

Not very funny.

"Howard was frantic. Not much time for levity."

But Salmon, Kimbell said, was funny.

"He would hop into his state police car and say 'Let's go to Boston.' And he'd go to see a Red Sox game."

Kimbell first got directly involved in electoral politics in almost as off-hand a manner.

"After the '78 session I was leaving the Statehouse with Madeleine [Kunin]. She was chair of the Appropriations Committee and running for lieutenant governor. 'I need a campaign manager,' she said. I got paid \$150 a week. She beat Peter Smith by 2,500 votes."

And he recalled how Kunin won.

"Within earshot of reporters, Peter Smith said that 'all the broads' were going to vote for Madeleine. That ill-advised comment is what swung the election."

When Kunin was governor Kimbell served for two years as her state planning director, the person in charge of the administration's legislative program.

"I found that I didn't really like working inside the government," he said. "I got out and went back to my private practice."

Then came the partnership with Kunin's press secretary, Bob Sherman.

"We went to Seyon Pond fishing and talked about what we really ought to do. We concluded that combining law and journalism in a firm to do advocacy was a good idea."

And to call it just that is an understatement. Kimbell Sherman & Ellis has no peer in Vermont. Not only is it the most successful lobbying firm in the state, it has also built an out-of-state client list which now represents about half of the business. It has offices in Washington and does business all over the country, tracking and reporting on issues and also specializing in crisis management.

When I asked Kimbell about the most dramatic moment in his political memory, he recalled the death of Richard Snelling in August of 1991.

"How many times does a sitting governor just drop dead," he said.

Howard Dean was in touch almost immediately.

"Howard called Sherman and said 'I need a speech within an hour,'" Kimbell recalled. "And we helped the new governor make the transition. He was here for a lot of meetings. And we took some heat. The press said 'How can these lobbyists advise the new governor.' A lot of the criticism was probably warranted, but sometimes you just have to do things."

And Howard Dean is not the only politician to have beaten a path to Steve Kimbell's door. For a couple of decades now candidates and potential candidates have come to Kimbell & company. They want to know—from someone who does—if they should or if they shouldn't.

"We are in the business of politics," Kimbell said. "It doesn't matter where they come from. If they want to talk to us, we give advice."

And Steve Kimbell has brought this sort of matter-of-fact attitude to all his efforts. Despite his highly visible work for civil unions and gay marriage, he insists that his approach is always the same.

"I'm an advocate," Kimbell said. "I take a hard-nosed approach. To do this job you have got to be well prepared, emotionless and tenacious. Gay marriage was a hugely emotional issue. I worked very hard to be analytical and strategic. It is my personal belief that that is what people pay us for."

Hard-nosed. True enough.

Savvy. Unparalleled.

Matter-of-fact. Certainly.

Passionate. Despite protestations.

And funny.

The politician's politician.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO PATRICIA J. COVINGTON

• Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, it has been nearly five decades since Patricia J. Covington, Director of VA's Congressional Liaison Service, began her public service, and nearly all of it has been with VA, first when it was the Veterans Administration, and, since 1989, as the Department of Veterans Affairs. Although she served in various capacities, it is in connection with her long and distinguished tenure at the Congressional Liaison Service that my colleagues and I, along with our staffs, know her. I am sure that there is not a Member's office in the U.S. Senate that does not regularly call upon her services. Over the years, Pat has worked tirelessly to ensure that our requests for information about VA or for help for veteran constituents are handled in a timely, thorough, and nonpartisan manner. On the occasion of her upcoming retirement, I call on my colleagues to join me in thanking her for assistance to us and to countless veterans, most of whom will never know the critical role she has played in our efforts to improve their lives.

Pat entered public service in 1963. After an initial period of employment with another Federal agency, she moved to VA where she gained experience at the Board of Veterans Appeals with the appeals process for denials of disability claims. She also helped administer the Presidential Memorial Certificate Program, established by President John F. Kennedy to honor the memories of deceased veterans. As my colleagues know, each certificate bears the President's signature and conveys to the families of deceased veterans the Nation's gratitude for their service.

After gaining a hands-on understanding of many VA benefits and services, Pat joined the Congressional Liaison Service in 1971. The Committee on Veterans' Affairs, which I have the privilege of chairing, was established that year, marking the Senate's heightened commitment to addressing the then-emerging challenges facing veterans of the Vietnam war. I was not in the Senate at that time, but looking back at the large and impressive work of the early days of the committee in responding to a host of complex issues, along with the fact that there were thousands of new veterans seeking assistance from their Federal elected officials, it must have been a very challenging time in Pat's new assignment. From the start, she nevertheless kept pace with the unprecedented number of demands, deepening her knowledge about VA as she took on new respon-

sibilities. In fact, Pat was so good at her job that over time she was repeatedly tapped to serve as Acting Director of the Congressional Liaison Service. In 2002, she was appointed as Director, and has continued to excel in that position.

Not long after I became committee chairman in 2007, a veteran arrived at the committee to seek help after being turned down by VA for additional benefits in connection with post-traumatic stress disorder. He had driven thousands of miles and related to committee staff that he had struggled with suicidal feelings. At the time, although VA had not begun to reckon with the rising tide of veteran suicides, Pat knew who to contact to provide counseling and other suicide-prevention services to the veteran and promptly secured a thorough review of his claim. Her compassionate and deeply informed assistance to this veteran was in keeping with her longstanding excellent work.

Committee staff and I have relied on Pat and the excellent staff she oversees for information about a wide range of matters relating to the large and complex dimensions of VA's mandate. From disability compensation to health care, construction and cemeteries, home long guaranties and the new G.I. bill, her office has consistently responded with the highest professional standards. With a war on two fronts and increasing numbers of returning servicemembers from Iraq and Afghanistan, along with serious issues facing veterans from earlier wars, her contributions have never been more valued nor her services more needed. Yet to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. Pat is ending this chapter in her life and will soon open a new one. Again, I thank her for her long service to the committee and her unsurpassed commitment to the veterans of the Nation. I wish her every happiness in the days to come. We shall miss her.●

WILDROSE, NORTH DAKOTA

• Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, today, I am pleased to recognize a community in North Dakota that is celebrating its 100th anniversary. From July 2-4, the residents of Wildrose, ND, will gather to celebrate their community's founding.

Wildrose, ND, is a Great Northern Railroad town site founded in 1910 in Hazel Township of Williams County. The post office for Wildrose was established on July 13, 1910. The site for the town was platted in 1910 and became an incorporated village in 1913. Until 1916, Wildrose was the terminus of the railroad line and billed itself as the largest primary grain market in the United States. Wildrose reached its peak population of 518 in 1930.

Grace Lutheran Church, located in Wildrose, will also celebrate its 100th anniversary on July 4. Wildrose Lutheran Church was founded in 1910.