup>3</sup> Despite its grandeur, by Burdick’s day some of the building’s features were outmoded. Gilbert designed the House chamber to resemble an opera

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house. The presiding officer had the most elevated and commanding spot on the floor, just behind the front desk, where the natural “acoustics are excellent unless, of course, there is a lot of noise in the room,” observed Burdick.<sup>4</sup> Legislators addressing the body from a small table at the front of the room were often undermined by the high noise levels and constant chatter. Until the public-address system was installed in 1937, many people considered a loud voice to be a sign of destiny in terms of a legislative career. Burdick told stories of political candidates who listed their voice as a major qualification for office.

One candidate, an auctioneer, printed on his campaign literature that he could talk louder than his opponent and that he could be heard in St. Paul. Yes, he was elected. Some speakers . . . campaigned and were elected on the same issue. The installation of individual microphones on members’ desks and on the speaker’s desk [1939] took away that advantage. I’m also told that the Reading Clerk sixty years ago was a hog-caller with a loud, deep voice.<sup>5</sup>

While Burdick had never been a hog caller, he was known for his distinctly uplifting baritone.<sup>6</sup> It was considered majestic. After his death on March 9, 2011, former House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher was asked what the people of Minnesota should remember about Burdick. She simply said, “It’s that voice.”<sup>7</sup> U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar wrote that he would be remembered as “the voice of the Minnesota House of Representatives.”<sup>8</sup>

All told, Burdick served the Minnesota House for more than 60 years, winning high praise from politicians of all persuasions. Walter Mondale—former Minnesota attorney general, U.S. senator, and vice president—first met Burdick in October 1948.<sup>9</sup> His assessment captured the feelings of many: “I have known Ed for nearly fifty years, from his first days as chief clerk and parliamentarian, serving as the astoundingly gifted and pre-eminently fair clerk under both political parties over an unprecedented and sometimes turbulent period in our history. To have been so trusted by the leaders of both political parties over so many generations of public leadership is truly astounding.”<sup>10</sup>

**B**URDICK’S SUCCESS DERIVED FROM A SECRET family formula. He was born on December 29, 1921, to Harold Burdick, an active Democrat who chaired



*Ed Burdick and his father, Harold, in the Vernon Center News print shop, about 1942*

Blue Earth County’s Democratic Party for 20 years and was the Second Congressional District’s secretary and treasurer for 16. His mother, Carrie, was a strong Republican; her father, Daniel Thew, was a very conservative local Republican Party official.<sup>11</sup> The neutrality essential to his future career came naturally during his formative years: “As a young kid at the supper table, I would hear political debates night after night. I learned not to take part. I guess that was pretty good training for my job,” Burdick later told a reporter.<sup>12</sup>

His political DNA and father’s thriving local newspaper contributed to Burdick’s desire to get involved in politics. As a young man, he habitually read daily newspapers and attended political rallies after school. He remembered Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale attending a political fundraiser his father organized at their house in 1948.<sup>13</sup> His family’s continuing interest in people and politics for the common good once led young Burdick to consider running for public office: “Early in my career, I had a possible interest in becoming a member of the House or Senate, but I gave up on that,” he said, because the partisan nature of politics did not particularly appeal to him. Although he enjoyed his family’s dinner-table debates, he preferred to listen actively but take no side. Rather, he weighed in with occasional points of view as if he were a reconciliatory judge or “an impartial umpire.”<sup>14</sup> These skills and habits, combined with his rural upbringing, served him well.

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and partisan harmony seemingly worked side by side, especially in rural areas where most people knew each other. Elected leaders amicably settled their opposing views on policy matters more often than not, overcoming personality conflicts and political ideologies. In this environment, Burdick began working as a “printer’s devil”—an apprentice—at his father’s *Vernon Center News*. The print shop once received a visit from Rep. Ben D. Hughes of Mankato, who wanted to place a political advertisement. Intrigued by the newly elected House member, the printer’s devil approached Hughes. As Burdick later related, “I asked about the possibility of getting a job at the Capitol and much to my surprise I got a call from Hughes, asking me if I’d be interested in working as a page.”<sup>15</sup> Armed with his diploma from Garden City High School, Burdick began his legislative career.

