

## 26/Medallion Service

# 1987 Medallion Service Award Recipient

## Ken Cook



*Cook's involvement with UW has touched generations of alumni. His tremendous contributions as a whole are once again saluted as he is named the 1987 Medallion Service Award Recipient*

By Marty C. Padilla  
Alumnews Editor

"The University of Wyoming has given myself and my family more than we could ever repay," says 1987 Medallion Service Award Recipient, Ken Cook.

Cook has been a long time friend of the University, and as the award suggests; he has given unselfishly of his time, service and talents to insure that UW will remain a great place for generations to come.

Cook was born in Alliance, Nebraska. He grew up on an irrigated farm near Riverton which was homesteaded by his family in the early 1930's. Immediately after high school, Cook entered the University of Wyoming on a four year athletic scholarship majoring in animal

husbandry and minoring in agronomy with concentrated studies in agricultural science, education and physical education.

Playing football for four years on scholarship was one highlight of Cook's college career. He was also a member of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity and served as chapter president in 1942. Cook credits his fraternity involvement as one driving force behind his successes in the classroom, on the playing field, and throughout his lifetime.

"Each day at UW was a highlight ... I received an exposure that would help me my entire life," he added. During his junior and senior years he was part of the Livestock Judging Team and Scabbard & Blade. He was also an active participant both the W Club and the Agriculture Clubs.

Cook recalled his days at UW, and noted he was balancing a rigid academic

program, playing football and participating in other extra-curricular activities and working a variety of part-time jobs.

He worked at the Snowy Range Cafe which is now the First Interstate Bank Parking lot in Laramie. "I cleaned the cafe every night for my board. All three meals for four years," he said. In addition, Cook could be found doing a variety of odd jobs around the campus as part of a work program for 35 cents an hour.

He also, on occasion, cut stone at the university's quarry for the Wyoming Union and Knight Hall buildings as a way to earn extra money.

Cook said his scholarship and part-time work made up the majority of his financial support. "You could count on your fingers and toes all the automobiles that were on the campus back then," he said. Enrollment topped out around 2,500 students

in the early 40's and football games were played on Corbett Field, which is now the area behind the Union.

Upon graduation from UW in May 1942, Cook was commissioned as an officer in the Army and entered active duty. He completed his military training under the UW ROTC Program. Cook rose through the officer ranks to Major. He served as company commander, battalion plans and training officer, battalion executive officer and finally commander of the 3rd Battalion, 155th Regiment, 31st Infantry Division. Most of his service career was spent in the Pacific Theater.

It was August 8, 1942 at Fort Benning, Georgia, where Cook made Evelyn Judkins his wife. Judkins joined Cook and thirteen friends from the University of Wyoming who were also stationed at Fort Benning. The thirteen turned out to be the



# Ken Cook has been a long time friend of the University giving unselfishly of his time, service and talent.

wedding party, Cook added. He and Evelyn have two children, Kay, the director of advertising and marketing for Butterick Publishing in New York City and son, Walter, an operations agent for Burlington Air Express in Boise. Walter has two sons; Charlie and Adam.

Following four years of military service Cook began his professional career in April 1946. He started as a county agent for Montana's Agricultural Extension Service in Billings. Four years later he joined the Agricultural Development Department of Northern Pacific. Cook's career with the Northern Pacific included service as an Agricultural Development Agent in Seattle, Spokane and Billings. In 1963 he was appointed the Western Agricultural Development Agent and in '66 he was named Director of that department and relocated to St. Paul. In '70 Cook joined Burlington Northern as director of Agricultural Development and in '78 was named Executive Representative for Burlington Northern in Denver. In this capacity he served as a liaison to Wyoming, Nebraska and Colorado communities mitigating impact caused by the increased traffic of the railroad.

In the late 70's Cook recalled a tremendous increase in coal development in Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska. In some communities train traffic increased from eight trains a day to over twenty and in most cases the trains were getting approximately 30 cars longer. "There was a lot of impact on these communities. There were many adjustments to be made. Residents were concerned with waiting at train crossings for fire protection, school buses, etc.. "We immediately went to work to extend sitings for longer trains, and addressing individual concerns to relieve that tension. Now after spending several billions of dollars things have improved," Cook said.

During the years Cook spent outside the state of Wyoming he stayed actively involved with the university volunteering a good deal of time for student recruitment. He was always in touch with the school to assist with recruitment of students from every area he lived between 1946 to the present. He also assisted the Alumni Association with several reunions and functions during that time.

"I remember several times in Minnesota when the UW coaches would call

me up and want to learn more about particular athletes from the surrounding St. Paul and Minneapolis areas. Evelyn and I would go to these high schools, talk to the various coaches and collect as many as 60 rolls of film for the UW coaches to screen in the basement of our home when they would come to town. "We'd spend evening after evening watching the films," he recalled. Cook also said he helped the young athletes find summer work to financially prepare for the university. "I also used to get to a lot of Minnesota high school games for UW coaches over the twelve years I spent in the area."

Cook retired from Burlington Northern on October 1, 1982, to pursue new adventures which keep him actively involved in his former career and also heavily involved with his alma mater, the University of Wyoming.

Cook is the immediate past president of the University of Wyoming Cowboy Joe Club and serves on its executive committee. He has served on the Cowboy Joe Club Board of Directors since 1978. He is a past president and board member of the UW Alumni Association and also served on the

Wyoming 4-H Foundation Board of Directors as chairman. He works with the university's Agricultural Advisory Council which includes his recent appointment to the Wyoming Operation Lifesaver Program as a co-coordinator. The lifesaver program is a national program to prevent accidents at the nation's 225,000 public railroad and highway grade crossings. He holds FFA Honorary State Farmer Degrees from the states of Washington, Minnesota and Montana and in 1977 the national FFA awarded him the honorary American Farmer Degree. In 1986 Cook was awarded the coveted "White Hat" award by the Cowboy Joe Club to recognize his unswerving loyalty to the university.

For UW's future, Cook said he hopes that the institution continues to maintain high standards for its educational programs. He added, he would like to see the Alumni Association and the athletic program continue to grow.

Cook's involvement with the university has touched generations of alumni. His tremendous contributions to the university as a whole are once again saluted as he is named the 1987 Medallion Service Award Recipient. □

*"Each day at UW was a highlight ...I received an exposure that would help me my entire life."*