

Flashback to first Trenton press corps roast: Golden

Published 5:08 p.m. ET May 2, 2018

In the 11 years I served as press secretary to Govs. Tom Kean (eight years) and Christie Whitman (three years), it fell to me once a year to draft their speeches for the annual New Jersey Legislative Correspondents' Club dinner.

I was selected for the task presumably because my daily interactions with the Statehouse press corps blessed me with insight into the personality quirks of the media, legislators and political figures which I could then exploit into witty one-liners guaranteed to bring the house down.

I approached it determined to be funny but not cruel, to elicit laughter but not embarrassment, to skewer but not eviscerate, to launch barbed zingers that pinch but leave no scars.

Sometimes it was easy; most times not.

My first effort occurred in 1982, Kean's first year in office, and I turned out what I thought was a brilliant blend of satire and parody guaranteed to leave the audience rolling in the aisles and bring them to their feet in a spontaneous outburst of admiration and appreciation for the display of clever wit.

I recall sitting across from Kean while he silently read my work, convinced he'd recognize the finely-honed sense of humor it conveyed. He finished,

