

*Remembering  
Al Marshall*

*1921-2008*





*Al Marshall being sworn in as secretary to the governor, January 3, 1967. Photo courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center.*

## Introduction — Joseph E. Persico

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**A** sure sign of someone’s influence on others is how much they treasure favorite memories of that person. Everyone who knew Al Marshall has such indelible recollections. Here we, who knew Al, honor him by sharing those memories.

For those fortunate enough to have worked with the man, or for him, or to observe him in action, leadership was at the very core of Al Marshall: that indefinable quality that makes others eager to follow in the wake of another’s personal magnetism. Al took a prosaic sounding profession, “public administration,” and made it come to life, translating the work into tangibles that you could measure in new university campuses, parks, cleaner water, better housing, all achieved through the skills and tools of the public administrator. And Al did it with a talent captured perfectly in his name. He knew how to *marshal* people, to organize them, galvanize them, push them, cajole them, humor them to gain the objective.

Al was part of that Greatest Generation who came home from World War II; he then studied the art of public administration under the GI Bill, then became a career official in state government. Along with others who followed a similar trajectory, they created a golden age of public service in New York.

It reflects admirably on Nelson Rockefeller, arguably the greatest governor in New York's history, that he spotted the talent in this career civil servant and elevated Al Marshall to stand alongside him as his chief executive officer in managing the state. I was once asked, "What's Marshall's role in the Rockefeller administration?" "Governor Rockefeller is the captain on the bridge in his dress blues," I said, "Al Marshall is down there sweating in the engine room making the ship run." Jim Cannon put it another way: "Rockefeller set the policy and made the decisions. Marshall made it all happen." Little wonder that the Rockefeller family subsequently chose Al Marshall as president to run one of the major commercial enterprises in America, Rockefeller Center.

Al went on to a brilliant business career after he left public service, the successful tenure at Rockefeller Center, his leadership of the Lincoln Savings Bank, capped by creating his own real estate corporation. But it is as the warm, bearlike, fun loving, irreverent, inspiring *Mr. Get Things Done* of state government that we will most vividly remember Alton G. Marshall.

And now let us enjoy the reminiscences of others who knew well this remarkable man.

## Harry W. Albright

**A**s I now remember it, Al Marshall was, like most of us, a complex human being. He had great and natural leadership qualities shown from his first day in the Marine Corps where he became a major. When I first knew him, he was Norm Hurd's deputy. From his early days working in the Division of the Budget, part of his job was to visit all the various state departments and agencies. Thus, he knew firsthand their financial requirements and then their leadership. I think he was a financial genius. I can still see him with a column of figures for state operations. He knew more about New York State government than anyone I knew. He was always Norm's equal, yet Norm always supported and loved him.

Al was capable of being quite tough and using salty language when necessary but he remained fair and rational. I can still see expressions of incredulity which he used so often in his dealings with people. As I grew older, I began to see even more clearly his many talents. When the governor was absent, which was often, he became the acting governor. He was always willing to use his authority to lead and act whether he had the authority or not. In short, he was quite a guy.

## Richard Bartlett

**A**lton Marshall rather liked being thought of as the tough ex-Marine, but that characterization was misleading in describing how Al actually functioned. Al was not the order-barker field commander of government nearly so much as he was the leader of the governor's staff, who got others to do things by persuasive argument.

In the summer of 1967, I was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention being held that year. I had left the Assembly after eight years, the Penal Law Commission work was winding down, and I looked forward to returning to my law firm in Glens Falls as a full-time practitioner. One day while the Convention was in session, I had a telephone call from Alton, asking if I could drop down to the second floor to chat about a matter. The “matter” was the Safe Streets Act passed by Congress as part of President Johnson’s War on Crime, which required creation of a state agency responsible for preparing New York’s criminal justice plan, and making grants in furtherance of that plan with the federal funds being provided. Al said they needed a “strong” chair for the agency to coordinate the component parts of New York’s criminal justice system and the governor really wanted me to take the position. That translates to “I decided that you were the right guy for the job and the governor went along.”

My protestations that I had to get back to my Glens Falls law practice and that Claire was complaining that our kids needed to get to know their father were unavailing. Al gave me that wonderful smile of his and assured me that this role would be a “piece of cake,” leaving plenty of time for me to practice law and be with my family. I left his office, another victim of the charming persuasive powers of Al Marshall. Of course, I took the job.

## **James Cannon**

**A**l Marshall had a better understanding of the practicalities of the three-tier American system of government than anyone else I ever met in public life.

His grasp of what the feds, the state, and local government could best accomplish, separately and collectively, was impeccable.

A great talker, Al not only knew how to make government work but he could also explain the role, function, and responsibility of each entity, and how private enterprise fit into the whole as well. Al could talk. At length. In detail. In theory. In reality.

