

## **Bakke retires from Moorhead Public Service Commission**

By Katherine Tweed **Posted** October 12th, 2016



At Les Bakke's final meeting as a Moorhead Public Service Commissioner Sept. 30, he turned the tables on his fellow commissioners.

Their plan was to have Bakke make the motions and have his name prominent in the minutes. "It didn't take Les long to figure out what was going on. He sat there and wouldn't make the motions," Bill Schwandt, general manager of Moorhead Public Service said.

Bakke enjoyed the camaraderie of the commission. He appreciated the gesture, and with his typical humor, did a friendly back at'cha to the other representatives. It probably helped that his "sweetie," wife Bev Lake, was in the audience that day.

That turnabout is typical of Bakke's character, Schwandt says, adding, "He was our resident parliamentarian, gently correcting us if there was a procedural deviation."

Bakke was first appointed by former Mayor Mark Voxland and re-appointed by Mayor Del Rae Williams. He served three terms on the commission.

He is proud of what the commission does and has done. The City of Moorhead operates the water and electric utility, Moorhead Public Service. The commission is responsible for control, management and operation, and it is responsible for approving the utility budget, as well as Reestablishing water and electric rates for consumers.

After a 36-year career in information technology at Minnesota State University Moorhead, Bakke became the IT director for the city. In 2010, he was part of the emergency operations center during flood time. The IT center was in the basement of the Law Enforcement Center. There were concerns the basement might flood, devastating city services and communication.

He and his “marvelous” staff and volunteers were able to move all equipment to a higher floor in only three hours. The city had only a few minutes of down time.

“It was a cool time, a busy time. It was a challenge and I loved it. I love a crisis. The thing about crisis is you can really find out who you can count on. Matt Siiro was a Clay County deputy then. He was a decider. He was calm, solved problems and moved on to the next topic during the emergency,” Bakke said.

Schwandt says Bakke giving credit to others is typical of him.

Bakke served in the U.S. Air Force, intercepting Russian military voice communication and air defense activity; then Veterans Service Officer at MSUM; then MSUM assistant registrar; then director of system institutional research for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities while information technology director at MSUM; and then, information technology director for the City of Moorhead.

Now “retired,” he continues to serve on boards and commissions for the Heritage Education Commission, Moorhead Community Access Media, Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County, Housing and Rehabilitation Authority of Clay County, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon of Moorhead, and League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley.

Or, you might find him teaching a genealogy class for community education.

Or, volunteering at the Rourke Art Museum where Bev is on the board.

Or, simply extending a hand where needed.

No matter what, Bakke will fulfill what Schwandt says about him: “Les will be right there helping. He’s humble but not shy, gentle with high standards. We appreciate Les a lot.”