

Some DFLers leaving party convention fearful of Franken 'hangover'

State delegates partied heartily after Saturday's quick endorsement of Al Franken to take on incumbent Norm Coleman this fall. But some party faithful are sobered by the potential fallout that the comedian's controversial past writings may create in his race – and in those of other DFLers on the ballot.

Analysis by DOUG GROW

Mark Dayton threw one of his classic DFL convention bashes Saturday night in Rochester: food, booze, a magician, a DJ playing rock and swing dance tunes. It all was free for DFLers who felt like partying after Al Franken quickly was endorsed as the party's candidate for the U.S. Senate.

But will there be a hangover from the party and the endorsement?

Many left Rochester at the conclusion of the convention Sunday fearing that Franken, who won endorsement with 62 percent on the first ballot cast, will turn out to be a problem for DFL candidates across the state. Republicans will at least attempt to portray Franken as the symbol of a party out of touch with "main street" Minnesota values.

By her actions, Mari Urness Pokornowski of Cokato made that statement. Up until the weekend, she was president of the DFL Feminist Caucus. She quit that post,

however, when the caucus board opted to endorse Franken.

"You have to make a choice where you stand," she told reporters Saturday. "For me, my decision was to step down."

Trying to avoid becoming a big part of the convention story, Pokornowski was not talking about her action Sunday. But those close to her said that it was something she'd wrestled with long before the convention began. She is remaining active in the party.

Party feminists split over Franken

Pokornowski was not alone in her concerns. In an e-mail before the convention, Planned Parenthood's political arm expressed concern about Franken. (Franken has long supported Planned Parenthood with appearances and donations.)

And, of course, 4th District Rep. Betty McCollum had spoken out a week before the convention about the problems Franken might pose for the DFL. She was booed by some delegates when she spoke at the convention Saturday.

In her speech, which came while first-ballot votes were being counted, she did not make direct references to Franken but she appeared to be indirectly talking about issues surrounding the controversial comedian and satirist.

"As Democrats, we have differences of opinion on candidates and policies," she said. "There is room for healthy debate. But as a Democrat, we must be committed to defending the values Minnesotans treasure. We must never stand silent when the values we

are fighting so hard to defend and promote are offended."

The announcement of the endorsement of the DFL feminist caucus came at a crucial moment in the convention. Word hit the floor about 10 a.m. Saturday at a point when most at the convention thought that Franken was in for a long, bloody fight – and that he could lose – against Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer.

Franken had received the approval of 72 percent of caucus board members at a Friday evening screening.

According to those who were present at that session, women in the group laid it on the line with Franken: They were not amused by his "fantasy" essay in Playboy magazine eight years ago, nor did they find funny his proposed skit about rape during a "Saturday Night Live" brainstorming session.

They also made it clear they did not want to hear any lectures about the art of satire. Franken, and his campaign, had tried to shrug off much of his controversial work as classic satire.

One member of the board asked Franken, "Is rape funny?"

The question brought tears to Franken's eyes, according to Jackie Stevenson, a board member.

"He was open, and he was honest," Stevenson said. She also said that Franken showed a remarkable knowledge of women's political history.

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MINNPOST.WORLD

More than defendants on trial in five 9/11 cases

By SHARON SCHMICKLE

Who, exactly, is holding court in the cases of the five Guantanamo detainees who are accused of terrorist acts that could be punishable by the death penalty?

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged 9/11 mastermind, and his four alleged accomplices claimed a certain mocking control over their initial court appearance on Thursday.

Mohammed all but demanded the death penalty. According to the Associated Press, he told the chief judge of the military tribunal, "This is what I wish, to be a martyr for a long time. . . . I will, God willing, have this, by you."

So much for the ultimate lesson the government planned to lay on him. If the federal prosecutors truly want to punish him, will they now sentence him to live?

Surreal lecture to the judge

In a surreal turnabout, Mohammed lectured the judge on topics ranging from the U.S. Constitution to same-sex marriage, the Wall Street Journal reported. "I consider all American constitution" evil, Mohammed told the military judge, because it permits "same-sexual marriage and many other things that are very bad. . . . Do you understand?"