Government had a purpose, he would say, to bring order and organization into society, to benefit all. Government was there to do for people what they could not do for themselves. It was a sound and common-sense system — you paid taxes for a common purpose and you were to be rewarded with effective and efficient public service. A corollary: Everyone in public office had a responsibility to use the public’s money well. Al was the manager of a state that spent a lot of money and had a lot to show for it.

Al managed his time well. The secret to getting a lot accomplished, he once said, was to handle every piece of paper only once. Decide, assign it to the right person, and move on. In the conference room he was a master. He was so well prepared and totally confident that he dominated the discussion and, more often than not, got his way.

To his great credit, Al held the abiding trust of political adversaries. With Democrat and Republican, commissioner and civil servant, he was a man of his word. No one else, for example, could handle the egos and bridge the political differences between Nelson Rockefeller and John Lindsay as he did.

Acting, performing — it was part of his job, and Al was good at it. He made sure he was seen in the right places. At one major political dinner in the Waldorf, Al arrived after everyone was seated, walked diagonally across the room, twice, shaking a hand here, stopping to talk there. Having recorded his presence, he left the ballroom and enjoyed a good dinner in a restaurant.

Away from work, Al was a jolly companion and most loyal friend. Often we weekendend at our modest country houses in the town of Warwick, where Al was a gracious host, dedicated pancake chef, engaged sports fan, and garrulous conversationalist. Tough as he could be in official negotiations, he was tender and affectionate with family — his boys, his daughters, his grandchildren. Nothing so became Al as his concern and love for his handicapped son.

Al Marshall exemplified the quality of person who should serve in representative government in the United States at any level. Bold or subtle to suit circumstance, he was a man of vigor, intellect, and enterprise. He had the self-discipline to be both chief minister of the greatest of New York State’s governors, and the verve and enterprise to be the leader in his own right — in business, banking, and real estate, where he proved to be as successful as he had been in state government. Optimistic and confident, a public man of character and dedication, Al Marshall demonstrated that in the American democracy and community of the whole, one good man can make a difference.

### **Evelyn Cunningham**

**W**hen I first met Al Marshall, he looked on me with suspicion and in fact one might even say anger. For I happened to be one of those people who became a member of the staff without Al even meeting me. That was not the best way to come in contact with Al Marshall. As a reporter for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, I had interviewed Nelson Rockefeller. At the end of what turned out be a three-hour interview he said, “You should think about joining the staff.” Without giving it a thought, I said “You got me.” So there I was, but for Al I looked like another one of those problem people or at the

very least a headache. But once Al realized that I understood his role and would not interfere with it, all went well, in fact wonderfully well. I knew how key Al's role was for the governor's success and that was what mattered to me. But fortunately for me, Al also became a dear and treasured friend. I admired him, cared about him, and will miss him greatly.

## Henry Diamond

**A**l Marshall was a serious practitioner of public administration, one of the best New York ever had, but he did not take himself or those around him too seriously. He approached difficult problems with experience and expertise, but he always had a twinkle in his eye and a half smile on his face as to say to the person across the table, "You and I really know what's going on here and how silly it is."

This ability to see the humor in human frailty and deal with it served him well in the halls of the Capitol. He understood that legislators had problems to deal with back in their districts and that they couldn't be asked to do that which they thought might hurt them politically, no matter how reasonable the cause or how much the governor wanted it. He knew that bureaucrats running agencies had their problems too and on occasion had to be given some leeway.

You had to watch Al, however, particularly when he went into his good-old Michigan farm boy routine. He could hand you a budget cut or a lemon of an employee and never break that friendly smile. Of course, if the smile didn't work, strong and profane words followed.

As secretary to the governor, Al was a master at the care and feeding of that enormous force, Nelson Rockefeller. He would step up and run things



when attention was needed and stepped deftly and nudge from the sidelines when Nelson wanted to manage himself.

Al brought not only proficiency but pleasure to state government.

### **Robert R. Douglass**

**A** I was one of a kind, probably the best public servant I have ever known.

He was smart as a whip, did his homework, and had a great grasp and understanding of public policy issues. As a salesman, he could convince even the toughest legislator to vote his way. He could also be tough as nails as a negotiator (his U.S. Marine training came in handy).

Under Al's lead, the Congress came through with a very generous formula for New York State to receive a greater share of federal revenues. It was a key victory and helped the governor balance the state's large expense budget. This led one observer to comment: "Al Marshall. He's the guy who made revenue sharing necessary!"

On the personal side, Al was a great family man, and though he worked an exhausting schedule, he always had time for "his boys."

All of us who worked with Al will miss him greatly. They don't make them any better.

