



# The Story of Mac Baldrige and Quality New Mexico

By Nigel Hey

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His name was Howard Malcolm Baldrige, but he insisted that people called him Mac. The White House plucked him out of a top corporate job in New England to be Ronald Reagan's first Secretary of Commerce. He was a Yale graduate (in English) and had a lifelong passion for the American West. He loved rodeo life and enjoyed curling up with a book by Zane Gray or Louis L'Amour. He was born in Omaha. He owned a ranch in New Mexico. And his name is forever associated with the grand idea that lies behind Quality New Mexico.

Mac's sister Letitia ("Tish"), who was Jackie Kennedy's social secretary in the White House, said he was full of paradoxes. "He likes you to think of him in jeans low around the hips and properly scuffed cowboy boots," she told Louise Sweeney, staff correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor*. "He enjoys that. His heart is in the West, but his body and his mind are in the East."

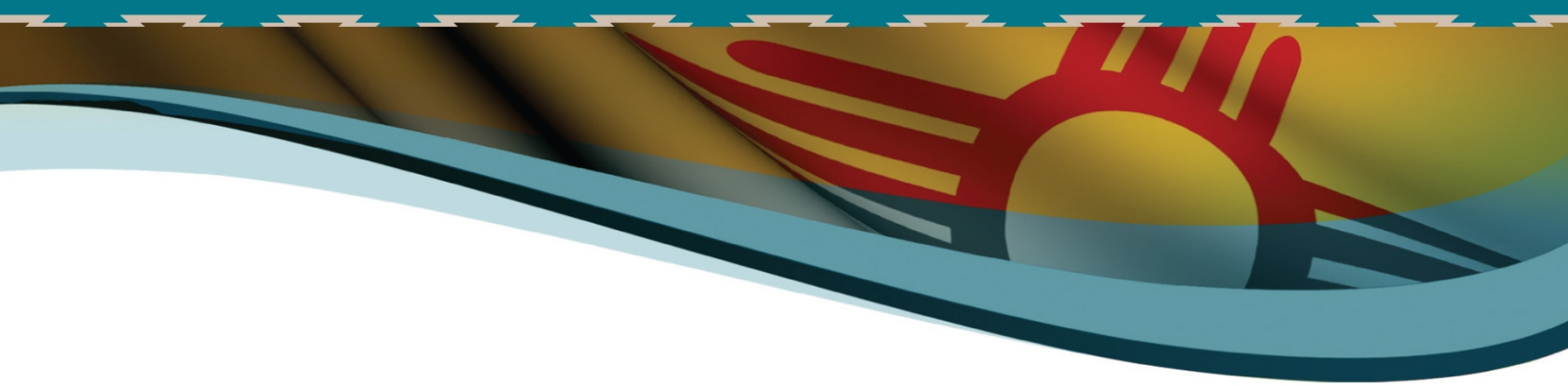


*Tish, Mac, Midge Fall 1983*

Baldrige died in California in 1987 as the result of a rodeo accident, leaving a legacy of successful trade talks with the Chinese, Indians and Russians – and a lasting persistence that his office would be a quality operation; further, that he expected the rest of America to follow suit. He was committed to policies that increase productivity and customer satisfaction, in particular a dedication to clear communication. "Use of the English language," he said, "should ideally be styled somewhere between Hemingway and Zane Gray."

Baldrige's interest in the West was deepened by reading the books of Gray, Louis L'Amour and other Western writers. And his family joined in. "I loved it," said his daughter Molly. "The ranch was a vacation place, and a way to be involved in the cattle business and have a foot in the cowboy world." His other daughter Megan, a teacher, was just as enthusiastic: "My decision to move to Cedar Crest with my young family in the 1980's and my sister's decision to work for an agricultural bank in Colorado shortly after my move was prompted by the wonderful vacations we had in New Mexico on the ranch."

Congress created the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award through Public Law 100-107 in 1987. On October 17, 1988, Baldrige was presented posthumously with the Presidential



Medal of Freedom by President Reagan. He was an inductee of the Professional Cowboy Hall of Fame, where his eulogy there makes the points that his philosophy was simple, and that he lived it in his business, political, and rodeo careers: “Success is finding something you really like to do and caring about it to do it well. Sticking your neck out if you’re sure you’re right, and getting lucky.”<sup>1</sup>

### **The Baldrige Program comes to New Mexico**

*“ . . . Our histories are intertwined, and it is both gratifying and humbling to have witnessed the transformation of this tremendous organization – from the birth of an idea, to the personal commitment of so many who have demonstrated true leadership in those early years, to purposeful motion and decisive actions that led to the formation of Quality New Mexico, to an enduring commitment and promise of making a true difference in the health and welfare of business, education, government, and healthcare in this great state. . . . ”*

*From “Open Letter to Quality New Mexico”, Albuquerque, New Mexico, March 13, 2003  
Chris Galvin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Motorola, Inc.*

The Baldrige program’s circuitous journey to New Mexico started with Motorola, which after severe public criticism of its products embarked on a