While Mohammed and the other defendants made a circus of the proceeding, there is nothing funny about the cases. These men are the alleged coordinators of the Sept. 11 terror attacks. They are charged with various crimes related to plotting the killings of 2,973 people that day.

That is all the more reason the government should get the proceedings right. Many Americans worry that that isn't happening.

It is a sad but salutary thing to recall the precise number of people killed on that day in 2001, Tim Rutten wrote in an opinion piece in Saturday's Los Angeles Times.

'Willful overreaching' criticized

"The consolations of legal justice never can be complete, but they're all we as a society have to offer the

injured and the grieving," he wrote. "That's why, when it comes to the handling of these cases, the Bush administration's willful overreaching, contempt for fundamental American values and defiance of basic American notions of due process have set the stage for travesty and further tragedy."

In announcing the charges against the men in February, Air Force Brigadier General Thomas Hartmann defended the military commission system that Congress authorized for use against the Guantanamo detainees.

"We have the rule of law. We have a Military Commission Act that's been determined by the Congress and the president, supported by the Department of Defense," Hartmann said. "We will follow the rule of law. We will apply the rule of law."

One criticism, though, is that legal challenges to the procedure haven't been exhausted. The defining event this month for all of the Guantanamo Bay detainees is a pending U. S. Supreme Court decision on whether the men held at the U.S. prison in Cuba are entitled to challenge their detention in United States civilian courts.

A decision is due any day. But the government's prosecution team isn't waiting.

Defendants aware world is watching

Clearly, the five men who were arraigned knew the world was watching. And they cleverly raised issues that are bothering many Americans.

In rejecting the government's offer of a lawyer, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali said, "Everything that has happened here is unfair and unjust. . . . The government is talking about lawyers free of charge. The government also tortured me free of charge all these years."

The five defendants were originally captured in 2002 and 2003 and held in CIA custody or secret lockups overseas until they were transferred to Guantanamo in 2006. CIA officials have acknowledged subjecting Mohammed to waterboarding. All of the

men reportedly were subjected to interrogation techniques that many consider to be torture.

When the government decided to keep the prosecutions out of civilian courts, Pentagon defense lawyers told the New York Times that they were worried about many thorny issues in the cases, including:

- Whether waterboarding constitutes torture.
- How statements obtained by coercion are to be handled.
- Whether detainees may be so psychologically damaged that they may not be able to assist in their defense.
- Exactly what the rules of the trials are to be.

Evidence issues to be decided in court

Hartmann said the issues will be worked out: "The question of what evidence will be admitted, whether [obtained through] waterboarding or otherwise, will be decided in the courts, in front of a judge, after it's fought out between the defense and the prosecution in these cases. That's the rule of law, that's the procedure that Congress has provided to us, and that's what we will use to finally answer these questions."

But military defense lawyers say it isn't clear how that will happen.

"You're asking me to tell you how we're going to get to a place we've never been, with a map I don't have," Col. Steven David, the chief military defense lawyer for Guantanamo, told the Times.

While the government said that evidence from torture sessions would not be used, there is a major gray area regarding when torture ends and legal interrogations begin, the Times said. Another clouded issue is "hearsay" evidence, based on intelligence reports gathered from sources who are not likely to appear in court or face cross-examination.

The Nuremberg analogy

Hartmann is one of several Pentagon officials who have compared the Guantanamo procedure to the Nuremberg tribunals that convicted top Nazi war criminals at the end of World War II.

"It's an extraordinary set of rights that we're providing to the

accused," Hartmann said. "And just so you know, at Nuremberg there were no rights of appeal."

But critics say the Nuremberg analogy actually highlights the shortcomings of military justice at the U.S. Naval base, Time Magazine reported.

"Although not without its own flaws, Nuremberg is generally remembered as having been a fair and careful legal process conducted at a time when many were demanding summary execution for leading Nazis. The legality of the proceedings due to begin at Guantanamo, however — against men held in secret CIA prisons where some were tortured before being brought to Cuba — has been loudly challenged by critics around the world," Time said.