### **Richard Dunham**

**I** first met Al in 1964 when Norm Hurd was interviewing me for an administrative deputy position in the Division of the Budget. Norm, whom I had known as a formal quiet college professor, concluded the

interview saying to me that he had a deputy, Al Marshall, who was exactly like him. They thought alike. I met Al and the first thing he said was, “I don’t know what the hell Norm wants you here for. You know how difficult he is to work for.” I concluded that this former Marine, who had taken part in the World War II battle for Iwo Jima, was not exactly the same personality as Norm. They complemented each other in talents but they were not like two peas in a pod.

A few years later, when Al was secretary to the governor and I was director of the Budget, we were meeting to discuss how to try and resolve some issues relating to the state’s complex and always controversial state aid for education formula. As I was losing the argument, I accused Al of violating the principles of the formula and was being quite indignant and pontifical. Al stood up and said, “I’m leaving the room and when you are willing to rise above the principle of a formula, I’ll come back in.” I lost the argument.

There was a local reporter for the *Knickerbocker News*, Arvis Chalmers, who wrote a column about Albany state government, mainly gossip. The construction of the South Mall had taken longer than planned but the art, painting, and sculptures had been purchased and stored in a warehouse. Arvis had written a series about this; demanding to see the art as the taxpayers had paid for it, etc. One day, Al came into the conference room where several of us were meeting with the governor and he had a bunch of photographs in his hand. He proceeded to tell the governor about Arvis’ campaign to see the art and then showing the governor the photographs and



*The Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza.  
Photo courtesy of NYSOGS Michael Joyce.*

said, “I can’t show him pictures of this junk.” The governor’s reply was, “Al, I picked out the art.”

## **Robert Herman**

A few days ago, I received a call to tell me of the death of our good friend, Al Marshall. This was sad news and brought back a slew of memories of a remarkable man and a remarkable career. Al wished for no memorial, but instead asked to be buried at Camphill alongside of his son, Bruce.

It was a happy day for New York State government when we selected Al from a group of interns almost sixty years ago, and he was awarded an internship in our Budget Division. Al’s ability was obvious as soon as he came to work in the Division. In terms of public administration and public policy, Al was a genius. He was a master at motivating people. He could, and did, charm his staff and his bosses. He knew how to marry politics and administration, and the values of each.



*Camphill Village, Copake, NY*

Even though Al and I spent little time together during the past few years, I look back fondly to the many experiences we shared and to the hours of discussion we had, and even the games we played with various officials.

Al left a rich legacy for all of us who look forward to living in a world of improved public policy and administration. He was truly a man for many seasons, a man who warmed both hands before the fire of life, a man who combined energy and vision and used both to improve the quality of New York State government.

## **Stephen A. Hopkins**

**I** was so saddened to hear of Al's death and want his family to know they have my deepest sympathy.

What a guy! Bright, articulate, charismatic, humorous, and full of humor. He had it all. Although I knew him only briefly, for a few years, we overlapped in Albany, I think of him as a good friend and one of the most outstanding leaders I've known.

## **Henry A. Kissinger**

**A**l Marshall and I worked together on the Rockefeller staff in two attempts for the presidency. Although we did not succeed, it remains one of the most exciting periods of my life. Al was the linchpin, the indispensable man, the one who knew the game and the players. He ran a complex machinery of several prima donnas and a highly charismatic candidate whose sense of hierarchical order was not highly developed. Al pulled all this together with humor, efficiency, and tact. Perhaps most important, he understood people. I learned a great deal about politics from him, much that proved very helpful in later years. When beset with problems endemic to political campaigns, Al was imperturbable, kept his attention focused on fundamentals, and somehow kept us all working together with his dedication and good sense.

When Nelson's political life wound down, Al and I went in diverse directions, he to important roles in New York State government, I more deeply into the world of international policy. As time went by, we saw each other less frequently, although we stayed in loose touch, Nelson our common bond. But once Al entered one's life, neither time nor distance nor differing

preoccupations could diminish the mark left by this unique man. I think of him with great admiration and affection, and always will.

### **Edward M. Kresky**

**T**here is no way to begin without stating that the governorship of New York is a great and powerful position. Nelson Rockefeller was indeed a powerful governor of New York. To be his chief of staff was, to put it mildly, a challenge. In his third term, Governor Rockefeller appointed Al Marshall to succeed Bill Ronan to that position. Governor Rockefeller was fortunate to have Al available to be his secretary to the governor. Al was very talented and was capable of, and did run, the whole state government for Governor Rockefeller. I did not work with Al Marshall but I observed his impact on the vast bureaucracy he supervised.

Al was a huge bear of a man. His presence filled every room he entered. His voice could be heard loud and clear throughout the Executive Chamber. It carried a flavor of language that would frighten the prim and proper. In fact, he could and would take off with colorful language that would make an old-time truck driver blush.