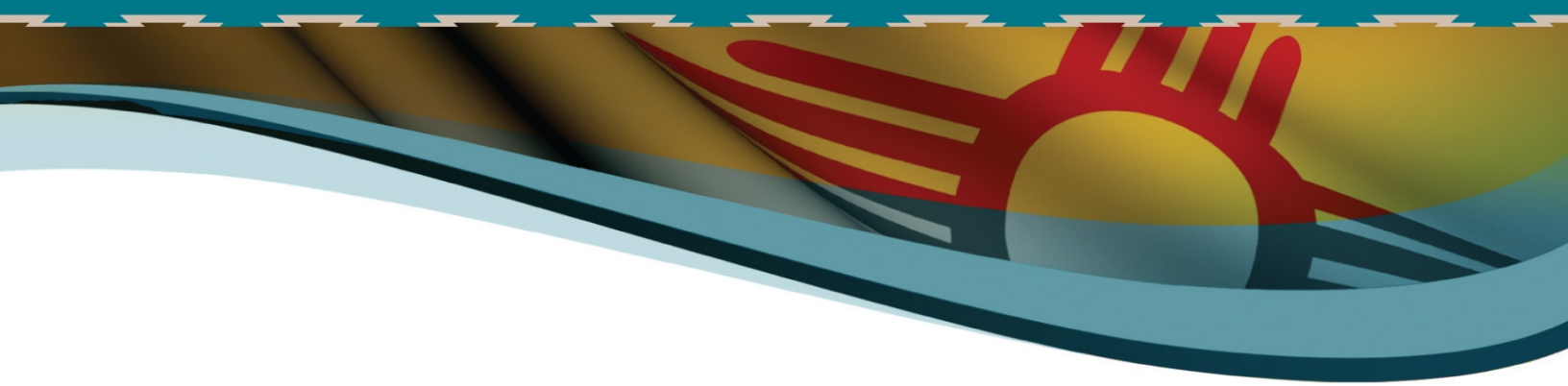
huge quality program under Board Chairman and CEO Robert (Bob) Galvin. In the words of a company press release, “Responding to the rapid rise of Japanese firms in world markets for electronics, Motorola’s management began an almost evangelical crusade for quality improvement.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1981, Motorola launched an ambitious, successful drive for a tenfold improvement in the quality of its products and services. One of its achievements was development of Six Sigma, a statistical quality system which after adoption by General Electric caused GE Chairman and CEO Jack Welch to say that: “Six Sigma changed the DNA of GE.” Six Sigma would prove to be an important part of Motorola’s successful bid for the 1988 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in Manufacturing.

To achieve the quality goal demanded by Six Sigma, Motorola required that suppliers start their own Baldrige-based quality programs. One such supplier was AT&T, which created an internal Chairman’s Quality Award based strictly on Baldrige Criteria, and required each division to submit a Baldrige application covering its internal quality program. AT&T ran Sandia National Laboratories, based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, operated for the Department of Energy under a soon-to-expire management and operations contract. Before long

<sup>1</sup><http://www.prorodeohalloffame.com/inductees/by-category/notableslifetime-achievement/malcolm-mac-baldrige/>

<sup>2</sup>[http://patapsco.nist.gov/Award\\_Recipients/PDF\\_files/1988\\_Motorola\\_Inc.pdf](http://patapsco.nist.gov/Award_Recipients/PDF_files/1988_Motorola_Inc.pdf)



Sandia's director of Quality Management, Charles Tapp, was on his way to briefings at AT&T headquarters in New Jersey, in effect launching the lab's new quality program.

New Mexico's quality initiative gained momentum in September, 1991, after Chris Galvin, Bob's son and then Motorola's Assistant Chief Operating Officer, made a germinal off the cuff speech to a group of business leaders at Las Cruces, N.M., at the invitation of Sen. Jeff Bingaman. Mac Baldrige had died four years earlier, and the Department of Commerce's Baldrige National Quality Program had since been named in his honor. Galvin knew about quality: it was his company's main weapon of defense against the onslaught of new foreign competitors in the international electronics markets. The company, once criticized for poor quality, had received the national Baldrige Award. Now he was spreading the success story.

"I had met [Chris] and his father, Bob, and had been aware of the Six Sigma initiative they had developed at Motorola," Bingaman told me. "The larger agenda was to help New Mexico businesses create and grow jobs. I had also gotten acquainted with Malcolm Baldrige during his time as Secretary of Commerce and had been impressed with his efforts to promote quality improvement in U.S. businesses. This was the period during which U.S. companies were very focused on the

competition from Asia, especially Japan."<sup>3</sup>

In short, Galvin's Las Cruces speech made a powerful case for quality initiatives, discussing Motorola's Six Sigma quality and the Baldrige Award, ultimately challenging New Mexico to be the first to be able to put on its license plates: "New Mexico = The Quality State."<sup>4</sup> A good way to start this journey, he said, would be to visit Motorola University in Schaumburg, Illinois, to learn what Motorola was doing to promote improved performance in all parts of his corporation. For many of his listeners this sounded like an opportunity too good to miss.

Meanwhile, Sandia National Laboratories was planning to offer its expertise in quality matters to the state at large as a public service, and its unclassified technical expertise as a service to industry. Sandia Executive Vice President C. Paul Robinson, who was Charles's supervisor, had been particularly disturbed by Japan's leap forward in the automotive market. The U.S. was not producing what its longtime customers wanted, he said, and "We believed America should wake up." The management of U.S. industry also needed streamlining. "Bureaucracy is like entropy, always increasing. We want to knock it back," he told me. "The quality method is the only remedy I know that will counter

<sup>3</sup>Sen. Jeff Bingaman, email message, June 1, 2015

<sup>4</sup>Chris Galvin, email message, May 31, 2015



encroaching bureaucracy.”<sup>5</sup> New Mexico had similar problems, albeit on a very much smaller scale.

Robinson’s director of Quality Management, responsible for the New Mexico initiative, was a veteran scientist whose quality expertise ran from the reliability of microelectronics circuits to the integrity of metal castings. Now another fortunate chain of events took form. Charles Tapp learned from consultant Faith Ralston that a man named Jim Buckman was running a successful state quality program in Minnesota, using principles laid down by the Baldrige Program. Soon Tapp was heading for St. Paul, where Buckman was at the reins of the pioneering Minnesota Council for Quality.

After a day of briefings, Charles thought it likely that like Minnesota, New Mexico could prosper through coaching its companies, schools, and government agencies to adopt Baldrige principles that would stimulate the performance excellence needed to bring about and sustain business success. Properly done, the idea would be a winner. The process would be guided by veteran volunteers with the help of workbooks and self-assessment aids. Participants would team with others with like interests and compete for state awards. With this process completed, they could set their sights on the program’s top prize, the

Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, “the nation’s only Presidential award for performance excellence.”



