

# Different Strokes

Former governors differed in style, but achieved similar results

By Quane Kenyon

**Veteran  
Associated Press  
reporter compares  
the leadership  
styles of Govs.  
Andrus and Batt**



ne is polished, some might say suave, gregarious, and by Idaho standards Kennedyesque. The other short, unremarkable, straight-spoken, an Idaho version of Harry Truman.

Side by side, Cecil Andrus and Phil Batt are a study in contrasts. Yet, both are considered among Idaho's most effective governors because, despite their stylistic differences, they got things done.

They are perfect examples of leaders who come in many forms; proof that effective leaders take many paths but always end their travels in the same place — successful public policy, in this case.

“People saw they were both effective,” says Dave Patton, director of Boise State's Center for Public Policy and Administration. “And when people look at their leaders, that's what the people care about.”



*Former governors Phil Batt and Cecil Andrus may even differ in their putting styles, but you can't argue with their success in public policy.*



Batt

As for accomplishments, both men amassed an impressive record.

A Democratic outsider at the time, Andrus rode into office in 1970 as the state's first major advocate for the environment. Throughout his 14 years as governor, he gave protection of natural resources top priority. He led Idaho into an unprecedented period of growth and economic prosperity and started the process of removing

federal nuclear waste from the state. He also prodded the Legislature into the first substantial funding for the Department of Commerce and always stood for better funding for education.

Five years after he left office, the state still feels and remembers his influence, a testament to his lasting legacy of environmental awareness and a "can-do" attitude that led to years of sound growth.

Batt, a Republican insider, inherited the nuclear waste problem and doggedly stuck with it until the federal government committed to a firm timetable for waste removal. In one of the major accomplishments of his four-year term, he pushed the Legislature to approve workers' compensation insurance for farm laborers. Batt also reversed a longstanding tradition among Idaho's leaders of ignoring the concerns of American Indians. He met regularly with Indian leaders, if not solving problems, at least discussing them.

Batt's biggest legacy may be sound state finances. He pushed for changes in the investment of state endowment funds and prodded the Legislature into adding more tax auditors, a move projected to add \$20 million per year to state coffers.

"Leadership" meant different things to Batt and Andrus, however.

At age 38, Andrus was one of the youngest governors ever elected. Andrus' four terms and 14 years as governor make him the state's longest-serving chief executive.

He was a logger and then in insurance before being elected to the Idaho Senate, where he learned from the "bumps of knowledge" he encountered. "I started out young enough in the state Senate that I had room to make mistakes," Andrus says. "I learned that you don't make the same mistakes twice."

Andrus may have worked from the outside, but he also understood the workings of state government and used that to his advantage, says Jim Weatherby, chair of Boise State's department of public policy and administration and a longtime Idaho political observer.

And Andrus wasn't afraid to use unorthodox means to get things done. He talks about "my 20-second instant fit" that he used on occasion — pretending to be angry and outraged to make his point. He used it sparingly, he says, so it wouldn't lose its effectiveness.

And, sometimes, the "fit" took on a grand form, such as in 1987 when he ordered the Idaho State Police to stop a train carrying federal nuclear waste — a step he admits he had no authority to take. But it worked. The defiant gesture was popular at home, and the federal government learned that Idaho couldn't be pushed around on the waste storage issue.

It was a risky move, but Andrus could sense when and how he could rally the people behind his vision — a skill necessary for a Democrat trying to govern with a Republican-led Legislature in a Republican state.

"He had an unerring sense for what would sell and would not sell well," says W. Anthony "Tony" Park, who was elected attorney general in 1970 — the same year Andrus won his first election as governor. "He knew what was doable and what was not doable. He made up his mind and then went and did it."

## Good Governance

What advice do former governors have for aspiring leaders? *FOCUS* asked Cecil Andrus and Phil Batt to share their words of wisdom.

### Phil Batt's characteristics of good leaders

- The ability to make decisions.
- The willingness to accept responsibility if things go wrong.
- Timeliness.
- Humility.
- The ability to delegate authority and review those to whom authority is given.

