

New Mexico shouldn't feel Inferior

Inside the Capitol, by Fred McCaffrey

SANTA FE--What is this wave of inferiority which sometimes seems to wash over New Mexico? Why do we insist on believing our state is the one which brings up the tail-end of the procession?

That's all right for people in Mississippi or Arkansas to believe about their place, but it doesn't apply to us.

Why there are times when we are downright out in front.

The thought comes when we read the prepared news release about the fact that Larry Gordon, of our Health and Environment Department, is going to be the new president of the American Public Health Association.

Gordon, Deputy Secretary of that important branch of state government, is a true pioneer, which the national body of specialists in the field has now recognized.

He put together the nation's first city-size comprehensive environmental health department right here in little old New Mexico.

That was back in the days when Larry worked for the City of Albuquerque, before

he began to stir the state to move in the same direction.

As much as anyone else alive, he was the motivating force in the creation of the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Agency – and many generations of New Mexicans still to come will have reason to be grateful to him for that.

Just as one little extra, he also planned and helped bring into being the nation's only comprehensive laboratory systems, which supports all parts of our state government.

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One of Gordon’s secrets is steady and protracted plugging. He’s not a high profile guy, full of zing and vinegar; in fact, in temperament he tends to be on the shy side. But when he’s onto something which he thinks will be good for city of state, he stays on it, without let-up, like a bulldog. Eventually it gets done – at which point he moves on to the next project.

Anyway, he’s an outstanding man in his field, who, as the Scriptures suggest, had more recognition as a prophet outside of his home territory than in it.

His predecessor as head of the Public Health Association is the commissioner of mental health for the city of New York, who happens to have on of the happiest names in America – Dr. June Christmas.

It’s good that the boss of this 30,000 member organization in 1981 is the same man who is deputy secretary of our state’s Department of Health and Environment.

We congratulate him, and remind all New Mexican’s that excessive modesty may be one of our state’s failings. Maybe nobody likes those Texas boasters, but nobody ignores them either.

We ought to be telling the world about the things in which we lead, like

Albuquerque being the first city in the Nation to adopt a Fair Employment Practices act or any of the other things in which we have shown leadership for good.

There’s no use our being so hard when we judge ourselves. Maybe we ought to spend the next six months or so jus talking about the ways in which we’re mighty fine folks.