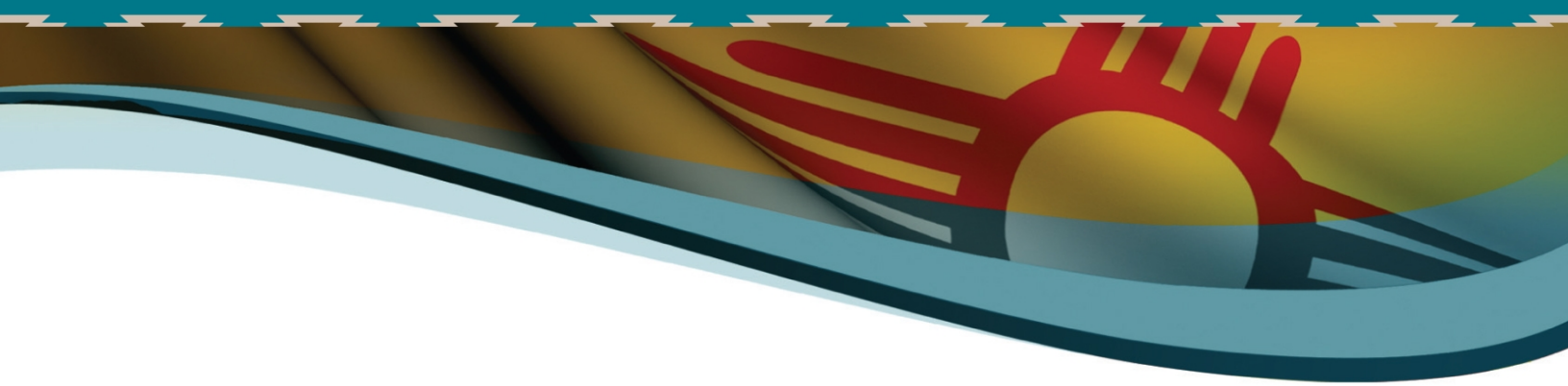
*1st Anniversary, July 1994 (Senator Jeff Bingaman, Joyce Godwin, Governor Bruce King, Charles Tapp, In the back row: Glenn Walters, Mike Silva and John Jennings.)*

Charles’s Minnesota trip report received a warm reception at home, and Sandia would formally adopt the Baldrige protocols for periodic self-assessment and improvement in 1994. Soon his organization was joined by a fellow Sandia staff member, Julia Gabaldón, who tackled the state quality program with enthusiasm.

Paul Robinson later called Charles and Julia his “ringleaders” in getting the state quality program into gear.

In January 1992, a group of 30 distinguished New Mexicans, energized by the Galvin speech, had packed their bags and were on their way to their day at Motorola University. Here they would learn about Motorola quality programs so that they could later develop their own their visions for transforming New Mexico into a “Quality State.” Senators Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman were

<sup>5</sup>C. Paul Robinson, telephone conversation, June 1, 2015



there, as were Governor Bruce King, Joyce Godwin, and a half-dozen other VIPs from government and the private sector.

The seminar presentation was a distinct success, signaling approval for a statewide quality initiative that was very likely to bear fruit for New Mexico. It was considered a solid first step to developing a comprehensive strategy that would establish and educate the state in quality principles and practices. Soon Bingaman's staff was putting together a more detailed blueprint for bringing the initiative to reality.

"One day Charles Tapp asked if I wanted to work fulltime on this project, the state quality initiative, and I said yes,"



Julia Gabaldón told me. "The Senator sent a letter to Sandia's President Al Narath asking that I could be a

loaned executive to facilitate the quality initiative. I was given the special assignment on April 1, 1993 – a Sandia-approved assignment. Charles told me if anyone at Sandia could do this, I could. I had zero staff and zero budget. The rest is history."<sup>6</sup> From the beginning, Julia was the dynamic President and CEO of Quality New Mexico.

Gabaldón was a good choice. Born to an Hispanic family in a remote New Mexico town, she was smart, outgoing, attractive, and a natural communicator. By the midsummer of 1993, at a State Capitol celebration, Quality New Mexico's interim board chair, Joyce Godwin, announced that QNM had received \$500,000 of in-kind contributions including office space in downtown Albuquerque, furniture, computers, and volunteers from Los Alamos National Laboratory, Public Service of New Mexico, and Sunwest Bank. Plans progressed for the staging of annual conferences that feature major speakers from the nationwide Baldrige community. And Julia, not new to broadcasting, started a radio program in 2000 that would become the weekly Performance Excellence USA, aired every Sunday at 7 pm (MST) on 770KKOB.

In 1994, Quality New Mexico took a major step, stepping into line with other major participants at the national level – the Baldrige-based state and local programs -- by establishing the New Mexico Quality Awards, which changed its name to New Mexico Performance Excellence Awards (NMPEA) in 2012. Julia has become recognized as a distinct asset to the national program, volunteering on the Baldrige Board of Examiners, Board of Overseers (2004-2006), its Alliance for Performance Excellence Board of Directors and the ASQ Board. *New Mexico Business Weekly* honored Julia as a "New Mexico

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<sup>6</sup>E-mail message, May 28, 2015

Power Broker” in 2007-2010 and “Woman of Influence” in 2010.



By 2015 Julia, her Board and staff had recruited a total of 3,461 volunteer NMPEA examiners, who provided services estimated at \$12.4 million. They had honored 743 entrants with recognition and awards that recognize achievement at three levels of effort – commitment (Piñon), progress (Roadrunner), and achievement (Zia, for performance excellence) to establish NMPEA as NM’s recognition for performance excellence.

Recognition is given for organizational development, not individual products or

services. In 2015, a first-level recognition, Adobe (foundation) was added to the three-tiered program.

In 1997 QNM’s rise to national stature was confirmed when retired Gen. Colin Powell agreed to speak at the annual conference, drawing more than 2,500 attendees to an event held at the Albuquerque Convention Center. Other notable keynote speakers have included General Norman Schwarkopf, Jim Collins, Mary Lou Retton, Tim Russert, Chris Galvin, and Mac’s widow Midge Baldrige.

Quality New Mexico’s “firsts” among the national Alliance for Performance Excellence community of Baldrige affiliates also include:

- Including the Governor and Congressional Delegation as honorary chairs.
- Hosting a “Salute to Malcolm Baldrige” at its 1995 conference.
- Producing a weekly Baldrige-oriented radio show.
- Maintaining a connection with Baldrige family (his wife Midge is a member; daughter Megan speaks at annual award ceremonies).
- Signing the largest number of Baldrige Award recipients as conference speakers.





