

# ‘When He Talked, People Listened’

## Walter Dale Miller’s Time As Governor Recalled During Monday Memorial Service In Pierre

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The proverbial old crowd, many now long retired, somberly gathered Monday afternoon for the memorial service honoring the life of former Gov. Walter Dale Miller.

The ceremony came on what would have been his ninetieth birthday. But he had died last week, on Sept. 28, while in Dallas, Texas, during a trip to visit the library of former President George W. Bush.

More than 200 people filled the rows of chairs in the rotunda and halfway down the east and west wings of the Capitol’s second floor. More people watched from the third and fourth floor overlooks.

In the very front, facing the assembled, sat two rows of dignitaries who held special connections to the former governor. Among them was former First Lady Linda Mickelson Graham.

Side by side she and Miller led the escort behind the casket of the late Gov. George S. Mickelson down the front steps of the Capitol on that April afternoon 23 years ago.

Miller was lieutenant governor for Mickelson from 1987 until the unimaginable news arrived on the afternoon of April 19, 1993.

The state airplane, having lost a propeller blade because of a flaw that the Federal Aviation Association didn’t warn pilots about, couldn’t stay aloft in the Iowa sky on the return trip from Cincinnati, Ohio.

As the state pilots Ron Becker and David Hansen fought to make a landing, the turboprop crashed into a silo. All eight men including Mickelson died.

Suddenly Miller was South Dakota’s governor.

The New Underwood rancher, businessman and long-time Republican figure had to step up for 20 months and 19 days to lead South Dakota during one of the hardest episodes in the state’s history.

At Monday’s service, state Rep. G. Mark Mickelson answered the question many people have wondered for more than 25 years: What led his father to select Miller as his running mate in 1986?

Miller had spent the previous 20 years in the state House of Representatives. Mickelson, a Brookings lawyer, was House speaker for the 1979-1980 term. Miller as speaker pro tem was in line for the next term to follow Mickelson in the top spot.

Mark Mickelson recalled his father sometimes stopping with the family at the Miller ranch. Watching the men together, he said he could tell his father felt that Miller “had all the attributes of a good partner.”

No one on Monday mentioned the 1994 primary election that ended Miller’s hope of winning a term as governor of his own. Only Gov. Dennis Daugaard made a slight reference, using the word “squabbles.”

Both Miller and former Gov. Bill Janklow sought the Republican nomination in the June 1994 primary. Janklow won.

Miller spent the next seven months trying to hold together state government’s budget. The South Dakota Supreme Court shut down video lottery from August until voters could decide that November whether to legalize it in the state constitution.

Daugaard noted that Miller was



PHOTO: ANDY OGAN

The body of former South Dakota Gov. Walter Dale Miller is removed from the state Capitol in Pierre Monday following a memorial service held for him.

South Dakota’s first full-time lieutenant governor.

“The state Capitol became Walt’s second home year-round,” Daugaard said. “He was the right man at the right time, the steady seasoned cowboy.”

State Attorney General Marty Jackley described Miller as the “cowboy governor” and “Meade County’s favorite son.” As a legislator Miller technically represented Meade County because that’s where the ranch was, rather than Pennington County where New Underwood is; the Jackley family roots are in Meade County too.

Jackley repeatedly praised Miller for his loyalty.

Steve Kirby of Sioux Falls, who served as lieutenant governor for Miller, told the story of how he came to get that appointment. Kirby said he called the governor’s office in the days after the plane crash and volunteered to help in any way he could.

Days later, on May 12, 1993, the Kirbys found a message on their telephone answering machine. “Seven words,” Kirby said: “Steve – Walt Miller – Please call me – Thanks.” Kirby said he joked to his family that the governor was calling to ask him to be his No. 2.

Turned out, he was.

The laughs came Monday afternoon with Frank Brost’s turn at the micro-

phone. He had been Mickelson’s chief of staff, but they had just parted ways. The plane crash changed those plans.

Miller told Brost that Miller needed him, according to Brost.

“I said, I’ll stay as long as you want,” Brost recalled.

Brost, his voice still carrying that same raw prairie gravel of a sheepherder’s son who took a strange turn into the halls of state government, acknowledged the politics of Mickelson, who wasn’t averse to seeking a sales-tax increase, didn’t always match the politics of Miller, whom Brost said had a “conservative approach.”

Brost said Mickelson and Miller were a great team.

“He was a great leader,” Brost said about Miller’s time as governor. “He said about as few words as possible, but when he talked, people listened.”

A motorcade was arranged to accompany Miller’s body to Rapid City on Monday after the service and a reception.

The funeral is set for Wednesday in Rapid City, starting at 10 a.m. MT, at Calvary Lutheran Church, 5311 Sheridan Lake Rd. Burial will follow at the Viewfield cemetery near the Miller ranch north of New Underwood.

### Accused School Shooter Indicted

CANTON (AP) — A grand jury has indicted the 16-year-old South Dakota student accused of shooting his high school principal.

