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HEADLINE: Madness to go against Maddy

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BODY:

It took a while and about \$60,000, but John Burton finally got the message about Ken Maddy.

Burton, now state Senate president, told the story at a ceremony Monday in Sacramento to unveil a Capitol grounds monument honoring Maddy, his departed senatorial seatmate.

Burton, a San Francisco Democrat, recalled coming to Fresno in 1970 to campaign against Maddy, a Republican. At the time, Maddy's district was heavily Democratic -- a surefire win, Burton figured.

So on behalf of the Democratic party, he gave \$20,000 to Maddy's opponent. Maddy won. Two years and another \$20,000 later, he backed the opposition again. Maddy won. Two years and another \$20,000 later, the same result. "That was the last time I supported an opponent of Ken Maddy," said Burton, who became fast friends with Maddy.

He didn't win them all, though, said Bob Beverly, another old colleague, remembering the time handicapper Maddy told him to put his money on a namesake, Lucky Bob, at the track. Bad luck. Lucky Bob never made it out of the gate.

DISARMING FELLOW: During his stop in Fresno last week, Vice President Dick Cheney defended the short-lived Office of Strategic Influence, recollecting his warrior days as secretary of defense in the Persian Gulf War when the good guys influenced the bad guys with disinformation. Once, to keep the villains guessing, he revealed, the United States staged a series of diversionary amphibious landings, thereby fooling the Iraqis and tying up five or six of their divisions.

ROYAL FLUSH: In the case of Emperor Haile Selassie, it was prunes that saved the crown, a turn of events brought to mind the other day at a luncheon for judicial candidate Charles Ray Barrett Jr.

Barrett's father, the late Charles Ray Barrett Sr., also a lawyer, practiced worldwide, including in Ethiopia.

As recounted by friend Bill Whitehurst, all the senior Barrett had with him on his first trip to visit the emperor was a small box of prunes from the Sugar Plum Farm near Hollister. Not to worry, an adviser told him. When it comes to protocol, it's the thought that counts. Prunes, raisins, whatever.

No sooner was he finished with his legal affairs and back in Fresno than a cable arrived from the emperor's foreign minister: "The Emperor loves the prunes. Please send more."

Five days later, before he could make a trip to Hollister to resupply, he received another urgent cable from the foreign minister. "Where," the emperor wanted to know, "are the prunes?"

No sooner said than done. Several weeks after dispatching a large box of them, he received still another cable: "The Emperor would like some more prunes."

Done again. Shortly thereafter, he delivered personally, after which the emperor and the lawyer became friends and the lawyer became the emperor's representative in the United States.

All as a result of two prunes served nightly in a silver dish, right up until the dying day of the Conquering Lion of Judah at the age of 83.

To think, Whitehurst said, Charles Ray Barrett Sr. and a steady diet of dried plums helped keep one of history's most powerful men on the throne.

Literally, he added.