***Megan Baldrige speaking at the Governor's Mansion Reception in 2014.***

The New Mexico program is one of 35 state quality programs that use the guidebook “Baldrige Excellence Framework” to conduct organizational assessments. These assessments and formal feedback help participants to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. A systems approach, it focuses on methods for managing and leading all components of the organization as a unified whole; managing change; and dealing with data analytics, data integrity, and cyber security. It is one of three related publications that explain and describe the overall Baldrige framework: a trio that Gordon Black, former Chairman and CEO of Harris/Black International Ltd., said “is probably the single most influential document in the modern history of American business.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup><http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/publications/criteria.cfm>

In 2000 Los Alamos National Bank became the first New Mexico institution to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (for small business), after receiving the New Mexico Zia Award for Performance Excellence the previous year. About 50 bank employees travelled to Washington, D.C. to see the Baldrige Award presented by President George W. Bush.

“No matter what the size of your organization, involvement in Quality New Mexico can be of great benefit,” observed LANB CEO Bill Enloe in the *Albuquerque Journal*. “I can attest to the value of the self-assessment and feedback available through participation [in QNM]. The bank has used this information to identify areas for improvement and has implemented many changes, with positive results for our customers, employees and investors.”<sup>8</sup>

The award brought much-needed positive attention to a little-known state. It was evident that, in Charles Tapp’s words, “having a New Mexico company win the national award after working through the Quality New Mexico steps validates the rigor and discipline of the New Mexico processes.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Bill Enloe, “Quality New Mexico looks too good to be true.” *Albuquerque Journal*, March 16, 2000

<sup>9</sup>E-mail correspondence, May 28, 2015





Motorola CEO Chris Galvin spoke at Quality New Mexico's first conference in Carlsbad, N.M. on April 8, 1994. He returned for its 18th anniversary and its 2011 Learning Summit (*pictured above*), when he remarked on the challenge he had issued for New Mexico "to be a quality state." Now he pronounced the establishment of "a rich and continuing legacy of motivating, educating and recognizing New Mexico organizations for achievements in performance excellence."

The outcome could have been different. "I sensed curiosity and interest, which could have easily died. But instead, what followed were concrete steps as well as a spirit of collaboration between New Mexico industry and government that led to the formation of this fine organization."<sup>10</sup>

In the words of Harry Hertz, Director Emeritus of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, "QNM is one of the oldest and strongest state programs

<sup>10</sup>Chris Galvin, open letter to Quality New Mexico, March 13, 2003

with a rich history of accomplishments."<sup>11</sup> Today, with two national awards already to its credit and its innovative practices, New Mexico is the state that other members of the Baldrige Alliance look to as a national benchmark.

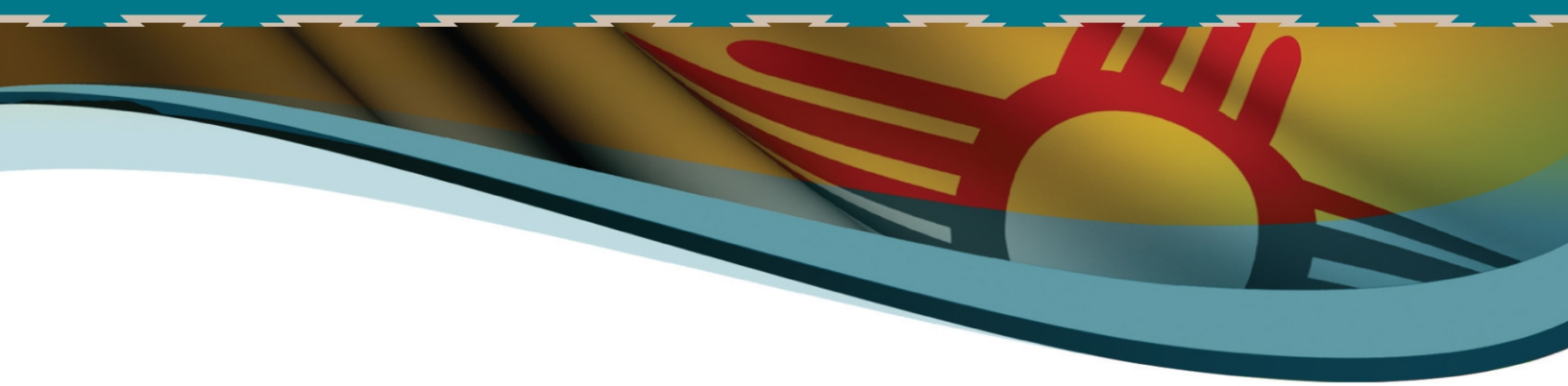
On Feb. 20, 2012, New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez signed an executive order naming the New Mexico Performance Excellence Awards Program as the official program "to recognize New Mexico businesses and organizations for their adoption, practice and promotion of quality concepts, principles and practices." Gov. Bruce King signed the executive order that originally established the awards in 1994.

### New Mexico Case Study: New Quality Journey for VA Center



**2009 VP Joe Biden, VACSP's Thelma Salazar, Mike Sather, and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke**

<sup>11</sup>E-mail correspondence, May 28, 2015



The link between Mac Baldrige and New Mexico is remembered every time quality enthusiasts hear a talk by Mike Sather, recently retired director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) Clinical Research Pharmacy Coordinating Center (CRPCC), located in Albuquerque. Like Baldrige, Mike was a government employee and cowboy – he has a horse ranch on the edge of the Manzano Mountains south of Albuquerque. Like Baldrige he sees something in the cowboy way of life that links with the state of mind that helps maintain high quality standards.

The center supports multicenter clinical trials for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and some other federal agencies. Located in a neat, closely packaged group of modern buildings just north of the Albuquerque Sunport, it became the first VA entity to become registered in the International Standards Organization (ISO) 9001 in 2003. Mike considers the VA’s CSP and investigators to be the customers his quality program has to please, while military veterans themselves are the center’s primary beneficiaries.