**A**T THAT TIME, STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATED on a different schedule than at present. The legislature met every two years, and the 90-day sessions employed only part-time staff. Long before the arrival of instant communications technologies, a page played the critical role of “gopher” by carrying messages, distributing documents, and running errands for all legislators. As a nonpartisan government employee, Burdick was required to take no public position on politics and policy issues. When his first House session ended in May 1941, he returned to his father’s shop but would resume his session-only job in 1943 and 1945.<sup>16</sup>

Named head page in 1947, Burdick began supervising the assignments of all pages. As this job, too, was part-time, he was happy for the option of working for his father. There was “no job security in government service” and “no benefits of any kind for members or staff,” he asserted when later recounting his back-up plan: “If this job [in the House] goes

sour I’ll buy a county seat newspaper someplace and write glowing editorials about the legislature.” Instead, Burdick worked in every ensuing session except in 1951, when he was stationed with the U.S. Army in Alabama.

The complexity of public-policy issues intensified during the 1950s. In response, state government began to change. Committee rooms for public hearings became inadequate, and the need for more staff was widely recognized. “When I came, the hearing rooms were small. If a meeting drew 25 people, it was considered a crowd. Now, we get 300 or 400 people to a meeting,” Burdick later said.<sup>17</sup> Much of the furniture and equipment (including typewriters) was on loan from the executive branch during the session, and the chamber and most House offices were locked up during the 18-month interim.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, in 1955, Burdick’s “chief page” job was upgraded, with bipartisan support, to one of three full-time House “clerk” positions.<sup>19</sup> By 1960 the part-time staff had grown to 99 employees (100 would be perceived as

*Speaker Robert E. Vanasek swearing in the chief clerk after one of Burdick’s many reelections, late 1980s or early 1990s*

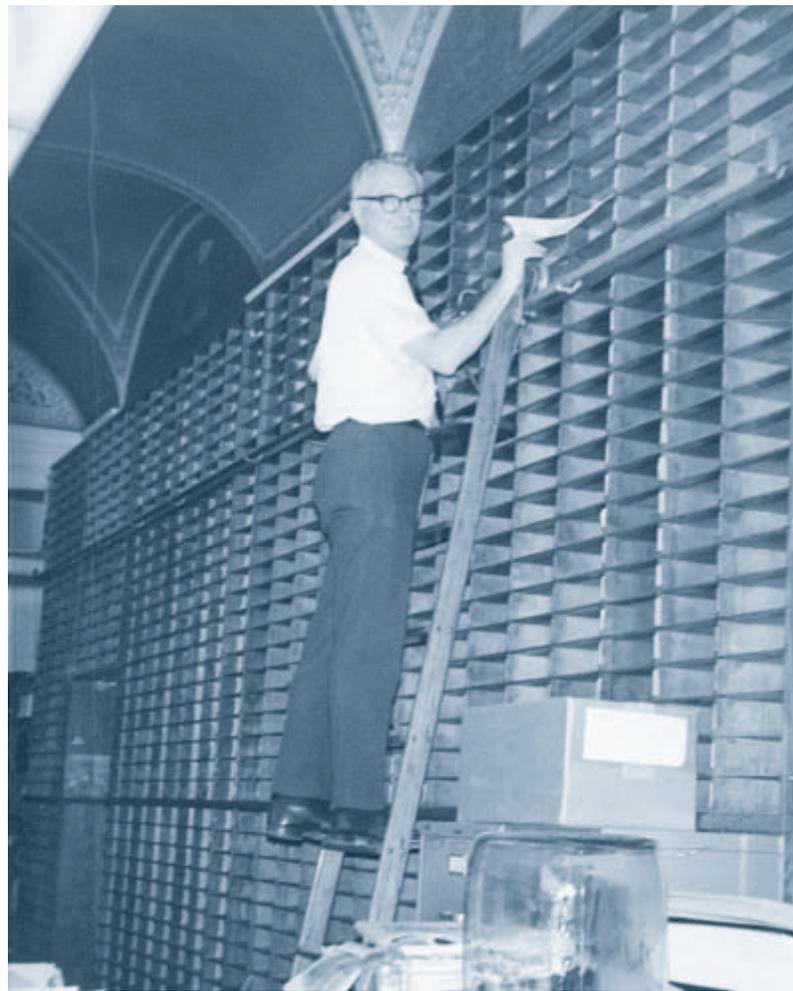


“extravagant,” according to Burdick).<sup>20</sup> He justified the increase and year-round service of full-time staff: “Government got more complicated, the Legislature is more complex. Now there is greater emphasis on research. It sometimes takes months, even years to properly research an issue.”<sup>21</sup> When he retired in 2005, the House employed 250 full-time workers.<sup>22</sup>

In 1967 Burdick was elected as the House’s thirtieth chief clerk and parliamentarian; thereafter, legislators unanimously reelected him for almost four decades.<sup>23</sup> The statutory mission of the chief clerk was (and still is) to provide assistance and advice to the speaker and members in “meeting the legal and parliamentary requirements of the lawmaking process and to record the history of that process in a clear, unbiased, and accurate manner.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, the Minnesota constitution requires that the office compile, print, and publish daily calendars and permanent journals that document all official actions—including the introduction and tracking of bills, amendments, and roll-call votes and the transmittal of bills to the Senate and the governor. During his tenure, Burdick’s office processed 80,953 bill introductions; 23,268 were signed into law.<sup>25</sup> Behind the veil of politics and policies, he was the invisible parliamentarian guiding the actions of House political leaders and managing the legislative processes in the chamber.

