

Krolicki leaves office having made a difference

By Susan Wood

Nevada Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki may serve his last day on the job come January, but it will always be Labor Day in which he made the most lasting impression on former state official Sue Wagner.

Fourteen years ago on that day, Wagner narrowly survived a plane crash with Krolicki while campaigning for her lieutenant governor's seat, along with Nevada Treasurer Bob Seale, who was also injured. Seale's wife died. Krolicki was ejected from the plane and got help at a farmhouse miles away.

"He calls me every Labor Day," Wagner told *Lake Tahoe News* in a soft voice. "I'll always be indebted to him for that. He was instrumental in getting us out of the plane."



Brian
Krolicki

Like others in high-profile state office posts, Wagner complimented Krolicki on his two terms as lieutenant governor – in particular for going “out of his way” to bring business into the state. Krolicki's background is in finance for the private sector and has used it effectively in the public arena.

“He’s done an incredible job as lieutenant governor,” she said.

Wagner believes Krolicki has managed to view life with a seize-the-day mentality since surviving the plane crash, causing him to excel in his long list of endeavors and accomplishments. They include his service as chairman on the Reno Tahoe Winter Games Coalition and his tenure as president of the state Senate.

Wagner is in good company with her assessment of Krolicki. Gov. Brian Sandoval holds Krolicki in the same high regard.

Since coming into the highest state office, Sandoval has been tested in the last few years with an ensemble of tragedies, ranging from a mass shooting at the IHOP in Carson City to an air show disaster in Reno.

“We’ve talked about that day, and I can’t wish that on anyone. If you survive something like that and you remind yourself to make the most of each day, then there’s something to that with Brian,” Sandoval told *Lake Tahoe News*, further admitting to having spent poignant moments with “BK.” The two Nevada leaders have embraced their nicknames. Sandoval joked he’s referred to as “BS.”

The duo has traveled extensively together.

Sandoval said Krolicki is protective of his home turf – Lake Tahoe, but he has also covered the far reaches of the high desert state. Krolicki, his wife and their three daughters live in Stateline.

“He can never get enough of Nevada,” Sandoval said.

He reflected on a time when both men wanted to get home after attending the Ely Crab Crack. They left Ely in the middle of the night and kept each other awake chatting.

“You really get to know somebody when you travel Highway 50,”

said the governor, who has known Krolicki personally and professionally for 20 years.

“I respected him immediately for his work ethic, and he’s a family man,” he said, also citing Krolicki’s sense of humor.

Sandoval said he hasn’t been privy to whether Krolicki ever thought about challenging the popular governor in their Republican Party.

“Whatever he chooses to do, I’m sure he’ll do it extremely well,” Sandoval said.

Nevada Commission on Tourism Deputy Director Larry Friedman, who threw out “ambassador” as a title for Krolicki, shared those thoughts.

Friedman mentioned being impressed that Krolicki only missed the state’s Rural Conference one time in eight years. He cites Krolicki’s accessibility to many residents over the years as a commendable quality.

“Not only has he always been at the awards ceremony we’ve asked him to speak at, he has stayed the whole time. This is huge. He enjoys it, and he’s fun,” Friedman said. “The constituents are there, and they have access to him.”

And beyond Nevada, Krolicki has a reputation for touting the state overseas – whether it involves trips to China, Japan or India. Friedman said he overheard the latter nation’s officials saying “he gets it” when it comes to tourism.

“He made such a difference when he was there. He reached out to everybody,” Friedman said.

And now the state could be gearing up to reach out to him. Friedman mentioned talk of a tribute to Krolicki at next fall’s Governor’s Conference in Reno. Details are being worked out.

Personally, Friedman noted Krolicki's tenacity in the early years. He referenced Krolicki's two blind dates he had with his wife, Kelly. They were seven years apart. But the last one must have sealed it for them.

To those who know the lieutenant governor well, patience and dedication are two of his strong virtues.

Jon Killoran, executive director of the Reno Tahoe Winter Games Coalition, cited the long-standing commitment Krolicki has maintained to get the Olympics back to the Tahoe-Reno region. The coalition is working on securing the 2026 Winter Games; a full two decades after Krolicki became involved in the effort.

"First and foremost, his passion and vision have always been there since the time of bringing the Olympic project to my attention," Killoran said, calling the chairman very approachable to everyone – even across the party aisle.

The executive cited Krolicki's die-hard dedication to hosting the World Financial Group's curling event in Las Vegas in January.

"That was a watermark moment for our movement," Killoran told *Lake Tahoe News*. Some competitors went on to represent countries at the Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, a month later.

The accomplishments don't end there. Krolicki has helped to organize the World Curling Federation Congress next September at the Peppermill in Reno, the first North American city to host the event.

Killoran said the events have built credibility for the state and the Olympic movement.

"It's been a pleasure and an honor to work with him," Killoran said.

Krolicki seems to feel the same way about those he has worked

with over the years.

“I’ve walked in that capitol building for 24 years, and I’ve had many, many good memories,” he told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Some days were better than others, as in all jobs in public service.”

Gaining good jobs for Nevadans and promoting the state are goals Krolicki holds near and dear.

“Economic opportunities and job creation is what public service is really about,” he said.

Apparently, he may soon live on the other end of that mantra.

“I’m excited about the possibilities,” he said, declining to provide specifics of what he’s planning to do.

He didn’t rule out a future public service opportunity.

“There are incredible successes that will forever outlast my time here. It’s been a great privilege,” he said. “It’s time to step down. I think that’s healthy to see where the journey takes us.”

Krolicki has earned the reputation of being a survivor – one who takes a tragic experience and turns it into a lesson for his professional life. He speaks of the plane crash.

“That accident was brutal. It took away or forever changed some extraordinary people. I was the only one not physically impaired from that crash. I must be the luckiest man in the world – not many people get to walk away from being ejected from an airplane. My public service has been a great way to manifest that,” he said.

There are other reasons he feels lucky – and a survivor.

His wife Kelly was a catch he wouldn’t say no to on their double blind date. He snickered at the thought of her agreeing

to it for a second time years later. She first met him prior to the plane crash.

He believes they were in different places of their lives on the two dates. Now, they have blossomed in similar interests, including travel, the outdoors and time with their girls, ages 12, 14 and 16. When asked if it's expected the male suitors would come to the door to greet the girls, his response was quick and decisive in pure Nevada style: "The Krolickis wholeheartedly believe in the Second Amendment."

But the right to bear arms may take a back seat to the right to give bear hugs to those who have worked so closely with him and will miss "BK."

"I've always said I have the best job in Nevada because I work for the nicest guy. He's ethical and honest," Linda Frederick, Krolicki's longtime assistant, said.

Frederick followed Krolicki from his wife's golf course development company to Krolicki's two terms at the state treasurer's office to now – logging 14 years with the man.

In that time, Krolicki created the Nevada College Savings Plan and the Nevada Prepaid Tuition Program, along with the Gov. (Kenny) Guinn Millennium Scholarship. As state treasurer, Krolicki endured some of the largest corporate failures in U.S. history during the Enron and WorldCom scandals. Krolicki ensured Nevada taxpayers didn't lose money in the financial disasters. In 2004, his peers selected him as the nation's "most outstanding state treasurer."

Krolicki is not only a veteran of financial affairs, he has assisted military veterans in their post-war efforts, hosting conferences at both ends of the state.

In the earlier years of community service, Krolicki served as a Douglas County planning commissioner and member of the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Task Force for the

state.

Where he will land after being termed out as the No. 2 man in Nevada politics remains to be seen.