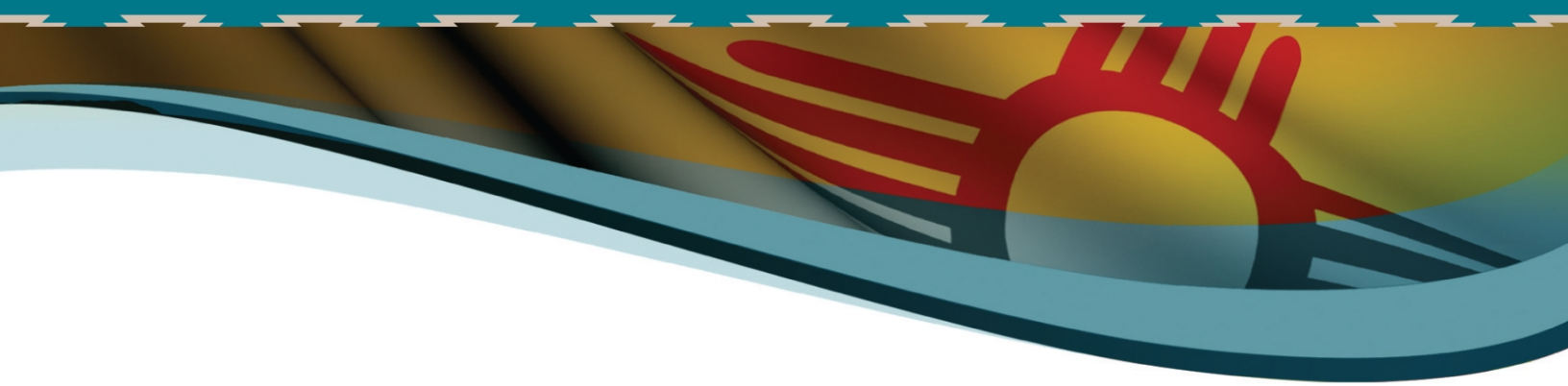
When he gives a quality talk Mike unrolls a 24 by 32 inch poster that is alive with photos and quotations about Baldrige, a man who “rode for the brand.” His VA business card – the “Director” designator crossed out and replaced with the handwritten word “Retired” – features a printed logo that

proudly bears the words “Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award 2009 Recipient.” His center was also a recipient of QNM’s topmost laurels, the Zia Award for Performance Excellence, in 2004. “QNM played a significant role in the Center achieving its National recognition.”

Originally from Minnesota, Mike moved to the University of North Dakota for his degrees in pharmacy, then from 1970 to 1974 developed and taught clinical pharmacy courses while on call for the state poison information center. He began his VA career in 1974 when he moved to Tampa as supervisor of the clinical pharmacy section at the VA Medical Center. In 1976 the VA’s National Pharmacy Service Director “voluntold” him to transfer to Washington, D.C. to develop and head a new entity (the CRPCC) to support the CSP with pharmaceutical expertise. The operation blossomed, making it necessary to move the entire operation to Albuquerque in 1977 to acquire much needed space.

For 35 of his 37 years in Albuquerque, Mike has been an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico’s Health Science Center College of Pharmacy, specializing in pharmacology, pharmaceutical law, ethics, and clinical trials.

Mike hired Stan Johnson to be chief of the Center’s quality section in the spring of 1996. A veteran examiner for the New



Mexico Quality Awards, Johnson was thoroughly familiar with the Baldrige Program, which would be a plus in his new job.<sup>12</sup>

In his job interview, Stan could see that the Center already had a quality-oriented organization with a unique culture, and that Mike was providing strong leadership. “He had created and shaped a very unique government agency, and I wanted to be a part of it.” Still, he and Mike agreed that “initiating a formal quality journey would be the right thing for the Center at that time.” Stan was aware that his knowledge of the Baldrige Criteria would help. “I needed some pizzazz to bring to the position, something value-added that could help me establish my credibility as a new member of the leadership team.”

Stan did not know at the time that all the centers in the VA’s Cooperative Studies Program, including the Albuquerque operation, were under a mandate to enforce a significant budget cut, to the extent that some were being threatened with closure. “Mike saw that by using proven business models and criteria such as ISO 9001 (the International Standards Organization’s Quality Management Systems) and the Baldrige Criteria, he would have a better roadmap for increasing efficiency and weathering the budget reduction.”

Mike remarked wryly that people in government often are in, or are anticipating, budget cuts that could do away with jobs or even entire organizations. “When you’re in that situation you have to be good.” That’s one good reason that, with Stan’s backing; he committed himself and his VA colleagues to the Baldrige Program. “It’s difficult to shoot a winning racehorse” is one of Mike’s favorite quotes, illustrating his belief that third-party recognition such as Baldrige Awards and ISO Certification is the best insurance policy the Center could have.

At first the Center’s staff found it difficult to accept the Baldrige idea. “Change is always hard for most folks, and is nearly impossible for many federal employees,” said Stan. “But Mike stayed the course and we eventually won people over, one by one.”

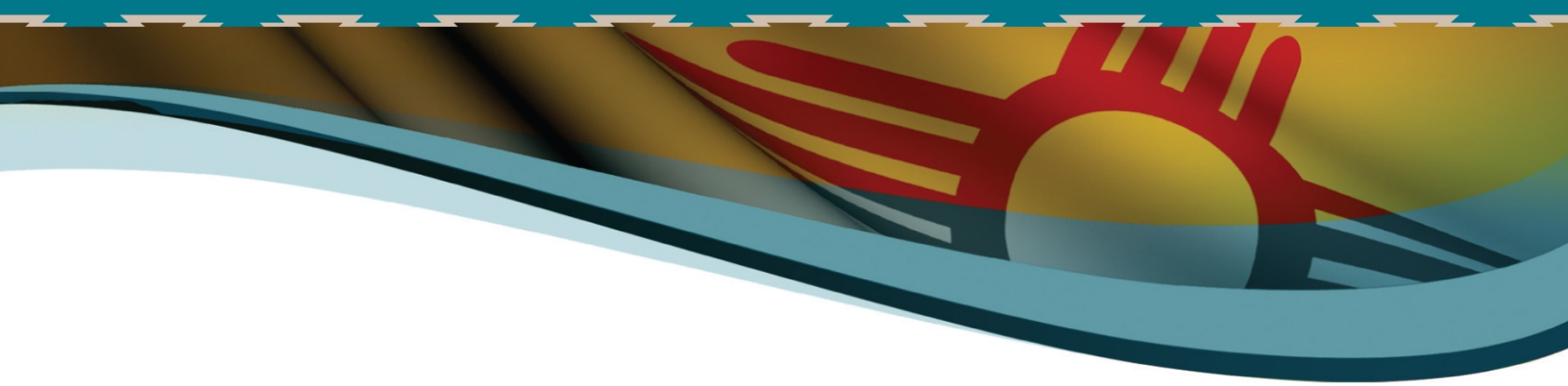
“Our quality journey was never dependent on Mike alone, and it could never have happened without getting everyone on board and all rowing in the same direction. Mike has led the organization to be self-sufficient and to have a quality culture spliced directly into our corporate DNA.”