Navy Cpt. Prescott Prince was chief military counsel to Mohammed (who said Thursday he wants nothing to do with an American lawyer). Prince told Time there is no comparison with Nuremberg.

Nazi defendants weren't tortured

"None of the top Nazi defendants faced torture or waterboarding, or other forms of 'enhanced interrogation' — or had to be concerned that information elicited under torture might be used against them in court," he said.

He also said that many of the lawyers who were prepared to advise the five defendants couldn't get clearance to see them.

"In a capital murder case involving thousands of victims, it is just unbelievable that many members of the defense team have barely been able to meet with their clients, and some not at all," Prince said.

In conclusion, Time echoed many other critics: "These legal controversies suggest that the trial of the man accused of planning the worst terror attack ever on U.S. soil may focus as much on the quality of U.S. military justice as on the crime of 9/11."

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The Daily Glean: Some 'close calls' for justice

By DAVID BRAUER

Larry Oakes' outrageously great sex offender treatment series continues in the Strib; today's Part II focuses on the judicial "close calls" that effectively sentence an offender to life without a life sentence. That's because the "treatment" program has never released anyone. Oakes details imprecise diagnostic tools that one psychologist says is wrong 30 percent of the time. Everyone wants to see these guys locked up, but a life sentence should be explicit; Oakes' blend of doc-digging and human reportage shows well-meaning constitutional corruption.

DFL Convention post-mortem: MPR has a great headline: "DFLers and Republicans agree Franken is a great choice." Reporter Mark Zdechlik contrasts Franken's aggressiveness and fundraising with the GOP's promised firehose of oppo research. (Idle thought: Has Al ever written anything about Jesus?) The GOP will try to bell every DFL cat with Franken's risqué remarks. AP quotes a DFL legislator observing that 2006 Senate nominee Amy Klobuchar helped feed that DFL wave, but Franken could do the opposite.

More Al: A Strib editorial astutely notes that Franken, a

political swordsman, is good on offense but "less effective in defending himself against charges he had to know would come." One operative I spoke to this weekend says Franken must quickly "take out the trash" on himself — release all the damaging stuff — to neutralize the drip-drip-drip. Mpls.St.Paul's Brian Lambert offers Franken some pithy observations about media relations, adding a love tap at our own Doug Grow.

DFL Kumbaya? The Strib's Kevin Duchscher and Mike Kaszuba nail the spirit I sensed at Saturday's DFL Senate endorsement — it was Sigh-of-Relief Day as Hillary Clinton gracefully conceded and Franken opponent Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer did same. The party isn't unified — witness convention-floor booing for DFL Congresswoman and Franken critic Betty McCollum — but there are fewer problems going out than coming in, which is news. The Strib's Kevin Duchscher reprints '60s activist Tom Hayden's astute email analysis of Franken.

The Strib's Katherine Kersten says the ACLU is ideologically biased for defending a Pledge-protesting student but not Confederate flag-wavers. Lots of problems here. First, the ACLU has defended Confederacy dunces: see here,

here and here. The problem is judges — including a conservative Supreme Court — have consistently said no, so the local ACLU is acknowledging the obvious. Conversely, the law forbidding Pledge mandates is clear. Kersten tried valiantly to attack the ACLU's convention-protest defense, but here too, the law has proven hospitable.

Speaking of convention protests ... the St. Paul protest route may be too small, says the PiPress's Jason Hoppin, who measured it. Using a standard 10-square-foot-per-person measure, Hoppin says the 400,000-square-foot space "may not handle" the estimated 50,000 protesters. And that doesn't include barriers, etc. that reduce elbow room. St. Paul cops counter that 300,000 Grand Old Day revelers co-existed in a similar space. Protesters feel vindicated. Kersten alert: The ACLU is conducting its own analysis.