Also in 1967, the House established a nonpartisan research department, an impartial agency to study issues and provide legal services to members and committees.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the years, the House has witnessed political maneuvering and partisan policy fights—on agriculture, appropriations, business, education, energy, housing, labor, taxes, transportation, and welfare—and voted on all major governmental-operation issues that affect every citizen of the state. Creating the research unit was a significant step, according to former Speaker Martin Olav Sabo, because it enabled the House to develop legislation independent of the executive branch and interest groups. While Burdick was not involved in creating the department, he supported the idea.<sup>27</sup>

With more staff, the legislative branch gained greater efficiency, Burdick and his team maintained. The growing complexity of party politics and policy issues, however, masked these gains. During 1989–90, well after the legislature had begun meeting annually for a total of 120 days per biennium, 612 new laws were created. In 1949, during the 90-day biennial session—without air conditioning, computers, and private offices for legislators—747 were passed.<sup>28</sup>



*Burdick, either filing or retrieving bills, about 1967*

**A**LTHOUGH BURDICK ATTRIBUTED THE productivity of the past to long hours and hardworking legislators, the earlier era’s atmosphere of congeniality and informality was a contributing factor. In his decades as chief clerk, Burdick witnessed a major transition in governance from nonpartisan elections and caucuses to election and legislating by party affiliation, and from smoke-filled rooms—literally—to a more formal setting with increased professional staffing and more centralized power. When Burdick began as parliamentarian, each desk in the House chamber was equipped with a brass spittoon, cigar smoking was common, and eating at desks was generally accepted. He recalled

One of the first things I did when I was elected Chief Clerk in 1967 was remove the spittoons from the chamber. Some people claimed that was the major accomplishment during my first term of office but I like to think otherwise! Smoking was permitted in the chamber

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until 1975. If a member passed a local bill, he or she would buy cigars for all the members. The room at the end of the day would be filled with smoke and there was a blue-gray haze near the ceiling accentuated by the lights.<sup>29</sup>

Until 1969 only the chamber's aisles were carpeted; the rest of the floor was hard, gray tile. The room was very dark, and each employee at the front desk had an individual lamp. Unlike today, not all representatives' desks had a microphone; pages sitting on the front bench would bring a large portable microphone and plug it in when a member was recognized to speak. The voting machine, installed in 1937, broke down constantly and "it was not unusual to recess a few minutes each day to repair or adjust it."<sup>30</sup>

Under these conditions, the House had the feel of a relaxed social organization. Unlike their counterparts in the Senate, House members behaved informally and dressed in casual attire, though they took their legislative work seriously. As political economist Royce Hanson noted, "The House is no club, membership in it is special and is not taken lightly," even though there was "wide latitude to the behavior of its members."<sup>31</sup>

Until the early 1970s, only the speaker and the majority leader had private offices; other House members had neither offices nor individual telephones. (Committee chairs often used their meeting rooms as offices when no meetings were scheduled). There were no personal secretaries. Legislators met with their constituents, picked up and read their own mail, and answered letters from their desks in the chamber. When a member needed to dictate a letter, a secretary from the stenographers' pool would be summoned to the House floor with a notepad and a folding chair. Representatives hung their coats in lockers in the west hallway and lined up to use the few available telephones in the main hall. To draft legislation and conduct research, they worked with a small team of attorneys and analysts in the office of the revisor of statutes, which was then part of the Minnesota Supreme Court.<sup>32</sup>

At this time, many House members from rural districts stayed for a session at the Ryan Hotel in St. Paul,

and representatives from the metropolitan districts often joined them for breakfast, dinner, and other social events. Lobbyists, House staff, and constituents frequently met legislators in informal settings. As a result, Hanson elaborated, legislators were "virtually marinated in politics and legislative policy in this environment, so formal caucuses were unnecessary. By the time an issue had been developed by committee and reached the floor, members knew how they were supposed to vote. The system of discipline was benign, but effective, based as much on social pressure as on the overt exercise of political power."<sup>33</sup>

Burdick began his career in this congenial yet serious environment which, according to Hanson, was "as much necessity as a choice." Former Speaker Rod Searle (1979) recalled the House as "a place where there was a lot of mutual respect and camaraderie; there was more fun and humor than in later years. Members were not seated by caucus affiliation, so close friendship developed across political lines."