When he talks about the Baldrige program Mike likes to refer to the Code of the West, which by tradition is followed by all self-respecting cowboys. The code is a gentleman’s agreement on principles of conduct,

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<sup>12</sup>E-mail message, May 29, 2015





common-sense when you think about it but strictly followed. As the western writer Ramon F. Adams pointed out long ago, “it was never written into the statutes, but it was respected everywhere on the range.” But more recently Jim Owen, who runs the Center for Cowboy Ethics and Leadership in Austin, Texas, put this situation right. He crystallized the main points of the cowboy mantra – previous attempts to do this produced as many as 40 different principles – and reduced them to ten crisp dos and don’ts.

### CODE OF THE WEST – ETHICS THE COWBOY WAY

Featured by Jim Owen’s Center for Cowboy  
Ethics and Leadership

1. Live each day with courage
2. Take pride in your work
3. Always finish what you start
4. Do what has to be done
5. Be tough but fair
6. When you make a promise keep it
7. Ride for the brand
8. Talk less say more
9. Remember that some things are not for sale
10. Know where to draw the line

Mike had never heard of him, but when a Montana cowboy friend presented

him with a copy of Owen’s *Cowboy Ethics: What Wall Street Can Learn from the Code of the West* he read it and was delighted.<sup>13</sup> Owen’s set of the cowboy’s ten commandments fit his own view of the way life should be lived and was a perfect match for the Baldrige principles. Mike also employed principles from Don Bishop’s book *The Code of the West – Then, Now, Forever*.<sup>14</sup> Bishop is an Air Force Veteran who writes about living life the cowboy way.

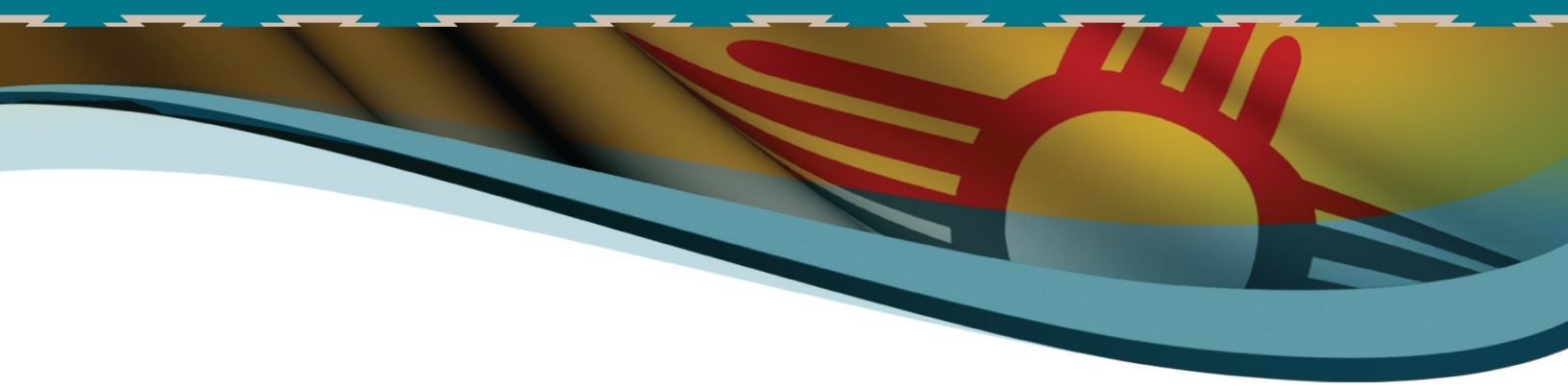
“My fascination and passion for the west and cowboys began early in my life,” Mike says.

Mike is particularly fond of four of Owen’s principles – “Live each day with courage”; “Take pride in your work;” “Be tough but fair;” and “Ride for the brand.” Two other favorites are “Rules can always be bent, but principles cannot” and “Bureaucratic rules are no substitute for personal principles.”

Mac Baldrige would have been proud to know Jim Owen and Don Bishop. And Mike has become a fan of Owen, the lean Texan and Bishop, the veteran Air Force pilot, who answered their calling to promote the wider observance of American ethics. “We developed a set of Ethical Expectations around our core values: Build enduring

<sup>13</sup><http://cowboylethics.org/cowboy-ethics/>

<sup>14</sup>Bishop, Don. *The Code of the West – Then, Now, Forever*. Olde West Cedarmill Publishing, Mustang, Oklahoma



relationships, respect, adopt a can-do attitude, seek excellence, and act with integrity,” says Mike. “We integrated the Code of the West ‘principles’ into them, which made the expectations come alive.”

“I think that the Baldrige Program enabled us to transform our organization from being good to a great organization, one that is very high-performing,” he added.

Julia Gabaldón remarked that “We feel tremendous pride that our process has now prepared two New Mexico organizations to achieve national excellence and we have many more in the pipeline.” And Mike, though retired, is by no means through. “Now I’m going help the center start work on a second Baldrige National Quality Award,” he promises.

“Entirely possible,” agrees Stan, “and in fact, most likely.”