The *Argus Leader* reports the indictment charges Mason Buhl with first-degree attempted murder and commission of a felony while armed with a firearm.

Buhl is accused of confronting Harrisburg High School Principal Kevin Lein with a handgun in his office Wednesday and firing a single shot that lightly wounded the educator in the arm. Buhl was subdued by other school officials and no one else was hurt.

Buhl is being held without bond. His attorney, Mike Butler, didn’t immediately return a call seeking comment on the charges.

Buhl’s father, Rodney Buhl, told The Associated Press Wednesday his son has been very quiet over the past year and thinks he’s “just mad at everybody.”

### Neb. Mental Health Care Access Studied

GRAND ISLAND, Neb. (AP) — Experts say the lack of access to mental health care in rural areas of Nebraska isn’t improving.

The June 2015 Nebraska Behavioral Health Workforce report says there wasn’t a mental health provider in 48 of Nebraska’s 93 counties in 2014. According to the report, roughly 84 percent of psychiatrists are in metropolitan counties.

Dr. Howard Liu, director of the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska, said rural areas don’t have all the resources to support mental health care. He told the *Grand Island Independent* that the shortage could worsen, with the report showing more than half of the licensed workforce as being older than 50.

“It’s really going to be truly an acute shortage in the next few years as those folks retire,” Liu said.

Loan repayment programs are giving incentives for providers to work in rural areas, said Tom Rauner, primary care office director for Nebraska’s Office of Rural Health. He said officials are working to figure out the best way to retain mental health professionals in rural areas.

It can be difficult to recruit providers to such areas, Liu said, if they have no ties to Nebraska.

“We really have to invest in our local students and mentor them all the way through,” Liu said.

### Omaha Police Investigating Shootings

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Authorities are investigating the overnight shootings of two women in Omaha.

Omaha television station KETV reports that Omaha police were called to the first shooting at 1:15 a.m. on Monday. Officers learned 22-year-old Tierra Williams had left the scene, but she was found a few blocks away with an apparent gunshot wound.

Williams was taken to the Nebraska Medical Center in serious condition with a non-life-threatening injury. Authorities say she was uncooperative with officers and offered few details about how she became injured.

Police say 23-year-old Talaysia Tanner arrived at Bergan Hospital with an apparent graze wound. Authorities say she told officers she was struck by gunfire at the same location as the first reported shooting.

### Annette Bosworth’s Husband Indicted

SIoux FALLS (AP) — The husband of former U.S. Senate candidate Annette Bosworth has been indicted on election law violations in connection with his wife’s problematic 2014 campaign.

A Hughes County indictment charges Chad Haber with one count each of offering false or forged instrument for filing and perjury.

Authorities say Haber turned in a petition nominating his wife Annette Bosworth that included false or forged signatures.

A former candidate for state attorney general, Haber, says he received the court summons Saturday and is expected to appear in court later this month. He says the charges are unfounded.

A jury in May found Bosworth guilty of six counts each of perjury and filing false documents in connection with her campaign petitions. She avoided serving prison time when a judge handed down a suspended sentence.

### Student’s Fossil Find Is New Species

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Fossils found by a University of Nebraska-Lincoln student in New Mexico have led to the discovery of a new genus and rodent-like species.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports the fossils were found in May 2014 by then-sophomore Carissa Raymond in New Mexico’s San Juan Basin, during her first fossil hunt. She saw a row of small black teeth coming out of the ground.

“I knew it was different and big and had very interesting teeth,” Raymond said. “But I couldn’t have told you it was something new.”

Raymond blanketed the fossilized jawbones and a partial skull roof in toilet paper and took them to Thomas Williamson, curator at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science.

“When Carissa found this thing and brought it to me, I instantly suspected it was new,” Williamson said in a release from the University of Nebraska. “I’d never seen anything like it before.”

A paper published Monday by the *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society* says the new species, named *Kimbetopsalis simmonsae*, was alive roughly 65 million years ago during the Mesozoic and Paleocene eras. Researchers believe the rodent-like animal weighed as much as 45 pounds.

### Boat Registration

#### Fees May Rise

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department is asking to increase the registration fees for boats that are more than 12 feet in length by \$5.

The Capital Journal that department staff made the proposal during the Game, Fish and Parks Commission’s meeting last week.

The fee for gas motor boats of less than 19 feet would jump to \$25, while longer gas motor boats would increase to \$45. Owners of non-motorized and electric-motor boats would go up by \$2.50.

**MORNING COFFEE**  
**AM 1450**

**WEEKDAYS**  
**MONDAY-  
FRIDAY**

Tuesday, October 6

7:40 am Yankton Library

(Kathy Wibbels)

8:20 am Calvary Kids

(Scilla Huber)

8:45 am Dakota Museum

(Laura Beall)

Wednesday, October 7

7:40 am MVCA

(Lauren Nelson)

8:20 am Hy-Vee Foods

(Chef Staci)


8:45 am MMC Athletics

(Chuck Iverson, Andrew Baker)

2015

women's

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**Tickets \$20.00**

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Proceeds benefit:  
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