

MEDALLION SERVICE AWARD

'Warm spot in heart' sparks Rochelle's UW service

BY DEBRA BAKER BECK

Medallion Service Award recipient Curt Rochelle says his dedication and generosity to the University of Wyoming stems from a strong desire to return something to the institution that helped him become the man he is today.

"I've always had a warm spot in my heart for the University of Wyoming," Rochelle (BS '41) says.

What he received from UW was much more than book knowledge.

"It wasn't the education that did the most for me," he says. "It was the people I met and the time I had to mature. I think that's one thing that helped me get along in my life."

Over the years, Rochelle has shown his devotion to UW via contributions of both time and money.

Certainly, the 1992 donation of \$1 million (closer to \$1.5 million when the pledge is completed in December) to fund the Curtis and Marian Rochelle Chair in Animal Science is a vivid expression. So are the many other financial contributions made by the Rochelles to both the College of Agriculture and the institution as a whole. The university recognized those contributions in 1991, when it awarded Rochelle the UW Foundation benefactor's statue for support of university programs and scholarships.

But equally important is Rochelle's donation of time. He served a six-year term on the UW trustees (1983-89), during some of the board's most interesting and trying times to date. He also was the first president of the UW Alumni Association when it reorganized after World War II.

Common Sense Approach to Life

Rochelle's approach to trustee service — "common sense" — mirrored his philosophy of life:

"There are three things needed to be successful in life — honesty, common sense, and the desire to get ahead and do something," he says. Rochelle also finds guidance in an old Denver Post motto: "There's no hope for the satisfied man."

Rochelle joined the trustees as UW began feeling the pinch of tight economic times. He also served when several interesting capital issues emerged, including approval of the Centennial Complex, exchange of the old stock farm site (now the Wyoming Territorial Park) for its current site west of Laramie, and the multi-year deliberation regarding structural problems with the Arena-Auditorium roof.

Both the arena roof debate, which spanned 4-5 years of his term, and approval of the American Heritage Center/Art Museum complex design stirred up plenty of controversy for Rochelle and his fellow trustees.

Personnel decisions also dominated his trustee time. Among the most visible was selection of Athletic Director Paul Roach to replace departed football coach Dennis Erickson and the selection of Terry Roark to replace retiring president Don Veal.

Rochelle had an opportunity to serve under both presidents.

"I hated to see Dr. Veal go," he says. "But after I got to know Dr. Roark, I was very happy that he was there. I got along very well with both of them."

Life as a trustee offered many challenges and rewards.

"It was always an interesting job," Rochelle says.

Livestock Leader

Throughout his life, Rochelle has been involved in the ranching business. After Rochelle's 1933 graduation from



CURT ROCHELLE

Casper High School, he remained on the family ranch for four years to herd sheep. In the depths of the Great Depression, he didn't earn a high salary — \$1 a day. But with minimal expenses, Rochelle managed to save some money. In 1937, he decided it was time to go to college to develop some "polish."

Rochelle intended to stay only a year, so he enrolled at UW as a "special student." He took a variety of courses that year, including a wool class and an accounting class. Rochelle enjoyed college life; so after taking spring and summer quarters off to help the family with ranching chores, he returned the next fall as a sophomore and eventually declared an animal husbandry major.

His Early Career

After graduating in 1941, Rochelle took a position with the air base then being built at Casper until he accepted a job as foreman of a Carbon County sheep ranch owned by the aunt of one of his fraternity brothers. He worked the 9,000-head operation for a year until he met his first wife and resigned in the spring of 1943.

At that time, Rochelle returned to UW to work in the wool department. When faculty member Alex Johnson left UW to head the U.S. Department of Agriculture's wool procurement operation, Rochelle followed him in 1944 and became a wool specialist for the northwest region. Based in Portland, he examined and appraised wool for Oregon, Washington, California and Idaho.

Rochelle didn't care for the travelling required by the job, so he returned to Carbon County in late 1944 to run the Savage Livestock Company. This 5,000-head ranch was owned by five elderly women who signed Rochelle to a one-

year contract with an option to buy. At the end of that year, he purchased one band of sheep and leased the land with a three-year purchase option. That was the beginning of his own livestock empire.

While running Rochelle Livestock, he got involved in the business of buying lambs for commission and eventually purchased half of that partnership. Since he and his partner owned some of the lambs for one to two months at a time, the found they could ask whatever the market would bear.

This became a lucrative operation, and he invested every infusion of cash into expanding Rochelle Livestock. Soon, it was a huge operation — 22,000 head of sheep — and he decided to focus his full attention on running the ranch. He still runs Rochelle Livestock, which now includes a cattle operation and a smaller sheep herd.

Cable TV

Over the years, Rochelle ventured into nonagricultural business interests. One of the best moves he made professionally was getting into the cable television market 22 years ago. He originally entered cable TV when a friend encouraged him to invest in a small cable system in Casper. The group began obtaining franchises elsewhere, and it organized as United Cable. That firm grew to become the sixth largest cable operation in the U.S. United Cable eventually merged with United Artists, and Telecommunications Inc. (TCI) later absorbed UA.

Rochelle has always taken a leadership position within his cable interests. He was a director of both United Cable Television Co. and United Artists Entertainment Co. Today, he serves as a director in United International Holdings. Rochelle and his partners established that worldwide cable organization six years ago. It has cable systems in Europe (nine countries), Asia, South America, Mexico and New Zealand.

Overseas cable is still in its infancy, Rochelle says. He compares it to cable activity in the United States 25 years ago. In fact, some countries only recently began allowing cable to operate legally.

Miscellany

Rochelle was elected to the Wyoming State Legislature in 1969 as a representative from Carbon County. He remains active in the livestock industry. Rochelle is a member of the Wyoming Cattlemen's Association, the National Cattlemen's Association and the Wyoming Woolgrowers Association. He is also past president of Carbon County Woolgrowers.

Rochelle is a partner in Stratton Sheep Co., director of Lander Energy of Fort Collins, and a director of Rawlins National Bank. He is a member of Rotary Club, Elks Club, various Masonic orders and Shrine Korein Temple.

While a UW student, he participated in Sigma Chi fraternity and the ag honorary society. Rochelle was Sigma Chi president during his senior year, as well as president of the senior class.

Rochelle and his wife, Marian, have three children: Kathleen Jaure of Rawlins, April Brimmer Kunz of Cheyenne and James Rochelle of Gillette.

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