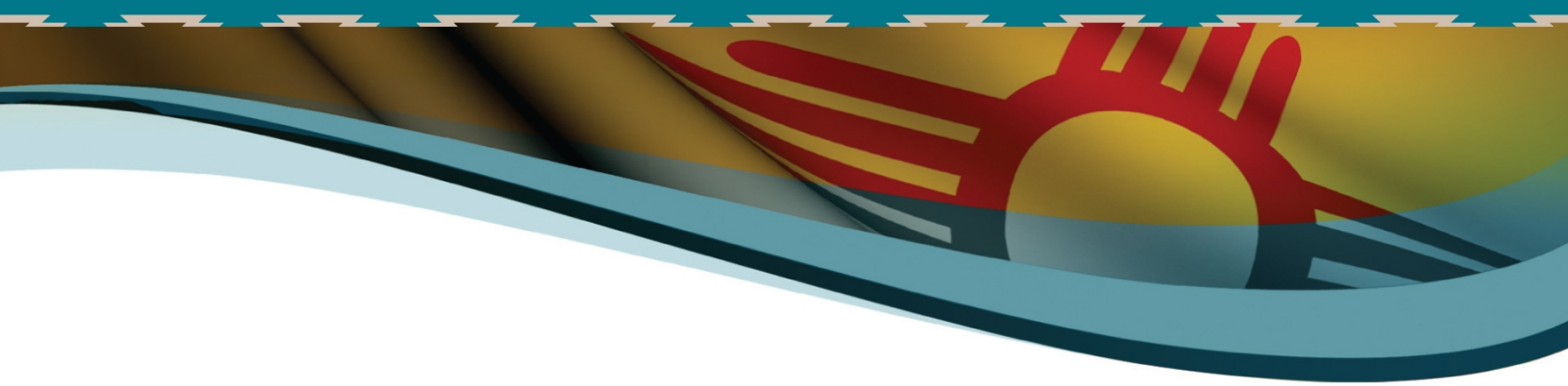
### **Secrets of the Baldrige Program’s Success**

The Baldrige program began in 1987 as a successful bid to build a federally managed public-private partnership that would build upon and complement existing corporate quality management plans. It would also work in collaboration with larger programs that included the International Organization for Standardization’s ISO 9000 quality

standards, Lean Manufacturing, Six Sigma, and W. Edwards Deming’s Total Quality Management.

The Baldrige program was different. It was applicable across a wide variety of different manufacturing, service, and government organizations. And it encouraged bottom-up, as well as top-down, communication -- something that stuck in Mac Baldrige’s mind in the late 1940s when he worked as part of a multinational group of manual workers who would send genuinely useful suggestions to a management that coldly ignored them. At the time, recently discharged from the U.S. Army, he had decided to start his civilian life as a blue-collar worker so that he could learn that part of industry before he was swept into what he expected, correctly, would be the corporate/governmental life suiting a Yalie.

The Department of Commerce had its work cut out for it when, in the first days of Ronald Reagan’s presidency, Mac moved into the office of the Secretary of Commerce. The nation’s international trade situation was in bad shape and its economic future was uncertain. Better relations were needed with India, Russia, and China. Clearly something substantial had to be done. And Mac would not give up an enduring passion for improving managerial quality and his steadfast war against officialdom’s use of jargon and bureaucratese. In 1984 his department



would publish *How Plain English Works for Business, Twelve Case Studies*.<sup>15</sup>

The media naturally liked to play on the near-incongruity represented by a Secretary of Commerce who spent an important life as a cowboy and rancher, and so did their readers. The August 31, 1986 cover of the *Chicago Tribune Magazine* featured a stunning action photo of Mac in his rodeo gear, lariat swinging over his broad-brimmed hat as he prepares to rope a calf bolting from the chute. The headline read: “Riding Herd on World Trade: It’s ‘High Noon’ for American industry – and ‘Mac’ Baldrige means business.”

Like other leaders of his time, Baldrige had been concerned since the late 1970s that U.S. and European industry was falling behind Japan and other competitors. One of his prime goals was to promote quality management, which he considered to be a key to national prosperity and long-term economic strength. The idea of forming a national quality management program was discussed many times in the following years; legislation to form an organization for that purpose was proposed. But nothing happened, even after years of discussion.

When in the summer of 1987 *Business Week* declared, “For U.S. industry, the message is clear. Get better or get beaten,” it was as through someone had

thrown down a massive gauntlet.<sup>16</sup> When the much-liked, highly successful Secretary of Commerce died two months later, his colleagues were stunned, from the President down. With this impetus it took just three days to create a noble new idea that was at first called, simply, the Baldrige program.

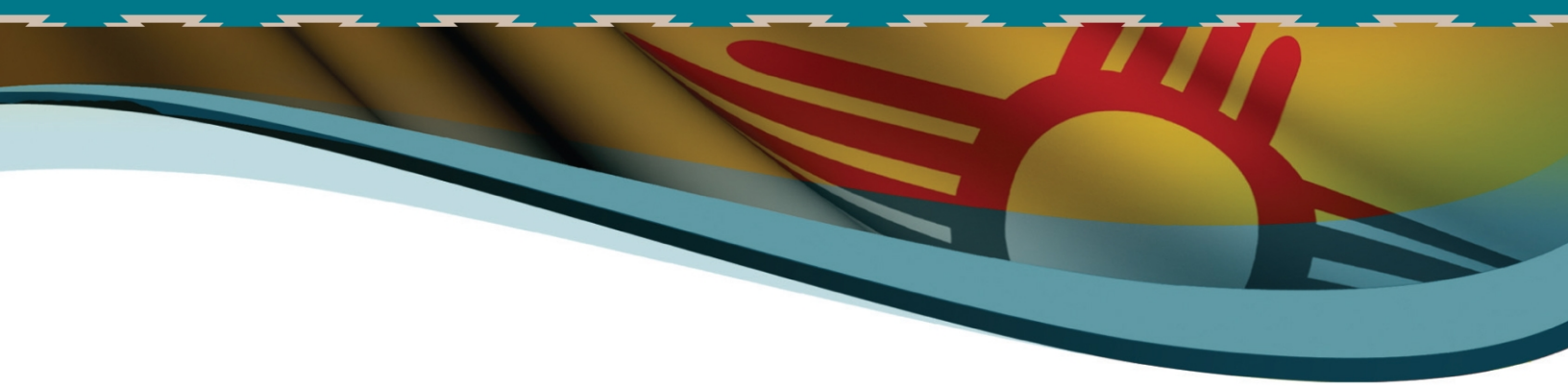
“This terrible accident suddenly created a vehicle that people could rally around,” said Curt Reimann, who would become first director of the Baldrige Program. “There was this pent-up feeling that something needed to be done about national competitiveness and quality problems. Those kinds of confluences are very rare. It was an accident of circumstances.”<sup>17</sup> The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation promptly renamed the legislation in Mac’s honor, and it became one of the laws of the land. The Baldrige program was to become known for its emphasis on results and service and giving participants access to the insight of specialized professionals. Meanwhile it focused on future strategies, customers and the workforce, and the importance of sharing information. It is intended to be integrated into what was already being done by the organization, or should be done.