Al Marshall's leadership abilities were most impressive. At times, he used them quietly, behind the scenes; at other times, to impose strict discipline. It was remarkable how he caused the sprawling state government in all its parts and pieces to work together without in any way impinging on the final authority of the governor. Al never forgot that, as powerful as he was, the governor was the sole and only "ruler" of the Empire State.

I have often wondered where Al got his manner and his presence that made him such a successful leader. My best guess is that his war experience

as a young Marine and the trial of combat in bitter battles helped make this wonderful man a great leader.

## Abe Lavine

**O**n July 7, 1949, I went to work for the New York State Division of the Budget as one of three appointees to a newly created program known as the Public Administration Internship Program. One of the three was another graduate of the Syracuse University Maxwell School of Public Administration named Alton G. Marshall. Meeting for the first time, we both had chosen the Administrative Management Unit of Budget for our one year of internship.

On September 19, 1949, after working together for some ten weeks on a joint assignment in the State Labor Department, we were on a train returning to Albany from New York City when I mentioned to Al that September 19th was my birthdate. Al instantly echoed, "It's also my birthdate." At the Albany railway station, we headed for the corner bar when my wife Sophie, approaching from the back, shouted my name, evoking from both of us a startled turnaround. She explained that the two wives, having discovered our birthdates, had put together a joint dinner party in celebration thereof.

Al and I have gotten together for a joint birthday celebration every year on or close to September 19th for 60 straight



*Birthday celebration with, from left, Al Marshall, Abe Lavine, Counsel Michael Whiteman, and Governor Rockefeller, September 18, 1969. Photo courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center.*

years without a single miss. Sometimes a work situation dictated the exact time and place. One year it took place at Pocantico coincidental with a major Rockefeller event. Despite his very busy leading role at the event, Al determined that a birthday commemoration would take place and it did. And so on over many years in Albany, New York City, and Washington, DC, as well as in such disparate places as New Orleans, Charleston, Savannah, Ashland, NC, Columbus, OH, etc.

In addition to birthday celebrations, in recent years we have managed to meet for lunch at a favorite restaurant in Kingston, NY. At many of those lunches, Al was accompanied by Bruce, one of his beloved sons. Bruce died a few years ago, a most depressing event that shook Al deeply.

Many can speak of Al's many accomplishments in his wide range of roles on behalf of New York State and directly and indirectly our nation. I am grateful to have had the privilege of knowing Al on a close personal basis for these many years. It was the saddest of days when in speaking with Al right after his last return from the hospital, it was made clear to me that he was home for only one reason with one purpose in mind.

## **Bill McDevitt**

**A**n anecdote that sticks in my mind was a comment by Al as we waited outside the governor's office one Monday morning. He said to us that "Mondays were always an adventure!" The governor would return from Pocantico full of vim and vigor, and brought at least one new idea that taxed the staff in every way.

This I do say — he was a man of inestimable talent who committed himself to the governor and the state like few public servants I have ever known. He could command a room by just standing there — fully erect with

that great mane of white hair, the always-ruddy complexion, and that smile that easily gave way to an infectious laugh. I admired his ability to bring a group to the point that he wanted to make or act on. His easy way with the governor betrayed, to me at least, the camaraderie and respect they had for each other.

## **Tanya Melich**

**A**l Marshall was never my boss but he was my friend in politics. We met during one of Governor Rockefeller's early election campaigns, and as other campaigns followed, Al was always there to cheer on our 24/7 political staff with light-hearted jokes about how hard we were working and how much harder we could work. His good humor was infectious. Often after he'd left our scheduling office or the delegate boiler room, the Rocky team — as we liked to call ourselves — would take a few minutes to stop and laugh.

I remember his smiling face and overpowering presence as he stood in the door of a nondescript hotel room during one of those pressure cooker conventions — I believe it was 1968 in Miami — and reminded us that our governor would be the best president the nation had ever known. Smiling back, we delegate-counters wanted to believe him even as we struggled with tallies indicating that Nixon would win on the first ballot unless Rocky and Reagan made a deal. For the brief time that he joked with us, Al cut through our bleak forecasts, made us believe we would win. Sometimes, as in Miami, we lost; other times, we won. Yet always during those struggles, Al made us believe we were part of something most important.

For others, he may have been a stern taskmaster. For me, he was the wise leader who knew that cheering on the troops for a good cause was better than



browbeating. The lesson of Marshall’s good humoring has guided me through subsequent campaigns, and when a mean-spirited reporter distorts the truth or the opposition lies, I just remember Al’s smiling face and get on with the task at hand smiling too.

### **Alan D. Miller**

I was very much aware of Alton Marshall as a powerful, almost irresistible, force in the governor’s office. “Larger than life.” Brilliant, funny, passionate. And he “got things done.”

He was also generous, embracing, and loved.