**S**EARLE'S MENTION OF CAUCUS AFFILIATION referred to the pre-1973 socio-political culture of nonpartisanship. Emerging issues and specific needs in members' districts drove legislators to coalesce in groups in which "conservatives" from rural districts often mingled with "liberals" from the metropolitan regions. Even as these two caucuses developed into party affiliations over the decades, House members were not elected on a partisan ballot, and they declared their caucus preference *after* the election. For example, Lloyd Duxbury, newly elected from rural Caledonia in 1951, waited until he had attended both caucuses before deciding which to join.<sup>34</sup> The *Star Tribune* characterized the Harvard-trained lawyer, who later became speaker, as "a conservative in an era when there were liberals and conservatives but no parties. He didn't like it when the Legislature became partisan."<sup>35</sup> Burdick, who witnessed the evolution of party politics, provided this analysis:

In 1972 the DFL party gained control of both bodies of the legislature for the first time in the history of the



ABOVE: Rep. Lloyd Duxbury, who would serve as speaker for eight years, about 1960.  
RIGHT: Burdick and Speaker Martin Olav Sabo, 1970s.



state. One of the first bills enacted into law in the 1973 session was repeal of the 60-year-old law providing for the nonpartisan election of legislators. . . . Oh yes, there was some partisan politics in this room during the 60 years when we were nonpartisan!<sup>36</sup>

Party designation was formally implemented in 1974 under Speaker Sabo.<sup>37</sup> In practice, however, the transition was gradual.<sup>38</sup> A system of party politics *and* caucus discipline had organically developed by the early 1970s. Then, as now, House members would break from their caucus on particular issues; these votes were often tolerated on a case-by-case basis, especially when the home district's needs were factored into the calculus of the member's loyalty and other decisions. But usually, the informal exercise of formal leadership authority guided the direction of voting within the caucuses. For example, when a member asserted independence on a bill that was important to caucus leadership, Speaker Sabo gently reminded her: "You rarely can go wrong if you stick with your leaders." Repeated deviation and defections carried subtle punitive actions and loss of privileges, such as committee assignments and chairmanships, authorship of bills, and travel to national conferences.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, legislators increasingly began to challenge their caucus more candidly and the rulings of the

speaker more openly. Lawmakers started to put forward motions to table bills, which would procedurally cut off the debate on the floor. In earlier days, Burdick observed, "Legislators thought such tactics beyond the bounds of parliamentary courtesy."<sup>40</sup>

The chief clerk revered speakers Duxbury (1963–69) and Sabo (1973–78) who oversaw the transition to the new era of formality and centralized the power of the speaker. During Sabo's tenure, the House recruited a greater number of professional staff, an increase Duxbury had initiated. Sabo also introduced a better organizational structure, which steadily improved conditions for the caucuses, committee system, and the office of the chief clerk.<sup>41</sup> Sabo's modernization strategy also elevated the importance of lawmaking; public awareness of the House and citizen engagement in policy discussion began to increase.

As the House morphed into a body with more formal authority and organization, party politics became firmly embedded in the caucus and committee structures. Relationships of trust and friendship were transformed into partisanship. The majority party took the lead in running the organization and shaping legislation, while the minority often resorted to challenging the opposition's parliamentary procedures and policy positions. The highly charged environment pressured legislators,

who serve two-year terms, to put more time and effort into their upcoming political campaigns while giving less attention to legislative matters. As mastery of subject matter and policy issues were delegated to personal and professional staff, legislators increasingly found their comfort zone with “old-timer” Burdick and his nonpartisan, professional staff. Yet the changes affected the chief clerk, too: “I had to concentrate on the parliamentary and administrative ends, and forget about substance. . . . [In 1980] there were more than 5,000 bills introduced in the House and Senate, and no one can understand the subject matter of 5,000 bills.”<sup>42</sup>

Burdick mastered the legislative history that connected the modern legislature with institutional memory, which he actively cultivated. While political power can be transient, Burdick provided continuity. As former Speaker Steve Sviggum declared, “Ed *is* the Legislature.”<sup>43</sup> His knowledge, nurtured trust, and mutual respect afforded him a comparative advantage—wholly apart from formal authority—within the power structure. A walking encyclopedia, the chief clerk intimately knew nearly everything and almost everybody, including—most

important—the representatives of all 67 districts and their policy positions,<sup>44</sup> as if the House were his family and community. In fact, Burdick never married; he was wed to a public institution.

