

Brickley's seat showed implied presence at Granholm inaugural

One of the things a good reporter tries to do is select out of the myriad of details surrounding a news story the one or two nuggets that best catch the core of what's going on.

There were lots of possibilities available last week as Jennifer Granholm was inaugurated as Michigan's first-ever female governor.

One has to do with the tiny chair, not more than three inches tall, that sat on the podium while she gave her inaugural speech. It bore the label, "Jim Brickley." The late James Brickley was a well-respected former lieutenant governor, president of Eastern Michigan University and chief justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. He was a standard-bearer for the moderate Michigan Republican tradition that reached its best expression in the administration of former Gov. William Milliken.

I asked Chris DeWitt, Granholm's spokesman during the campaign, about the chair. He explained that, "When she was elected attorney general, Jennifer wanted Jim Brickley to help wear her in. But this never happened; I think it was blocked by John Engler. Then Jim Brickley died. So before last November's election, Joyce Brithwaite (a distinguished Milliken administration spear carrier and Brickley's wife) sent Granholm this miniature chair with Brickley's name on it as a kind of a symbolic gift. I made sure it was on the podium when she gave her speech."

Here's why I fastened on to this piece of detail: It brings home the striking parallels between the administrations of Govs. Granholm and Milliken.

Granholm is a moderate Democrat, just as Milliken was a moderate Republican. Granholm knows full well she needs to govern out of the center, working in a bipartisan manner with the GOP-dominated legislature, just as the Milliken-Brickley administration worked with the Democratic-controlled legislature of the time. And Granholm realizes a big chunk of her support comes from moderate, suburban, centrist voters made uneasy by the strident right-wing image of the Republican Party. Readers with long memories will recall that Bill Milliken dominated politics in Michigan for a long time by appealing repeatedly to suburban "Milliken Democrats."

Certainly the major message Granholm was trying to communicate during her inauguration was that the tone in Lansing is going to be very different from that set by her predecessor.



Phil Power

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essor, John Engler. Granholm's speech — "Walk with me, talk with me, work with me" — sent an inclusive message markedly different from the inner-directed, tough-minded, Lansing-oriented approach that so characterized the Engler administration. The religious service at the beginning of the day was a fully reformed example; it involved Christians, Jewish, Greek Orthodox, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh clergy.

Democratic partisans praised her performance. "She's just as good a communicator as Bill Clinton," gushed one, "without all the baggage." And most political commentators and editorial pages around the state said nice things about Granholm's initial moves. Republicans agreed. The two top Republican legislative leaders, House Speaker Rick Johnson and Senate Majority Leader-elect Ken Sikema, were prominent on the platform and had nice things to say — at least initially — about cooperating with Gov. Granholm.

Especially notable was the relatively warm reception she received from the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, normally fiercely Republican. Tricia Kinley, director of tax policy and economic development for the chamber, told me: "We are going to try to help her keep some of her campaign themes to cut spending and not raise taxes. If she can bring the business community in and gather ideas about the future of Michigan, we would be more than happy to help out."

The new governor has a tough row to hoe. She is the only Democrat in a state capital dominated by Republicans. She is facing an enormous budget deficit, which means as a practical matter that she won't have any money to pay for new and snazzy stuff for at least a couple of years. So she's going to have to rely on goodwill, bipartisanship and a good dose of symbolism.

Maybe Jim Brickley's chair on the podium was too small for an adult to sit in, but I suspect it will loom large in the early going of the Granholm administration.

Phil Power is the chairman of the board of the company that owns this newspaper. He would be pleased to get your reactions to this column either at (734) 953-2047 or at pppower@homecomm.net.



Will Tupper

War protest memories inspire quest for peace

I was 1991 when I took part in my first war protest. The world was worlds different then. With changes occurring on the Global Stage at a break-neck speed, with Americans happily figuring out they were entitled to sue anyone they wanted over anything they didn't like, disagreed with, or felt the contents of was too hot for their lap as they pulled out of their neighborhood's fast-food drive-through.

