

Two families are grieving today and we join with them. Our city, state and nation lost two of our most able sons. I lost two friends, men I admired and respected.

Joe Allen and Michael Stevens had much in common. Both were home town boys, born and educated here, family men, married over 30 years. Their families were the center of their lives. And each readily admitted on many occasions, they had "married over their heads". Their wives, Kitty Cowan Allen and Kim Stevens, made their husbands' public service possible. They kept both men "in the game" and mothered the family while their husbands served the public. It is a Texas tradition: strong women, leaders in their own right, who made their men stronger. Thank you Kim and Kitty. May God's grace be upon you and the family.

Both Joe and Michael left their mark. But media, with time and space constraints, can never tell the whole story. The footprints of these two giants are too numerous and significant to fit in the space confines of a newspaper.

I suggest each of us who had the pleasure of working with Joe and Michael write their families and share vignettes, personal insights, and other remembrances so they may more fully appreciate how much we value the worth of two unselfish public servants and dear friends.

Joe Allen was established on the political scene when I was just getting started. He was from Baytown, a born politician, and a loyal Democrat. I was originally from Port Arthur (Baytown's bitter rival), a businessman, and a Republican ...some say opposites attract. Despite our apparent differences, we grew to be friends. Joe's experience and insight made him a man you sought out to seek counsel from on most any subject. I called on Joe often. He was given leadership power and he used it judiciously. Joe was respected by all. He was a fashion icon who had the courage to dress to the leading edge. I would tease him about his studied flamboyance; he responded that I was always "dressed to bury." I grew less conservative in my dress with his nudging, but Joe never changed.

We found many issues impacting the Houston area, particularly the Port of Houston and highways, on which we were allies. We met with success working together, taking different sides of the aisle. It was just fun to work with and be around Joe. Our community, the entire area, and all Texas have suffered a great loss.

Michael Stevens and I came to know one another well when appointed to the founding board of the Harris County-Houston Sports Authority. Michael was as quick as a hummingbird and as charming as a leprechaun. He was indefatigable. One NFL owner asked after a presentation if he was a televangelist. Michael had all the makings. It naturally evolved that in our 'Mutt and Jeff' negotiating routines we would play off one another. Michael was the perfect 'good guy.' I complained about why I always had to be the 'bad guy.' He would get that little grin on his face as we were about to enter a negotiating session and say, 'Now look mean.' He was correct; the record speaks for itself. We finished on time and under budget, and Michael played a large role in our success.

The task the Sports Authority faced was more than challenging. Overlaid with the

crushing time deadlines, and owners and leagues doing all in their power to shift financial burdens to the Sports Authority, it was brutal, as tough as it gets. Our opponents were successful owners backed up by their respective leagues and legions of lawyers, PR flacks, consultants, other experts, and usually the local media, particularly the sports beat writers. The Sports Authority, acting on behalf of the citizens, would have never met our goals without the benefit of Michael's prodigious skills. We have lost one of our brightest and best.

Both Allen and Stevens were pure Houston ... up by their bootstraps, both educated in public schools and then at the University of Houston. Both men were eager and willing to give of their time and resources to share in building this great community. I know others will step forward to fill their places in the ranks but let all know, we have lost two of our finest, most skilled leaders. All present and future Houstonians are in their debt.

Michael and Joe arrived in heaven together and they are surely in God's hands. We are richer and most grateful for the all too brief time they shared with us. Thank you Michael and Joe and God Speed.

Jack Rains

Houston

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