A perennial student of public-policy philosophy and issues, Burdick understood that, as Plato’s *Republic* declared, the fundamental purpose of democratic governance is to bring order out of chaos. To ensure that, he mastered the parliamentary procedure that guided law-making, which is all about the interplay of politics, policy, process, and people. When legislators called out, “Point of order, Mr. Speaker,”<sup>45</sup> the chief clerk would counsel the presiding officer on a parliamentary ruling while managing the flow of bills and other documents in the chaotic House chamber. Burdick recognized that every legislative ruling is based on hierarchical knowledge of the Minnesota constitution, House rules, joint rules, custom and usage, and *Mason’s Manual*.<sup>46</sup> Dealing with complicated matters that had accumulated a body of historic ex-

*Managing the flow of bills, 1984: Chief Clerk Burdick with Patrick Mendis (standing) and Patrick D. Murphy (seated)*





*Tied House, 1979: After Rod Searle (standing, back) became speaker, Burdick was reelected chief clerk. Here, clerk pro tem Ray Faricy (mid-ground, right) and others congratulate Burdick.*

amples and rulings, the chief clerk had to provide speedy answers as actions and processes rapidly unfolded. In the 1979 session, however, when the House was evenly divided between the two political parties for the first time in history, precedents and rulings were of no use. Burdick recalled

The House had 131 members in 1941. In 1959 it was raised to 135 members. In 1972 membership was lowered by the Federal Courts to 134—an even number. Some old timers warned that an even number was dangerous and that someday there might be a tied House. The judges replied that the odds were very much against it and that it would probably never happen in our time. Six years later we had a tied House.<sup>47</sup>

The majority party designates the speaker of the House, and there was no majority party. A negotiating committee failed to agree on a plan for electing a speaker. Burdick was instrumental in navigating through the ensuing parliamentary dilemma. Secretary of State Joan Anderson Growe presided until a speaker was finally chosen in January 1979. The Independent Republican caucus nominated Rod Searle, while Democratic-Farmer-Laborites proposed Fred Norton. Both agreed to serve a one-year term. Searle, who presided in 1979, said:

“Had it not been for Ed Burdick, I would not have been able to function as speaker.”<sup>48</sup> The bitterly divided House was an unprecedented challenge to Burdick and his veteran, nonpartisan staff.

In such instances, the chief clerk was in the eye of the legislative hurricane. He played a critical role in shaping legislation during every speaker’s tenure, yet he stayed in the background. The speaker was the public face. Burdick once explained, “I usually gave the speaker two or three choices. I said, ‘You can rule this way and if you do, these are the consequences.’” And then he always cautioned that if a speaker “ruled that way today, you better rule that way the rest of the session.”<sup>49</sup>

Each speaker had multiple options for making parliamentary decisions, based partly on Burdick’s counseling but also on his or her own calculus of party politics and gamesmanship. Burdick offered options, not directives or decisions, “usually with the gentle reminder that a particular ruling would set a precedent that should be followed in the future—perhaps in less politically advantageous circumstances,” the *Star Tribune* reported.<sup>50</sup> Hence, party leaders trusted Burdick unconditionally. Sviggum affirmed, “As speaker, you have to have a great deal of trust with the chief clerk in his or her decision-making ability. That was certainly true with Ed. He was the institution. When he’d look at you and say ‘Steve, here are your

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choices,' he had a lot of credibility. You knew if you followed his advice it was probably the right advice."<sup>51</sup>

Governor Tim Pawlenty, who had previously served as House majority leader, agreed: "He was good at instantly pulling out a ruling. . . . Everybody just trusted him. He had a perspective that there was a responsibility to the institution of the House and not the individuals who were temporarily holding seats."<sup>52</sup> For Burdick, the House was a cathedral of Minnesota politics involving drama, suspense, service, parliamentary law, diverse personalities, and vigorous debates.<sup>53</sup> From his vantage point near the speaker's desk, he witnessed reverence for the human spirit leading all political actors to lawmaking, whereas others might perceive the same process as crass and ugly "sausage making."

**I**N 1986, WHEN HE HAD REACHED the age of 65, Burdick decided to retire from government service. By then, he was known nationally as the dean of parliamentary procedures and legislative affairs. He had established a splendid record, received service awards, and been elected national president of the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries.<sup>54</sup> And so, a bipartisan group of legislators who called themselves "Ed-Heads" appealed to their mentor and friend, persuading him to stay on for another session.<sup>55</sup> In 1990, the second of his five announced retirements led the Ed-Heads to install a bronze bust, financed entirely through voluntary contributions, of the 69-year-old in the capitol. This honor coincided with the renovation of the House chamber, which restored the room to its original motifs