For the most part, I viewed him from the distance. I was then commissioner of the Department of Mental Hygiene, and knew Alton from Cabinet meetings, and reputation.

All that changed one day, in the early 1970s. He phoned to say that he had something to discuss with me. I was in his office an hour later. He began with a question — “Have you ever heard of Camphill Village down in Columbia County?” I hadn’t. “It’s an unusual community of about 240 people, 100 or so of them developmentally disabled adults. I don’t think they need us, but I would like you to get to know them. Maybe you could visit there sometime.”

He went on, “You know my son, Bruce. He went to live there a month or so ago.” I visited a few weeks later, met with some of the senior staff — called “co-workers,” and was given a tour. And I saw and talked with Bruce. I had known him as a lost and quiet teenager, going to special classes, quite isolated and with rather low self-esteem. When I spoke with him at Camphill, he had been there a few months: a self-confident and outgoing young man,

proud of his contribution to the farm, warm, and friendly. At that point, I knew that I needed to know more about Camphill and I have been attached to it ever since.

It was Alton who had pointed the way and for the next 35 years or so, until he died, he was a powerful and beloved member of that community. He became the first president of its governing board, and served for more than 20 years in that capacity. He continued on the board after stepping down from its presidency, and almost never missed a meeting until the month he died.

During all those years, he became deeply involved in its community life, made countless contributions to its well-being, inspired all of us with his love and intellect, and became best friends with Bruce. Over the years, he became well-known in the Camphill movement, and an inspiration to the other villages in North America and the worldwide Camphill activities.

Bruce lived there for more than 30 years, having become one of its pillars, and a proud farmer. After he died, about a year and a half ago, Alton continued to be a beloved and wise presence at Camphill. He said, often, that Camphill was the most important, inspiring, and spiritually enriching force in his life.

Before he died, Alton gave clear instructions about how and where he was to be buried. He wanted to be cremated and buried next to Bruce at Camphill. And it was done. On a rising not far from the barn, overlooking a fertile and tended garden, a small, beautiful tree was planted over his ashes. Bruce is buried beneath a small tree, 10 feet away.



*Al and Bruce Marshall*

## **Richard Parsons**

**A**l was gone from the governor's office by the time I arrived in 1970, so I never got to see him "in action" as secretary to the governor. Nevertheless, stories of The Silver Fox (I don't know who gave him that moniker, but it was my favorite) abounded.

The thing I personally remember most fondly about Al was his smile. Al not only had a gorgeous, warm smile; it was maybe the most genuine smile I ever saw. When Al smiled at you, you believed he was really, truly happy to see you. You could also see the imp hiding behind the craggy features in his smile. He was a great man.

## **Ned Regan**

**W**hile I have seen Al Marshall occasionally in the past several years, I really remember him as Governor Rockefeller's "chief of staff" during our 1970 campaign. When the governor was speaking (formally or informally), Al always seemed to be just a few steps behind the governor and/or off to the side and always with an armload of papers and documents. One got the distinct feeling that no matter where the governor was headed intellectually and verbally, Al was going to make sure that the state's daily business, even the small items, got done. I, of course, had deep esteem for the governor but also admired Al for his tenacious yet quiet way he guaranteed the accomplishment's of the state's business.

## Howard Shapiro

**M**y friendship with Al Marshall evolved gradually, beginning with my initial service in the Rockefeller administration as assistant counsel to the governor for Criminal Justice, in February 1969. When I came to the Capitol, Al was already a legend as the governor’s chief of staff (secretary to the governor) with a reputation as a hard-charging, gruff, earthy, and charming politician. In my early days on the second floor, my dealings directly with him were typically limited, although he did display what seemed like a special interest in my subject area of responsibility. This was especially so with regard to the use of illegal drugs and law enforcement activities and issues related to those matters.

I remember vividly a Saturday morning Governor’s Counsel’s Office staff meeting in Bob Douglass’s office with all the assistant counsels and Michael Whiteman, the first assistant counsel, deeply engaged in discussion of various governor’s program legislation. Al, as was his way, burst into the room proclaiming he had thought of a solution for the state’s persistent, insidious, and growing illegal drug problem, especially in New York City. His plan, he said, would be to establish a methadone clinic (methadone was thought to be a relatively harmless synthetic substitute for heroin) on “every street corner in the City.”

The response from the assembled group at first was deafening silence.

After all, this was the chief of staff. Finally, a strong voice (not mine or anyone I care to identify) sounded out: “Al, are you out of your mind?!” I wondered how Al would take this rejection — would a head roll or was this really a place where anyone could speak their mind? Al swallowed hard and left the room — quite chagrined — saying something like, “It probably wouldn’t work anyway ... (mumble, mumble) cost too much.” He was

probably thankful he had not yet offered his plan to the governor, who might have liked the idea.

