

Newest House member loves his new job

Rep. Greg Davids (IR-Preston) says filling former representative Elton Redalen's old shoes may be a big job, but adds that he's got just the feet to do it.

Size 12 to be exact. People notice when Davids, a former wrestler and football player, enters the room.

But on a more serious note, Davids says he knows the district in southeastern Minnesota as well as anyone. He grew up there, served for four years as the Fillmore County Independent-Republican Party chairman, was a member of the Preston City Council, and served as mayor of the city from 1987 to Feb. 13 of this year.

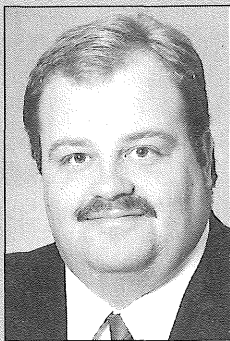
Davids had thoughts about running for office before, but says Redalen and Sen. Duane Benson (IR-Lanesboro) were doing such a good job that the best thing to do was wait.

When Gov. Arne Carlson appointed Redalen as commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Davids was the first of eight people to join the race.

"Before I'd ask for somebody's support, I'd ask if they were running, too," says Davids.

The general election came down to three people, and Davids won with 63.1 percent of the vote.

Davids says coming into session late was like grabbing a train ride with the train moving. And instead of "getting his feet wet," Davids says he jumped in head



Greg Davids

District 32B

Age: 32

Occupation: Insurance company president

District traits: Dairy farming is a major industry in 32B, but tourism is also becoming a booming business in the scenic area. The district voted for Rudy Boschwitz over Paul Wellstone in the 1990 U.S. Senate race by a 59.7 to 40.3-percent margin.

first. Shortly after being sworn in, he introduced his first bill.

"I don't waste any time," he says.

But he'll miss his old job as mayor, he says, and some of the characteristics that went with it. His new job will require persuading more than just two members on the city council to think his way, he says.

Davids' district is primarily agricultural and includes no towns larger than 2,500. He lives in Preston, which has about 1,500 people, and owns an insurance company in Harmony, a town of almost 1,100. Though agriculture is the major issue in his area, he also wants to help small-town businesses.

"I want to do anything I can do to help small business in rural Minnesota because I don't want to see these small towns dry up," says Davids. "There are too many vacant buildings on main

street. And that's a major concern of mine — to get those buildings filled up."

Like many legislators, Davids says he's also concerned about educational issues, workers' compensation reform, and health insurance reform.

But unlike many, Davids' diverse background gives him the advantage of viewing those issues from a variety of perspectives.

In addition to his job as an insurance agent and his service as mayor and city councilman, Davids has taught high school government and coached numerous high school sports for both boys and girls.

Although many representatives truly love being members of the House, Davids seems to especially relish his seat.

"There should be a law against having this much fun," he says.

Do you know?

Blame it on those incompetent government clerks.

Stearns County was supposed to have been named after Isaac Ingall Stevens, but a clerk mistook Stearns for Stevens, as in Charles Thomas Stearns. When the error was finally detected, Stearns was deemed worthy of the honor since he had established a respectable political reputation in the county.

Originally from Massachusetts, Stearns settled in St. Cloud in 1855, where he ran a hotel for 14 years. Two years earlier, the land on which the city now rests was purchased by John Wilson for \$250. A great admirer of Napoleon, Wilson insisted the site be named St. Cloud, after the city the French ruler built for Empress Josephine.

Stevens was not to be forgotten, however. The former governor of Washington Territory, congressional delegate, and major-general would later have Stevens County established in his honor.