Because of the DFL convention, I wasn't able to get to too much of this weekend's National Conference on Media Reform, held in Minneapolis. But the big news was a confrontation between Bill Moyers and an ambush-hungry Bill O'Reilly producer. The Uptake, a locally based site, captured the cinema verité. Two Northwest jets clipped wings at the airport,

KARE reports. Not in mid-air; one screwed up taxing into a gate. Still images show wing tips touching. No one was hurt.

Remember Christopher Smith, the peachfuzz-faced, bragadocious, country-fleeing Internet drug dealer who made headlines recently? Mpls. St.Paul's Steve Marsh has an excellent long-form profile of the manchild here, with great stuff from Smith's not-exactly-tame family and the still-cocky perp himself.

The Business Journal's John Vomhof Jr. reports that just three Minneapolis businesses received Small Business Administration economic-damage loans following the 35W bridge collapse. Ten others didn't make it through the paperwork-laden process.

Nort spews: Is the Twins' motto "Watch us regress to the mean?" The once-again-sub-.500 club gets blown out for the third time in Chicago 12-2 and falls five-plus back of the Whities. In happier news, the Minnesota Lynx rise to 6-1 with a 90-78 win over San Antonio.

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Joel Kramer, CEO and editor

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Nelson-Pallmeyer wasn't nearly so impressive during his screening. The St. Thomas professor spent much of his time talking about a book "he'd written 10 years ago," said Stevenson.

The impact of the two 30-minute screenings? Franken got the caucus's endorsement. The convention got a straightforward apology and even a confession. ("For 35 years, I was a writer. I wrote a lot of jokes. Some of them weren't funny. Some of them were inappropriate. Some of them were downright offensive.") Franken got huge applause from the delegates.

But this may have been the most surprising outcome of all: After it was announced that the Feminist Caucus had decided to endorse Franken, there was a line of women waiting to sign up to become members of the caucus, Stevenson said.

Generational change, 'Obama factor' at work in party dynamics, too

Stevenson, who is 71, believes this was another sign of the generational change going on in the political process this election year. Perhaps she's right. Perhaps things that may be offensive to people over the age of 40 bring yawns from those under 40.

The generational change could be seen on the convention floor. As many as three-quarters of the delegates were first-time convention goers, according to former party chairman Rick Stafford. Many of those had never before even labeled themselves as DFLers, Stafford said.

Some of this shift is a result of the aging of the boomers. But much of it could be traced to what has become known as "The Obama Factor." Recall that on Feb. 5, DFL caucuses shattered all participation records. Many of Franken's delegates arrived at the convention via "Obama-Franken" subcaucuses.

"The Times They Are A-Changin'" could have been the convention's theme song.

Joan Friant, a delegate from Stillwater who on the eve of the convention decided to support Nelson-Pallmeyer, said that Franken's controversial words had nothing to do with her decision.

"I would have no problem supporting him," Friant said of Franken before the balloting began. "It's tantamount to Bill Clinton. I didn't want to marry him -- I voted for him based on his stands on the issues. I think most Minnesotans will be concerned about the issues that affect them."

But some of the DFL's more-seasoned politicians believe that Franken might represent another aspect of the Obama campaign. Franken could be for some DFLers the sort of albatross the Rev. Jeremiah Wright almost became to Obama.

In a year in which the DFL had high political hopes of running a massive unity campaign -- from Obama to state legislative races -- Franken may be a problem in tightly contested swing districts.

Ashwin Madia, an out-of-nowhere DFLer who is running against Republican Erk Paulsen in the 3rd District seat that is opening because of the retirement of Jim Ramstad, sidestepped the question about whether he could march in a parade with Franken.

"I'm not thinking about that,"

Madia said. "I just know what I have to do. I have to show my independence and moderation because that's what the voters are. The voters in the 3rd District are very thoughtful. They will look at each office separately."

Other DFLers were expressing great concern for the party's No. 1 rising star, U.S. Rep. Tim Walz, who defeated longtime Republican incumbent Gil Gutknecht in Minnesota's 1st Congressional District two years ago. Walz will face the winner of a primary fight between the endorsed Republican, Brian Davis, and state Sen. Dick Day.