### **John J. Sheehy**

I just wanted to share a very few words about Al Marshall. I was an assistant counsel to the governor between 1965 and early 1969. Al was greatly admired and highly respected by all the assistant counsels. He had a marvelous sense of humor and was one of the most knowledgeable and humble members of the governor's administration.

Gregarious to a fault, he loved to invite us over to the governor's mansion in the early evenings for a spirited doubles tennis match.

I remember being in meeting once where the discussion centered on a recent newspaper article criticizing the use of limousines by state officials. Al stated: "We could drive every one of these limousines into the Hudson River and it would not reduce the state budget by a damned cent."

I had the privilege of seeing Al from time to time after we both had left state government. He was then president of Rockefeller Center and I was with a Manhattan law firm. He always greeted me with a huge smile and hearty handshake. I was so proud to have known him and to have been one of his many admirers.

### **H. Claude Shostal**

I had the special good fortune to work for Al Marshall in two separate capacities. First, of course, as a program associate on the governor's staff and later at Rockefeller Center, Inc. where Al did such a spectacular job of

invigorating and expanding that enterprise into a major national real estate company. I was therefore able to observe and benefit from Al's executive style from very different perspectives. In short, Al was the best boss I ever had.

His political skills were unmatched and he could deal with everyone. A few years ago, at a forum sponsored by the Rockefeller Institute, Al was on a panel on the development of SUNY, normally regarded as Nelson Rockefeller's greatest achievement as governor. Al was asked whether SUNY was not, in fact, overbuilt and had too many campuses. "Of course," he retorted. "How the hell do you think we got the program through the legislature?" It was reminiscent of one of his favorite maxims: "There are times one must rise above principle," though this was said more for effect than anything else as Al's professional ethics were rock solid.

He was in fact a great student of government building on his preparation at the Maxwell School. He was always trying to make government decision-making as rational and informed as possible while recognizing that the lack of adequate time and information were endemic to the process. So he placed enormous emphasis on building the state's policy-planning resources. He struggled constantly with the reality that, if planning were left to the line agencies, it would be swamped by the urgency of the in-box and never get done. But if it were too removed from the service delivery agencies, it tended to be useless — too late and too separate from operational realities. His answer was to expand the Office of Planning Coordination that had the clout and oversight of the Executive Chamber and supplement its efforts with functional planning groups targeted at specific issues. He never achieved the success he wanted, but he never stopped trying.

But, perhaps most importantly for those who worked for him, beyond his legendary political acumen and renowned governmental expertise, he was a

superb manager of people. He was impeccably fair, loyal, and supportive toward those who worked for him. He knew how to orchestrate a staff and knew instinctively whether prodding, encouragement, or embarrassment would be the most effective motivator.

One time, I was drafting a staff memo to the governor. These documents always went in Al's name to the governor and therefore had to be concise, complete, and, above all, accurate. I do not remember the subject, but I sent it in knowing that I was not sure of one of the key facts. I figured Al would catch it if it were wrong and change it accordingly. A few days later it came back to my desk with the governor's characteristic marginal notes. The errant fact was circled with an angry admonishment to Al about sloppy work. Al said nothing to me. He simply took the heat to teach me an important lesson. After that, I never again submitted a memo that was not as good as I could make it.

## **Robert W. Sweet**

**A**l was the personification of the New York State trooper. He was tall, big, with a direct and commanding look. His honest and ample manner concealed an encyclopedia of state government and human conduct.

I met Al in the late 1960s when he was secretary to the governor of the state of New York, and I was deputy mayor of the City of New York. There is and was an institutional tension between the entities we served, the state and the City. In addition, there was a strong electrical current flowing between the leaders, Nelson Rockefeller and John Lindsay, sometimes direct and sometimes alternating. Al and I were conductors of this current and sought to keep it flowing without blowing a fuse.

Together we dealt with a plan for containing rioting and civil disobedience in the City, the garbage strike, state parks in the City, Roosevelt Island, Battery Park, and omnipresent budget issues. History reveals we did not always march in step, but even when outwitted and outfoxed by Al, I respected and admired him. He was a master statesman in every meaning of those words.

New York, its governor, and its citizens gained much from Al's extraordinary capacity. I gained a long-lasting, deep understanding of honesty, integrity, and service. He will long be remembered.

### **Charles J. Urstadt**

**I** served as commissioner of Housing in the Rockefeller administration from 1967-1973 and was the founding chairman of the Battery Park City Authority. The great Al Marshall was my boss during most of this time and I learned a lot from him and enjoyed every minute of it. It was his support that enabled the Battery Park City Authority to be created and succeed.

Al was the type of person who took charge and proceeded directly to solve the problem. He did it with personality and charm, but always got the job done.