*Ed Burdick, his bronze bust, and its sculptor, Paul Granlund, 1990*

while providing updated amenities.<sup>56</sup> As the House's official *Session Weekly* later recorded, the "dignified wavy-haired man that greets visitors to the House chamber" is depicted with his trademark glasses, suit, and tie.<sup>57</sup>

Burdick is the only Minnesotan ever honored with a bust in the capitol while he was still working in government, and the Capitol Area Architectural Planning Board opposed the installation.<sup>58</sup> At the unveiling ceremony, disarming opponents with his humor, the chief clerk said, "It's no secret that there was some criticism for installing a bronze bust of someone who has not yet died or at least someone who has not retired. Maybe we have a problem because I am not prepared to announce either of those events today."<sup>59</sup> More important, Speaker Robert Vanasek defended the action, asserting that House space would be used as the legislature saw fit and crowning Burdick the "keeper of the flame."<sup>60</sup>



When the eighty-third legislative session ended in 2004, the 83-year-old public servant legend finally retired for good. In a career spanning more than six decades, he had seen 17 different speakers, served over 1,000 representatives, and remained as chief clerk through seven shifts of political control in the House. Praise was instantly forthcoming. President George W. Bush wrote to Burdick in March 2005 that “our Nation is deeply indebted” for his military and legislative service.<sup>61</sup> Former Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court Kathleen Blatz and public officials from around the country expressed their admiration and gratitude for his remarkable public service, encompassing both leadership and stewardship.<sup>62</sup>

At the retirement event in the House chamber, Rep. Ron Abrams divulged the best-kept “public” secret of Burdick’s success: “Nobody knows if Ed is a Democrat or Republican, Green Party, Independent, or whatever. . . . But we all know, in our years of service in the House that Ed Burdick is quintessentially Minnesotan.”<sup>63</sup> House

*BELOW: Burdick bids farewell while Speaker Sviggum looks on; retirement celebration, 2005. RIGHT: Retired chief clerk at the 2005 celebration, surrounded by well wishers (from left) Patrick Mendis and former speakers David Jennings and Rod Searle.*

Resolution No. 1 declared him a “legendary” public servant. Gov. Pawlenty articulated the essence of Burdick, calling him “a Minnesota icon and a Minnesota institution.”<sup>64</sup> To honor the most celebrated chief clerk in the nation, the governor then proclaimed January 10, 2005, as Edward A. Burdick Day.<sup>65</sup>

When this author asked about his rationale for decision-making and his internal moral compass for public service, Burdick quickly referred to James Madison, the father of the U.S. Constitution.<sup>66</sup> For Burdick, the words “fairness” and “respect” resonated with the nation’s founding principles, including the Madisonian system of checks and balances that ensures shared governing



power. And indeed, at Burdick's retirement in 2005, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* noted, "In an age of fierce partisanship, he is revered for fairness."<sup>67</sup>

Madison also described the need for "an impartial umpire" in good governance.<sup>68</sup> In politics, as in sports, the umpire plays a central but unglamorous role. Such arbitration often seems boring compared to the colorful role of political actors in the public square. But Burdick, the embodiment of that umpire, maintained a different perspective: "The work on the House floor, the activity before bills hit the floor—I can't imagine a more exciting job. There's intrigue and excitement all the time."<sup>69</sup>

**B**URDICK'S STORY IS UNIQUELY MINNESOTAN AS well as American. A rural son without a university education, he achieved admiration and respect from every level of government. In the days following his death in March 2011, colleagues and admirers remembered him as exemplary. Vice President Mondale commented,

"When I am asked what we should expect of public servants, I will suggest that we look to Ed Burdick as the perfect example of talent, training, devotion to the public process, honesty, caring and thoughtfulness to set the standard."<sup>70</sup> That sentiment was shared by House Speaker Kurt Zellers, who praised Burdick for "maintaining the decorum of the House chamber with grace and dignity."<sup>71</sup> For Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, Burdick's Madisonian character is as enduring and inspiring an example as the nation's founding vision.<sup>72</sup> In the *Congressional Record*, U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum declared that the "Minnesota icon to public service" was truly "a gentleman."<sup>73</sup> Moreover, he was a father figure to many, including numbers of minority students and immigrants, this "adopted" Minnesota author among them.<sup>74</sup>

In retrospect, the "Voice of the House" was more than merely a voice. The permanent bronze visage at the entrance to the House chamber greets visitors to the state capitol and stands as a tribute to Minnesota's impartial umpire. □

## Notes

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1. House Resolution No. 1, 84th sess. (2005–06), Jan. 10, 2005: [www.house.leg.state.mn.us/resolutions/l84/0/HRO001.htm](http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/resolutions/l84/0/HRO001.htm) (accessed Aug. 21, 2012). Sixty years later, Burdick's annual salary was \$120,000—roughly equal the governor's and four times that of House members; *Star Tribune*, Dec. 28, 2004, B2; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 2, 1990, p. 6.