Franken contributed mightily to Walz's victory over Gutknecht. Not only did Franken campaign for Walz, but he also made financial contributions to the Walz campaign -- as well as the Senate campaign of Amy Klobuchar -- through Midwest Values, a political action committee he formed before announcing his candidacy for Senate. That PAC, which made contributions to Democrats across the country and to Minnesotans in all levels of races, is dormant at present.

Republicans will blanket the district with photographs of Walz and Franken together. At the same time, they'll surely be asking Walz to "denounce" the man who is now the party's Senate candidate.

Walz was on the podium with Franken following his acceptance speech Saturday. But, a few days before the convention, he did express concerns about some of Franken's work.

Some wonder why party was the last to know of Franken 'skeletons'

One of the big questions coming from many corners of the

DFL convention was why DFLers were the last to know about Franken's problems.

"We have to do a better job of vetting our own candidates," said Minneapolis City Council Member Gary Schiff, a Nelson-Pallmeyer supporter. "Our candidates should not have been put in a position of being surprised by any of this."

Others wondered why some of the questionable things about Franken hadn't been raised early in the campaign by onetime opponent, Mike Ciresi.

A Ciresi adviser, who requested anonymity, said that the campaign did know of some of Franken's potential baggage. But the rules of engagement in campaigns for endorsement are vastly different from general election campaigns.

"Even if you criticize someone for their position on an issue, you get people angry at you," said the adviser. "You have people saying, 'DFLers shouldn't attack other DFLers.'"

There are no rules now. Even Franken's most devoted followers are expecting the Republicans to gleefully keep releasing more material about Franken that they believe will offend Minnesotans.

But what if the times truly are changing? Isn't there a danger this stuff might start backfiring?

"Oh no," says a confident Ron Carey, executive director of the Republican Party.

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Republicans will blanket the district with photographs of Walz and Franken together.

At the same time, they'll surely be asking Walz to "denounce" the man who is now the party's Senate candidate.

Hearings in St. Paul seek truth about conflict half a world away

By SHARON SCHMICKLE

For two years, hundreds of volunteers from Minnesota and other states have worked to get the full story behind Liberia's bloody civil war.

In private sessions — so emotional that counselors stood by to help with the trauma and healing — they listened while Liberians who had fled the conflict poured forth their painful stories of rape, murder and torture.

Now, an unprecedented public phase of that inquiry begins this week in St. Paul. It is historic in that it is the first time the formal process known as Truth and Reconciliation has been staged half a world away from the scene of the conflict, according to The Advocates for Human Rights, which has coordinated the U.S. arm of the inquiry from its offices in Minneapolis.

Truth and Reconciliation commissioners from Liberia will preside over public hearings at Hamline University from June 10-15. Liberians from across the United States have been invited to tell their war stories and contribute recommendations for how their West African nation should deal with the aftermath.

It is the culmination of a process that started with Ahmed Sirleaf II telling the traumatic story of what happened to his family in Liberia. In the first private statement given to trained volunteers, Sirleaf told about the slaughter of his three brothers and two sisters as well as dear cousins and friends.

"I told their stories and gave them voice," said Sirleaf, who now works for the Advocates. "I told about my own experiences as a young person who got caught up in the war, separated from my parents and ended up in a refugee camp in Sierra Leone."

Like Sirleaf, thousands of war survivors eventually found their way to Minnesota. Along with emotional baggage, they carried the history of that awful war. Now the history is housed, story by story, in apartment complexes in Brooklyn Park, bungalows in Brooklyn Center and a scattering of residences across the Twin Cities and across America.

International effort

What started as a local project in 2006 has grown into an ambitious international quest, with teams of volunteers from Minnesota training others to take statements in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and several other American cities as well as in the United Kingdom. Dozens of them have travelled to Liberia and Ghana.

Many of the volunteers are attorneys, like Dulce Foster of the law firm Fredrikson & Byron. She's lost track of the hours she spent on the project, but it's hundreds for sure.

Several major Minnesota-based law firms are helping The Advocates and local Liberian organizations with the project. It is one of the largest pro bono efforts ever coordinated by lawyers in the Twin Cities, Foster said.