Al was an outstanding public servant, a natural leader, and a wonderful guy to be around.

### **Barry L. Van Lare**

**A**l Marshall was an iconic figure during my ten-year tenure with New York State government. I first came to know Al when he was deputy



Budget director and I was a newly hired public administration intern in the Division of the Budget's Management Unit. Later I had the opportunity to work with Al in the Executive Chamber as a program associate and assistant secretary to the governor and on a couple of Nelson Rockefeller's gubernatorial and presidential campaigns.

While there are numerous personal stories I could share, it is almost impossible to overestimate the impact that Al had on state government. During the Rockefeller years he helped ensure the success of initiatives that included transportation financing, pure waters, building the State University system, ending the era of large remote institutions for the mentally ill and the developmentally disabled, urban renewal, and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Mall. He combined a sharp analytical mind and outstanding management skills with an almost uncanny ability to negotiate the political realities of state government.

Al was a master of instilling a strong sense of responsibility and accountability in his staff. One of my most vivid memories was shortly after I joined the Executive Chamber. Al had asked me to develop a proposal for the governor outlining the state's response to urban riots. I worked hard to draft a memorandum — although I was unable to meet the single page standard — and passed it along to Al expecting that he would review it and give me his feedback. After several days passed I asked Al when I could expect his comments. His response was, “Oh, I didn't have time to read it so I just sent it along to the governor.” Following that experience I never approached staff work in the same way again.

He also taught me to never assume that I knew what my boss would decide. He and the governor wanted to see the full range of options around an issue and would often surprise me by their willingness to take positions and risks that their staff would have avoided.

Al was always willing to allow his staff to grow and to use them in new ways. When Al brought me to the governor's office it was to coordinate criminal justice programs and policies. When I happened to make an observation about the cost to New York of President Nixon's welfare reform plan he tasked me with learning more about the proposal. Within six months I had switched from criminal justice to human services and went on to develop the governor's own welfare reform program in 1971 and 1972.

Al's capacity to move from command of state government operations to gubernatorial and presidential campaigns was astounding. He expected his program staff, which took leaves to work on the campaigns, to become overnight experts on national issues from gun control to foreign policy.

I remember particularly one piece of advice that Al gave as we were trying to negotiate a particularly difficult policy dispute among a number of agencies. He said to think about it like trying to tame tigers. First you need to get them moving (in his analogy, running around a tree) and once they are moving fast enough, get them to move off in the direction you want them to go. The message, I think, was that it was important to begin and maintain a dialogue before you could build a consensus and generate action.

Knowing and working with Al is an experience I will never forget and one that provided an outstanding foundation for my 35 years that followed.

## **Richard Wiebe**

**A**l was a big guy. He had a commanding presence, as befitted someone who led men on Iwo Jima. He was as smart and savvy as they come. If you were to build a leader from scratch, you'd have Al Marshall. He was the total package. Accordingly, he was the picture of confidence and self-assurance, for good reason.

But he could be shaken, even stirred.

In November of 1965 Al succeeded Bill Ronan as the man who made things happen in the Capitol. As luck would have it, on one of the first nights of his command the Great Northeast Blackout struck. Al, Ron Pedersen, Dick Stewart, and I assembled as the emergency response team in Al's office. No one had an inkling of what had happened or any idea of what to do about it. Nuclear attack? Sabotage? A really nasty squirrel? We were literally and figuratively in the dark. Completely — no light of any kind, physical or mental.

There ensued what seemed to be an interminable period of random behavior of which none of us could be proud in this, the vital nerve center of state government. It was embarrassing. And dark.

Finally, a couple of candles showed up to illuminate the scene.

And there, sitting contentedly at the end of Al's red leather couch was Bill Ringle, Gannett's Albany Bureau chief and "ear" witness to what we thought was a pitiful display of ineptitude!

The revelation of Bill's presence shook — nay, stirred — us all, including Al. But Bill was a good guy, recognized Al as another good guy, and treated us undeservedly well in his "inside" story the next day.

Whew!

## **Dick Winfield**

**W**hen I arrived to work on the second floor in Albany in 1965, Bob Douglass was my boss. Bob was counsel to the governor and I was one of about a half dozen assistant counsels. In the two years I served on the second floor my colleagues at one time or another included Dick Stewart,

Mike Whiteman, Ben Schenck, John Sheehy, John Gemma, Dave Hassi, Bob Helm, Howard Shapiro, and, later, Steve Hopkins. The lawyers, all in their 20s and early 30s, occupied offices on the second floor of the Capitol. Across the hall from the lawyers were the offices of the men and women who worked with Al Marshall. They included, for instance, Mary Kresky née McAniff, Ed Kresky, Dick Wiebe, Ed Van Ness. In all, a collection of very smart, very savvy, deeply experienced men and women with advanced degrees in public administration. The lawyers, by contrast, only had law degrees.