2. Edward A. Burdick, "Remarks at Dedication Ceremony," May 23, 1990, p. 4, <http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2012/other/120802.pdf> (accessed Sept. 19, 2012).

3. Julie C. Gauthier, *The Minnesota Capitol: Official Guide and History* (St. Paul: State of Minnesota, 1907), 10.

4. Edward A. Burdick, "A Brief History of the Minnesota House Chamber," 5, paper presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual History Conference, Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), Nov. 5, 1983, <http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2012/other/120803.pdf> (accessed Oct. 1, 2012).

5. Burdick, "Brief History," 5.

6. *Mankato Free Press*, Jan. 10, 2005, p. 1.

7. *Star Tribune*, Mar. 9, 2011, [www.startribune.com/politics/blogs/117656588.html](http://www.startribune.com/politics/blogs/117656588.html) (accessed Oct. 3, 2012).

8. Amy Klobuchar to author, Mar. 24, 2011.

9. Lavon Burdick (Ed's brother) email to author, Nov. 16, 2011.

10. Walter F. Mondale to author, Mar. 25, 2011.

11. Ed Burdick, "A Few of My Favorite Anecdotes," unpublished booklet, 41, copy in MHS.

12. *Star Tribune*, Dec. 28, 2004, B1.

13. Burdick told the author this story when they met Mondale at the 1986 dedication of the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota.

14. *Mankato Free Press*, Mar. 10, 1981, p. 17. Burdick shared these views with the author and advised him to honor his convictions and the importance of nonpartisan and bipartisan approaches to public policy. On the establishment of the nonpartisan Edward A. Burdick Legislative Award at the University of Minnesota, see [www.hhh.umn.edu/alumni/one\\_to\\_one/lynch\\_mendis.html](http://www.hhh.umn.edu/alumni/one_to_one/lynch_mendis.html) (accessed Oct. 3, 2012).

James Madison, the father of the U.S. Constitution, used "impartial umpire" as a principle for governing the new republic. See Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 407.

15. House Resolution No. 1, Jan. 10, 2005; *Sleepy Eye Herald Dispatch*, Feb. 13, 1975, p. 3.

16. Here and below, Burdick, "Dedication Ceremony," 5, 2.

17. *Mankato Free Press*, Mar. 10, 1981, p. 17.

18. Burdick, "Dedication Ceremony," 8.

19. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Feb. 15, 1981, F14.

20. Burdick, "Dedication Ceremony," 5.

21. *Mankato Free Press*, Mar. 10, 1981, p. 17.

22. *Star Tribune*, Dec. 28, 2004, B1.

23. *Mankato Free Press*, Jan. 10, 2005, p. 1.

24. Chief Clerk's Office, [www.house.leg.state.mn.us/cco/cco.htm](http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/cco/cco.htm) (accessed Aug. 21, 2012).

25. House Resolution No. 1, Jan. 10, 2005.

26. House Research Department, [www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/about.htm](http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/about.htm) (accessed Aug. 21, 2012).

27. Martin Sabo, phone interview with author, Apr. 23, 2012. See also [www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/about.htm](http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/about.htm).

28. Burdick, "Dedication Ceremony," 8. In 1974, the 1962 constitutional amendment extending the 90-day biennial session to 120 days was finally implemented, and the legislature began meeting every year;



*The Dalai Lama honoring Burdick for his parliamentary service in the capitol, May 2001*

Royce Hanson, *Tribune of the People: The Minnesota Legislature and Its Leadership* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1989), 211.

29. Burdick, "Brief History," 8–9.  
 30. Burdick, "Dedication Ceremony," 5–6.  
 31. Hanson, *Tribune of the People*, 59.  
 32. Burdick, "Dedication Ceremony," 6–9; Hanson, *Tribune of the People*, 58–100.  
 33. Here and below, Hanson, *Tribune of the People*, 61, 59.  
 34. Hanson, *Tribune of the People*, 68.  
 35. *Star Tribune*, Mar. 25, 2002, p. 4.  
 36. Burdick, "Brief History," 12–13.  
 37. Hanson, *Tribune of the People*, 61.  
 38. Martin Sabo, phone interview with author, Nov. 6, 2011.  
 39. Hanson, *Tribune of the People*, 62, including Sabo quote.  
 40. *Star Tribune*, Dec. 28, 2004, B2.  
 41. Hanson, *Tribune of the People*, 68–71, 72–73, passim; Sabo, phone interview, Nov. 6, 2011.  
 42. *Mankato Free Press*, Jan. 10, 1981, p. 18.  
 43. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Jan. 1, 2005, p. 1.  
 44. Mike Cook, "Saying Goodbye to the People and the Process," *Session Weekly* (Minnesota House of Representatives), Jan. 7, 2005, p. 5.  
 45. Mike Cook, "All Eyes are on Us," *Session Weekly*, Jan. 7, 2005, p. 3.  
 46. Burdick to Mendis, Apr. 20, 1984.  
 47. Burdick, "Dedication Ceremony," 5.  
 48. *Star Tribune*, Dec. 28, 2004, B2.