It is more than a civic duty for Foster.

She found herself absorbed in "an incredibly compelling story" that isn't well known by most Americans. It's a story Americans need to hear, Foster said, because the histories of the two nations are intricately intertwined.

Liberia was settled by freed American slaves who no longer were welcome in this country. Beginning with a coup in 1980, tension had smoldered until bloodshed erupted in 1989 when the warlord Charles Taylor gathered an army of boys and men to rise against the government.

The waves of fighting that followed sparked almost unbelievable brutality — mass rapes, forced conscription of thousands of child soldiers, innocent civilians burned or buried alive, unborn babies cut from their mothers' wombs in tribal revenge.

Taylor was elected president in 1997, but that brought no peace. He battled an armed rebellion until he stepped down in 2003 and left the country shattered by almost every measure.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was sanctioned as part of a peace agreement in 2003, making Liberia one of about 30 countries that have followed the example South Africa set when apartheid ended. The commission's

mandate is to investigate gross human rights violations, war crimes and economic crimes. It also is to draw out victims and perpetrators in order to create a record and facilitate reconciliation where it is deemed appropriate.

The commission has no authority to prosecute wrongdoers. That would be up to the Liberian government.

25,000 statements

Since the commission officially opened for business two years ago, it has taken more than 25,000 statements from Liberians around the world, Sirleaf said. That process will continue through the end of this year when the work of compiling reports begins.

Public hearings have been held in Liberia, but the one in St. Paul this week is the only one scheduled for the United States.

The process has been intensely controversial. Taylor is charged with war crimes for his role in conflict in Sierra Leone, and a trial is underway in The Hague, in the Netherlands. Many Liberians wanted their new government to follow Sierra Leone into speedier prosecutions.

Further, while the commission systematically gathers information, some former warlords have taken positions in the new government.

One reason wounds are still raw and passions run hot in Minnesota is that Liberians representing the many sides of the conflicts now live here.

Photo by Dulce Foster The children of Liberia have endured years of violence.

"People who did horrible things live here. People who are victims live here," Sirleaf said. "Some of them have been direct players in the conflict, combatants themselves."

Others cannot forgive the slaughter of loved ones. They worry the commission eventually will reach let-by-gones-be-by-gones conclusions.

Foster responds to criticism by explaining that the process is a first step toward any action the evidence might warrant.

"I tell people this is your op-

portunity to be heard, to have your story become part of the record," she said.

The full historic magnitude of the process hit Foster last year when she travelled to Liberia and saw almost heroic efforts to pull out the evidence village by village.

"Here we might go to an apartment complex to take statements," she said. "There, they are walking through the bush with no roads. When they finally arrive in a town, they ask to see the chief and ask if they can sleep on somebody's floor for a couple of weeks."

One group of statement takers found a village completely abandoned.

"Somebody had seen them coming and thought they might be rebels," she said.

Emotional visit

The work also took Sirleaf home for the first time since he fled Monrovia in 1990. The first trip was emotional, but "scary" too, he said.

"I hadn't seen my mother since six months before I left," he said.

He had been living as a student in Monrovia when warring factions cut off roads to his hometown. So he fled toward the Sierra Leone border, as did millions of other Liberians who have described a nightmare of a journey — trudging corpse-strewn roads and dodging ambushes by gangs of machine-gun toting child soldiers.

Sirleaf missed the chance to grieve with his family over their losses. He was grateful to finally see his loved ones, but he was heartbroken over the sight of his hometown in utter ruin.

"Somebody had to tell me where I used to live," he said. "I couldn't recognize it."

On the other hand, Sirleaf expressed immense pride in the work of bringing justice and healing to Liberia. If the commission fulfills his hopes, he will have played a role in far-reaching change and reform.

"It doesn't get much better than that," Sirleaf said.

The hearings are open to the public and they will be webcast at minnpost.com.