It often happened that one of the assistant counsels was assigned to work side-by-side with one of Al's deputies on a program initiative, or a program bill. The latter represented an initiative that the governor was launching as part of the administration's program. Whether it was Medicaid, or public employee collective bargaining rights, or some other project, it was typically bold, complex, and often controversial. Working side-by-side with Al's deputies exposed me, as a lawyer only four years out of law school, to ways of thinking, philosophies of government, breadths of vision, and nuances of political and budgetary reality that were totally new to me. I soon learned from Al and his talented deputies how narrow was the process we call legal thinking and analysis, and how incomplete it was to identify and solve governmental problems. Classic legal analysis was shown to have real limitations in this complex setting. To Al and his deputies I owe a debt of gratitude; I think they made better lawyers out of all of us. They understood Churchill's dictum that a lawyer's mind is improved by narrowing it.

Al, of course, was the outsized, ebullient, brilliant ex-Marine of the second floor. It does not diminish Al to state that he embodied the kind of adviser that Nelson Rockefeller attracted. Tough-minded, independent-minded, savvy, loyal and hard-working, the kind of advisers who would tell you when you were wrong. Nelson Rockefeller, with his Phi Beta Kappa key

from Dartmouth and a sense of intellectual and personal security, did not need to be surrounded by yes-men and yes-women of his generation. He was sufficiently secure so that his circles of cohort advisers, such as George Hinman, Al, Norm Hurd, and Malcolm Wilson, to name a few heavyweights, were distinctive for their integrity and independence. Al Marshall was among the best of that rare breed.

## Closing Comments — Mary McAniff Kresky

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There are many wonderful stories about Al Marshall. There were times, however, when being secretary to the governor was very difficult, even painful. One of the most poignant happened in the fall of 1968. Because of a jurisdictional dispute, a strike was called against the state mental hospitals, threatening the health and safety of many of the patients including many children. Alan Miller and Al managed to convince the union not to strike all the hospitals on the same day, which made it possible to move patients from one hospital to another ahead of the walk out. Al was at 55th Street at the time and through the night and the next few days he and Alan worked to move the patients safely. If my memory is correct, because of their management abilities and efforts, only one patient died. Coping with this situation would have been difficult for anyone but for Al, who had a handicapped son at home, it was horrific.

Another one of Al's talents was his ability to deal with so many different kinds of situations. He could move from coping with a devastating strike to bringing together a group of very disparate people. I saw this often in meetings with the staffs of other governors where, by the end of a meeting, somehow a resolution would get adopted endorsing some program or policy that Governor Rockefeller was then advocating.

But I think the tribute that would mean the most to Al was to recognize that he was a devoted, highly skilled *public servant* with the highest standards. That was what Al wanted to do — to serve the public good. He loved government because it could hinder, maybe even stop, whatever was harming the public good, and, it could remove obstacles that prevented citizens from reaching their potential. He gave his every effort, his many

talents and his superb intelligence to being a public servant and that was done with the highest sense of integrity.

Al was a devoted, truly extraordinary *public servant*.

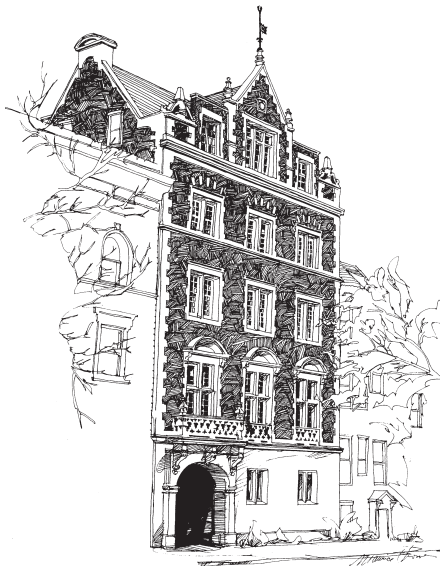
## Acknowledgments

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Who will read this publication? We know the people who worked with Nelson Rockefeller are an important audience. We thank all of Al's friends, colleagues, and admirers who contributed to this booklet of tributes, especially Mary McAniff Kresky and Michael Cooper who helped to produce it. As for other readers, it would be good if our audience included younger readers — people considering working in the public service, both in appointive office as well as in the career service. Al would have liked that. Most important of all for him was getting things done inside government with verve, skill, and bravado, and in the process ably serving his principal.

*Richard Nathan*





*The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, the public policy research arm of the State University of New York, was established in 1982 to bring the resources of the 64-campus SUNY system to bear on public policy issues. The Institute is active nationally in research and special projects on the role of state governments in American federalism and the management and finances of both state and local governments in major areas of domestic public affairs.*

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