49. Cook, "All Eyes," 3.  
 50. *Star Tribune*, Dec. 28, 2004, B2.  
 51. Cook, "All Eyes," 3.  
 52. *Star Tribune*, Dec. 28, 2004, B2.  
 53. The author often heard Burdick describe the House this way to visitors and friends.  
 54. House Resolution No. 1, Jan. 10, 2005.  
 55. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Jan. 1, 2005, p. 1.  
 56. Peg Hamerston, *Restoration: Minnesota House of Representatives* (St. Paul: House of Representatives, [1990]), n. p., first and last pages; Burdick, "Brief History," 8.  
 57. Nicole Wood, "Burdick in Bronze," *Session Weekly*, Jan. 21, 2005, p. 18.  
 58. *St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch*, Feb. 12, 1990, p. 3B. In 1987 the Minnesota Historical Society and Capitol Area Architectural Planning Board adopted a rule prohibiting sculptural memorials to individuals in public areas of the capitol until they had been deceased for 25 years.  
 59. Burdick, "Dedication Ceremony," 4.  
 60. *Mankato Free Press*, May 25, 1990, p. 9.  
 61. Joe Kimball, "Former State House Chief Clerk Ed Burdick has Died," *MinnPost*, Mar. 9 2011, [www.minnpost.com/politicalagenda/2011/03/09/26476/former\\_state\\_house\\_chief\\_clerk\\_ed\\_burdick\\_has\\_died](http://www.minnpost.com/politicalagenda/2011/03/09/26476/former_state_house_chief_clerk_ed_burdick_has_died) (accessed Aug. 21, 2012).  
 62. Hon. Kathleen Blatz, interview with author, Minneapolis, Apr. 6, 2011; list of memories and thanks for Burdick in "Re-

tirement News," *The Legislative Administrator*, Winter 2004, p. 7–13, [www.ncsl.org/legislative-staff/aslcs/2004-winter-legislative-administrator.aspx](http://www.ncsl.org/legislative-staff/aslcs/2004-winter-legislative-administrator.aspx) (accessed Oct. 4, 2012).

63. Michael Khoo, "Lawmakers Honor the 'Real' Speaker of the House," Minnesota Public Radio, Jan. 10, 2005, [http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/2005/01/10\\_khoom\\_burdick/](http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/2005/01/10_khoom_burdick/) (accessed Aug. 21, 2012).

64. Mike Cook, "Honoring Edward A. Burdick," *Session Daily*, Jan. 10, 2005, [www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/sessiondaily.asp?yearid=2005&storyid=316](http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/sessiondaily.asp?yearid=2005&storyid=316) (accessed Aug. 21, 2012).

65. Some six years later, Gov. Mark Dayton declared March 25, 2011, Edward A. Burdick Day; this time to mark the funeral service. Kimball, *MinnPost*, Mar. 9 2011.

66. During the author's graduate studies at the University of Minnesota (1984–89), he stayed with Burdick and worked in his office during the 1984 legislative session. Patrick Mendis, "Religious Faith and Public Life: Reflections on Edward Burdick's Life," *MinnPost*, Mar. 14, 2012, [www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2012/03/religious-faith-and-public-life-reflections-edward-burdick%E2%80%99s-life](http://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2012/03/religious-faith-and-public-life-reflections-edward-burdick%E2%80%99s-life) (accessed Oct. 4, 2012).

67. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Jan. 1, 2005, p. 10A.

68. Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 407.

69. *Mankato Free Press*, Mar. 10, 1981, p. 18.

70. Mondale to Mendis, Mar. 25, 2011.

71. Kimball, *MinnPost*, Mar. 9, 2011.

72. Mark Ritchie to author, Mar. 21, 2011.

73. Betty McCollum, "Honoring the Life of Edward A. Burdick, Former Chief Clerk of the Minnesota House of Representatives," *Congressional Record*, 112th Congress, Mar. 30, 2011, E571.

74. Patrick Mendis, "His Position was Local; His Reach, Worldwide," *Star Tribune*, Mar. 20, 2011, A15.

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