### Cecil Andrus' rules for governors

- Respect the people you deal with, but make it clear they must follow directions. You are the boss.
- Your name is the one on the ballot. You are ultimately responsible for everything that happens in the agencies under the authority of the governor's office.
- Delegate authority, but never ask people to do something you wouldn't do yourself.
- Insist that you are kept informed and notified quickly about problems.
- Hire good people because they will make you look good.

When he decided on a direction, he communicated his vision like few others in modern Idaho politics. His 15 State of the State speeches often tackled broad issues with clear themes on the direction he wanted to steer Idaho, which helped him build the public support he needed to enact his policies, Weatherby says.

It often took a fight, and sometimes took several years, before his vision became reality, but his ability to build public support helped him win the day and forge a legacy that still casts a shadow over Idaho politics.

"We're still talking about Andrus, and I don't know if that's true about the other governors we've had," Patton says. "He was able to do things under difficult circumstances and because of that he has a longer lasting impression."

Then there's Phil Batt.

Batt was much more orthodox, using the skills gained from his many years as a leader in state politics to accomplish most of his goals. He was more concerned with the mechanics of government than abstract concepts. He promised, and delivered, a no-nonsense, business-like approach to government that featured cost-cutting and lower taxes.

"Phil Batt — what you see is what you get," Weatherby says. "Phil Batt puts on no airs. He told it like it was and was very specific about what he intended to accomplish."

An onion farmer from Wilder who learned the trade by working for his father, Batt has vast experience in state government, which helped when he became governor. "I know where the bones are buried," was his favorite quote at the time. He served in the Idaho House and Senate. His Senate peers elected him floor leader and later president pro tem. Some called him the "Little Giant," a mixed metaphor referring to his short stature but big influence.

He served four years as lieutenant governor, which proved to be a good base for his nearly victorious 1982 gubernatorial campaign.

Later, he took over a battered Idaho Republican Party and by 1994 restored the GOP to prominence. It became evident that spring that if Batt wanted the Republican nomination for the seat Andrus was vacating, he would be a strong favorite.

"I've been in leadership all of my life," Batt says. "I learned that if you want satisfaction from a project, you'd better participate in it. And you get far more out of it if you participate in the leadership end of anything."

Batt didn't have the polish, and he certainly didn't have the gift of speech that Andrus had. But people trusted him as much as Andrus because he led by example and he spoke about his policies in clear, simple terms that the public understood.

"Leadership comes down to translating what has to be done, and both of these men



Andrus

could do that," Patton says. "A good leader has got to be able to tell people what they want to hear and in a way that they want to hear it."

And like Andrus, Batt never backed down when a principle was at stake. For example, he forced workers' compensation for farmworkers through the Legislature even though he knew he'd have to fight, and possibly lose, some of his friends who opposed extending coverage. It was worth

became only a difficult task for Batt as a Republican.

Neither relied on political posturing to score points, but neither was afraid to take a strong stand when one was needed. "We both have the courage of our convictions," Batt says of himself and his predecessor. "We had no hesitation to sell something if we thought it should be sold. We both realized that if something needs to be done, it must be done quickly to be effective."

Both also knew the best way each could sell to the public. Andrus worked well when he had a vision to impart; Batt's skill was setting a specific policy goal, such as limiting government growth, and working quietly behind the scenes to achieve it. But each man had what Weatherby calls a common touch because in their own style they could talk to the people.

Finally, both could be trusted. Through his years in state government, Batt was

known for standing by his convictions and always doing what he said. Andrus was the same way, almost to the point of stubbornness, but people knew that if Andrus made a commitment, he would carry it out.

And that may be the greatest testament to their success. As Patton says, leadership is all about trust, and the people certainly trusted them. □

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**'Leadership comes down to translating what has to be done, and both of these men could do that.'**

the cost, Batt said at the time, because it was the right thing to do.

On the surface, the two men appear as different as night and day. But dig beneath, say Patton and Weatherby, and the former governors are more similar than at first glance, revealing clues as to what makes a successful statewide leader in Idaho.

Both are centrists who advocated similar policies even though they represented different political parties. For instance, both favored workers' compensation for farmworkers. But what was an impossible task for Andrus as a Democrat — passing a workers' comp bill in the Legislature —