COMMUNITY VOICES

A student's memory of Harlan Cleveland

By **PATRICK MENDIS**

The founding dean of the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs passed away on May 30 at 90. Harlan Cleveland's remarkably engaging and imaginative mind kept him active and busy until his final days in Sterling, Va.

After serving as the president of the University of Hawaii, Professor Cleveland arrived in Minnesota in the early 1980s when I was a graduate student at the Humphrey Institute. As a farm boy from Sri Lanka, I was intimidated by him because of his stature as a former assistant secretary of State under President John F. Kennedy and a NATO ambassador under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Still, he made me feel so welcome and put me at ease when he said, "Patrick, I am Harlan; we both seem to have come from tropical islands." He knew that I was nervous and he wanted to know more about my American Field Service (AFS) high school exchange experience in northern Minnesota.

Ambassador Cleveland was born in New York City, graduated from Princeton University, and pursued further studies at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. He was a Marshall Plan administrator, a United Nations relief coordinator in China and Italy, and a senior executive in government before he was appointed as dean of the Maxwell School of Citizenship at Syracuse University. With his

years of tropical island experience, this unassuming American diplomat portrayed himself more as a down-home type than as a product of the East Coast establishment.

In July 1993, he inscribed these words in my copy of his book, "Birth of a New World: An Open Moment for International Leadership":

"For Patrick Mendis, With many thanks for the pleasure of watching your mind working, always hard and always constructively — with admiration, in friendship." — Harlan Cleveland

This inscription extraordinarily revealed the greatness of this man because I was the one who needed to thank him for his kindness, generosity, and friendship. The dean has always been charitable and "Minnesota nice" to me.

His egalitarian attitude reflected Thomas Jefferson, his vibrant mind was as inspiring as Kennedy's youthful looks, and his progressive and compassionate worldview was an extension of Hubert Humphrey. Overall, Ambassador Cleveland had been an authentic Minnesotan, who wrote a fortnightly column on world affairs for the Star Tribune of the Twin Cities from 1987 to 1993. He was also a trusted world leader, who had a global network of his protégés. He once assured me that anyone who comes from the developing world would get the best education in Minnesota with its test of survival skills in subzero temperatures.

Early advocate of online education

The professor, recipient of 22 honorary degrees and the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom, was an early advocate and practitioner of online education long before it became a buzzword — and he introduced me to online teaching. As a leading policy analyst, he recognized the implications of the information revolution and predicted a "nobody in charge" world, which he called "uncentralized" instead of decentralized. As a futurist and author of more than 12 books and 100 journal articles, he predicted the arrival of the knowledge worker in the global workplace and wrote about leadership and the information revolution. As an "accomplished generalist," he was recognized by his alma mater with the Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson Award and the U.S. Peace Corps' Leader for Peace Award. He was been an avid reader of world affairs, a travel enthusiast, and a life-long learner.

During his United Nations tour of the Middle East and his Asian tour as president of the World Academy of Art and Science, I had the privilege to serve as his special assistant. His intellectual curiosity was amazing; he learned how to count to 10 in Arabic from a taxi driver on our way to meet with King Hussein of Jordan in Amman. His energy level was higher than the proverbial "Energizer Bunny" as he climbed a hilltop forest hermitage to recruit the American-born Pali and Buddhist scholar,

Venerable Dr. Bhikkhu Bodhi, in Kandy, Sri Lanka, for the World Academy.

Even though he is no longer with us physically, his remarkable legacy continues. Just as Mahatma Gandhi once said, "My life is my message," Ambassador Cleveland told us: "All real-world problems are interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and international. Policy analysis means combining the rigors of different disciplines, the insights from multiple professions, the work ways of multiple cultures. But remember that a committee of narrow thinkers doesn't produce integrative outcomes. The best interdisciplinary instrument is still the individual human mind."

With this, he often reminded us to develop a "generalist" mindset, as he himself was an embodiment of "General" George Washington in stature, mindset, and dignity.

Patrick Mendis earned his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota and served as an American diplomat and a military professor in the NATO and Pacific Commands through the University of Maryland. He lives in Reston, Va.

Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at salbright@minnpost.com.