The economy was heading straight down the toilet, taking consumer confidence and a teeter-totter stock market right with it. It was utterly stupid. We still watched them. The man in the Oval Office was named Bush, who had a Defense Secretary named Cheney. The country was ready for something, anything, to lift us out of the economical and moral slump that had left us with only the big questions, like would Skippy ever get to kiss Mallory on Family Ties?

America's pump was primed for war. It was unending, walking through the halls of O.E. Dunkel Middle School in Farmington Hills, seeing my geography and history teachers huddled together in the teacher's lounge, staring at the newscaster informing all of America which buildings we'd hit, what people we'd killed.

Like it was a game, keeping a running tally on the slaughter of humanity. But as young men and women, we did possess that uncanny adolescent knack for turning even the most awful of atrocities into something funny. Or at least halfway funny. The one example I remember best was during "Current Events" in social studies class, when someone brought in a newspaper story saying Saddam Hussein had declared this to be, "The Mother of all Battles!" My friends and I made up jokes that we thought were as good as a saxophone solo's turns and twists, variations on that bad man's mean theme.

Suddenly, every exam we had became, "The Mother of all Tests!" Every test we didn't pass became, "The Mother of all Failures!" that we'd all vow to never, ever let happen again.

The humor was a way for us to cope with our Mother of all Fears. Whispered rumors at lockers between classes, talking together at lunch about someone's older brother who was sure he'd be drafted. Or what would happen to our science class if Mr. Kovalevski, our fresh-faced new teacher (who was definitely in the age range) was called on to serve our country. Would they cancel the rest of class?

OK, that part didn't sound so bad. I wasn't the best at science. I can't say I remember what it was that finally set us off. I'll never be completely sure, but the fact that probably broke our adolescent back was when we heard General Norman Schwarzkopf had ordered 50,000 body bags for possible (probable?) casualties. That was a number which to us meant

there could be that many less friends and brothers, fathers and, yes, even science teachers in the world.

We were young. This fueled us with The Mother of all Anger. We had to do something. Word spread like wildfire through more whispers and passed notes between classes. War protest. We were going to stage a war protest. When? Seventh period. Where? In front of the school. What were we going to do? Didn't matter. I guess we figured staging it was enough, and that the rest would just work itself out.

The bell rang, and tension was tangible as we all just kind of, well, stood around, and refused to go back to class. Teachers and the Principal waded their way through our collective mass of happy bodies, issuing stern warnings like, "OK," and, "That's enough," and, "Time to get back to class." But we didn't budge.

We didn't do much of anything, until one brave adolescent pacifist started singing a John Lennon song. You know which one.

"All we are saying ... is give peace a chance."

Everyone began to sing along. And that would have been just grand, a real dynamo crescendo to our little protest-show. Only this was 1991, and none of us knew any of the rest of the words. So, we'd sing the chorus.

"All we are saying ... is give peace a chance."

Then we'd pause and stare at each other, unsure of what to do next. Not coming up with a single suitable answer, we'd sing that one line again.

"All we are saying ... is give peace a chance."

This went on for a while, maybe 20 minutes or a half hour before the closeness of our bodies or the boredom of repetition set in, and we allowed ourselves to be herded back to class, feeling we'd definitely won a moral victory, if nothing else.

But what, you may ask, does any of this have to do with the war that it seems near certain we'll be waging in 2003? I say everything.

Because almost daily, I read editorials and reports from both conservatives and so-called liberals who support this new war on Iraq. We'll really get 'em this time, won't we? And to those who write such words of never-faltering, let's go get 'em patriots, I want to ask a few questions.

Why are you supporting this, and not teaching your kids about pacifist revolutionaries, who've gotten things done with far fewer broken bones, bombs, blood, dead family and friends?

Isn't it time, finally in this still fresh century, to again begin believing in, and finally practicing nonviolent means to achieve our ends? Shouldn't the next generation of the world's children get to learn the verses to go with that chorus, and how to take nonviolent action to make sure that happens?

"All we are saying ... is give peace a chance."

Or maybe we should bring back Skippy and Mallory.

Will Tupper is a senior at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.



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