<sup>16</sup>“Special Report: The Push for Quality,” *Business Week*, June 8, 1987

<sup>17</sup>[http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/25th/upload/How\\_the\\_Baldrige\\_Program\\_Began.pdf](http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/25th/upload/How_the_Baldrige_Program_Began.pdf)

<sup>15</sup><http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009512793>





The Baldrige program is no school for ninnies. Jim Collins, author and teacher of leadership skills, puts it this way: “I see the Baldrige process as a powerful set of mechanisms for disciplined people engaged in disciplined thought and taking disciplined action to create great organizations that produce exceptional results.”<sup>18</sup>

In more than 35 states across the country, organizations in six categories – manufacturing, service, small business, education, healthcare and nonprofit – complete annually for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), presented by the President of the United States. As of 2014, 105 awards had been presented to 99 organizations, including six repeat winners. The U. S. Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology manages the award as a major part of its services as manager of the National Baldrige infrastructure and the ASQ (American Society for Quality) handles support activities that include the application review process, publicity, and outreach. The Foundation for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was created in 1988 to raise sufficient funds to establish and manage an endowment; review Baldrige Program accomplishments; and disburse funds as needed to NIST to support the Baldrige Program.

As was the case in New Mexico, organizations frequently participate first in a state program and then join the national Baldrige Program. More than 400 quality professionals from throughout the United States serve as volunteers on the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program board of examiners, supporting and evaluating the performance improvement of Baldrige participants. A panel of judges appointed by the Secretary of Commerce selects candidates for approval by the Secretary of Commerce.

The basic credo of the Baldrige program is that “investing in quality and performance excellence pays off in increased productivity, satisfied employees and customers, and improved results for both customers and stakeholders.” On a more personal level, says Julia Gabaldón, it is “a very, very positive environment of people working together to help each other improve.”

Part of the Baldrige way of thinking is that once the organization is fully understood weak points can be recognized and remedies can be organized and put to work. So participants start out by analyzing their organizations’ governance and leadership, including ways of making sure that legal and ethical conduct is maintained. Then they move to study the organizational goals and strategies that are in place to achieve those goals. Once these steps have been thoroughly

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<sup>18</sup>[http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/about/what\\_we\\_do.cfm](http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/about/what_we_do.cfm)

covered, the process moves to customer relations – through listening to their comments and gathering satisfaction and dissatisfaction information. Next there is a study of ways in which the organization can engage its customers in order to serve their needs and strengthen the relationship.

These and other issues are visited repeatedly during the Baldrige process, with feedback forms used to help check progress on organizational goals and communication technique. Above all, they are intended to answer the prime questions *Are We Making Progress?* and *Are We Making Progress as Leaders?*

“One of the things that always struck me about the Baldrige process is it’s a way of institutionalizing a culture of discipline,” author and management guru Jim Collins told Julia Gabaldón in a radio interview. Its approach is nothing like that of managers who lay down the law and back it up with threats: “geniuses with a thousand helpers who personally discipline people.”

“We’re talking about making an entire cultural ethos where everyone is engaged in a systematic, methodical, consistent approach to making things work better day upon day, week upon week, year upon year, over a long period of time.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>[http://nistbaldrige.blogs.govdelivery.com/2015/04/28/collins-on-baldrige-as-a-smac-recipe-discipline-creativity-and-paranoia/#.VT\\_TXxvug0.email](http://nistbaldrige.blogs.govdelivery.com/2015/04/28/collins-on-baldrige-as-a-smac-recipe-discipline-creativity-and-paranoia/#.VT_TXxvug0.email)



*The Baldrige Sisters – Molly and Megan, Christmas 2013*

Like the Baldrige program, parts of the Baldrige family have settled firmly in the West – Megan in Albuquerque’s North Valley and Molly in Colorado. When the girls were youngsters the family would spend two weeks each summer on the ranch, enabling Mac to be that cowboy he had wanted to be as a kid. While his two daughters never adopted a permanent ranch life, they refused to give up their peaceful haven south of Albuquerque. Molly lived there and worked as a ranch hand for a year after college. Eventually she moved to Colorado and started a career in agricultural mortgage lending. Though it is hundreds of miles away, the ranch still stays in her mind. Currently she is planning to modify its layout so that stock and pasturage can be managed more effectively in what have been many years of drought.

The two sisters are currently putting the final touches to a book work-titled *Mac*

*Baldrige: The Cowboy in Ronald Reagan's Cabinet.* Centered upon his six and a half years as Secretary of Commerce, it will be published by Taylor Press, an imprint of Rowman and Littlefield, in November, 2015.

*"We didn't apply [Baldrige] concepts . . . to win an award. We did it to win customers. We did it to grow. We did it to prosper."  
-- Earnest Deavenport, chairman and CEO of Eastman Chemical Company and 1993 Baldrige Award recipient.*

*Nigel Hey, a British-born writer and author of six books, lives in Los Ranchos, part of the Albuquerque, N.M. area. His most recent book "Wonderment," is the memoir of an English boy who grew up to be a journalist and trade press writer in London, editor of a Bermuda newspaper, and finally a journalist and science writer in the American West.*

*Learn more about the author and his work at [www.nigelhey.com](http://www.nigelhey.com).*

