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UW recognizes four outstanding alums during Homecoming 1991

Four University of Wyoming alumni will be recognized during 1991 Homecoming festivities Oct. 11-12 in Laramie. Three -- the late Rodney Guthrie, Harold Kester and Ed Witzemberger, will receive Distinguished Alumni Awards.

A fourth, Dick Brown, will receive the 1991 Medallion Service Award. Judge Guthrie will be honored posthumously, with his family accepting on his behalf. Shown, from left, are Brown, Guthrie, Kester and Witzemberger.

UW holds special place in trustee Dick Brown's heart

For 1991 Medallion Service Award winner Dick Brown, the decision to attend UW was an easy one.

"I had my heart and my goals set early in high school to attend the University of Wyoming; so, naturally, I didn't consider anywhere else," the Cheyenne native says.

Pleasant experiences at UW's summer music camp back in 1944 sparked Brown's desire to attend college in Laramie. He was impressed with both the campus and the music program, two critical factors in his plans to originally enroll as a music education major.

That decision began his 40-plus year relationship with the institution. Brown, now living in Casper, has maintained strong ties to the university. His dedication of time and talents are recognized as this year's Medallion Service recipient.

Brown's pursuit of a degree (social studies education, with a music minor) took a slight detour through the military and the Korean War. He took time off from studies after his first two quarters and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. Shortly after his initial tour was completed, Brown (then a reservist) found himself being sent to Korea.

His military experience was a good one.

"I loved every minute that I served in the Marine Corps," Brown says. He arrived in cold, snowy Korea as a replacement in the machine gun section of a battalion that had been nearly wiped out. An old gunnery sergeant took 19-year-old Brown and his friends under his wing and "made men out of us."

Before returning to the states in 1952, Brown distinguished himself in the Corps. He earned a Purple Heart, Bronze Star with Combat "V" and a Korean Service Medal with three stars.

The experience also gave Brown the maturity he needed to return to college and succeed. While at UW, he was actively involved in several organizations. Among those were Omicron Delta

Kappa, Iron Skull and Phi Mu Alpha. Brown's affiliation with Sigma Alpha Epsilon social fraternity was one of his most satisfying UW experiences.

"The fraternity meant a great deal to me, because there I met many longtime friends," he says.

During those years, one of the most important responsibilities Brown took on was that of UW student body president (1954-55).

"More than anything, that prepared me to go out into the role of a citizen," he says. "It gave me a good deal of confidence."

Brown's daughter, Martha, followed in his footsteps many years later when she ran for, and won, the ASUW presidency in 1979-80.

"That's probably one of the proudest moments I've had," Brown says. "My only response to her was, 'Martha, go for it.'" Martha Brown was the first female student body president since the war years, opening the door for others in the 1980s. She and her father are also the only parent-child combination to serve as president in ASUW history.

Professional Experiences

Following his 1955 graduation, Brown tried a year of law school, then moved on to a management training program at Mountain Bell. Two years into that job (1958), he received a call from UW President George Duke Humphrey asking him to take over the reins of the Alumni Office. Brown accepted the challenge and, with the help of a supportive board, set up UW's first attempt at fund raising — the alumni-development fund. That project was the precursor to what has since evolved into the UW Foundation.

This didn't mean Brown was tied to the office. In fact, he spent a lot of his time on the road, visiting every community in the state, as well as making trips to alumni constituencies throughout the country.

During his tenure as UW alumni director, Brown learned about working with the Wyoming Legislature. In January 1959, Humphrey took him to Cheyenne, bought him a cowboy hat and announced that "now you're a lobbyist."

Lobbying for the university was relatively easy in those years. The institution enjoyed tremendous support from the legislature, and Humphrey was popular with state lawmakers. Brown primarily just made himself available to answer their questions.

His lobbying skills would play an important role in Brown's professional future. He left UW in 1969 to work for his former history professor, U.S. Sen. Gale McGee. Brown set up permanent offices for McGee in Cheyenne and Casper. He helped Wyomingites resolve problems with federal programs, such as Social Security and Veterans Affairs; and he represented McGee at various hearings, meetings and conferences around the state and accompanied the senator on his visits to Wyoming.

In 1976, following McGee's loss to Malcolm Wallop, Brown began his 15-year career with Pacific Power. He worked as the company's Wyoming lobbyist for two years, then transferred to a similar position in Oregon.

Five years into that job, Brown received a promotion that brought him back to the Cowboy state. He served one year in operations training, then became vice president and region manager, a position he's held for the past six years. Brown is in charge of all aspects of Pacific's operations in Wyoming and Montana.

Continued UW Service

Through the years, Brown's ties to UW remain strong. A large part of his service is in an official capacity. He serves on the UW Trustees, the UW Foundation Board of Directors, UW

Enhanced Oil Recovery Institute Steering Committee and the UW EPSCoR Steering Committee. He also served as honorary chairman of the university's Annual Fund.

Serving as a UW trustee has been an eye-opening experience for Brown. This job involves significantly more than anticipated; but he knows it's important work, shaping policy and guiding the university into the 21st century.

Despite countless hours of work, "we've barely scratched the surface in the things we're doing right now," he says.

Service is Important

For Brown, time spent serving his alma mater is a pleasurable job.

"If it hadn't been for the advantage of attending the University of Wyoming, and then having the opportunity to work there, I certainly wouldn't have been able to do everything I've been able to do," he says. "It's a great place."

Word of the Medallion Award was a pleasant surprise. As alumni director, Brown helped institute the Medallion program to recognize meritorious service to UW. He did not suspect, however, he'd be added to the list of recipients.

"I'm overwhelmed, because I didn't think it would ever happen to me," Brown says of notification he'd won. "Aside from my family, when it comes right down to it, the university has been among my first loves."

Brown and his wife, Marty (the former Martha Bauman, also a UW graduate), have six children. Two — Martha and Becky — graduated from UW. Sarah attended UW for two years before earning a degree from the University of Idaho. Mary graduated from Colorado College. Charlie, a law student at the University of Puget Sound, graduated from the University of Oregon. Katie has a degree from Oregon State University.