

MEDALLION SERVICE AWARD

John Clay

John Clay was born May 19, 1923, in Canton, Mo. His father died when he was 4 years old, and his mother moved him and his three brothers to the grandparents' ranch west of Laramie. The ranch is now a part of the University stock farm.

Clay's mother, affectionately known as Wana, taught in country schools during the depression years and later became Albany County superintendent of schools.

During the summer months, Clay worked on a ranch in the Centennial Valley, where he was paid one dollar a day with board and room. Later, when he was in high school, he worked summers and after school at the First National Bank for \$65 a month.



John Clay (EX '46, Honorary '04)

After graduating from Laramie High School, he continued at the bank while attending the University of Wyoming part time. In 1943, he enlisted in the US Army Air Corps and became a

pilot. "I was assigned to a training base in California where I met a lovely lady, Esther," he says. "We were married before I went overseas."

Clay flew 68 missions over France Germany and Belgium in a P47 fighter bomber. His job was to give air support to the 1st and 9th Armies Armored Divisions by dive bombing and strafing the enemy ahead of them. One of their toughest times was during the Battle of the Bulge. Clay was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for an especially harrowing mission, where he blew up a munitions plant while under heavy ground fire. "I am blessed to have come home in one piece," Clay says.

After the war, he returned to the University of Wyoming, studying accounting and business. With only nine hours remaining to graduate, Clay was encouraged to take a position with Wyoming Farm Bureau Insurance Company, which was just getting started. He became the company CEO and

eventually executive secretary of the Wyoming Farm Bureau.

In 1961, Clay took a position of vice president of the First National Bank of Kemmerer. He left to become a stockbroker in Cheyenne with the company now known as RBC Dain Rauscher. He has been with the same company, in the same town, since 1963. He held several positions with the company and today is a senior vice president.

Clay is a strong believer in giving back to his community and alma mater. He has served as a member of the University of Wyoming Foundation Board for 12 years – as chairman and now as an emeritus board member. He served as vice chairman to Chairman Senator Al Simpson on the UW Foundation's Distinction Campaign, which just finished raising over \$200 million in five years from private donations. He served on the Y Cross ranch board and is now an emeritus board member. The Y Cross ranch was given to

continued on page 7

John Clay

continued from page 6

UW and CSU by the Davis Foundation nine years ago. It comprises 50,000 acres and 700 head of cows. He has served as a board member of the American Heritage Center and is on the College of Agriculture advisory board.

Clay was the inaugural chairman of the UW Presidents Society for \$1000+ donors. President Dubois presented him with "The President's Best Friend" award. In 2004, he was awarded the UW Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree, and last spring the UW College of Business gave him the Distinguished Service Award.

He and his wife are partners in philanthropy and have along history of establishing endowments in the colleges of Business, A&S and Agriculture, as well as the library and the honors program. They were leadership donors in the Rochelle Athletic Center and the UW Art Museum.

Clay has served in leadership roles at the Cathedral Home, the Wyoming Episcopal Church

Foundation and for his church in Cheyenne. He served on the boards and as chairman of the Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce, the United Way and Cheyenne Rotary Club. In 1997, the Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce named him Person of the Year.

The Clays were instrumental in establishing the Laramie County Community College and the LCCC Foundation; Clay has served there as chairman and a board member. The couple established an endowment to bring noted artists to LCCC for the Clay Summer Watercolor workshops. They gave to renovate the college art gallery and helped establish the music cultural series and the business training center. Esther, a watercolorist, headed the capital campaign to build the Cheyenne Civic Center. The Clays support many community activities. "We are partners in philanthropy and believe strongly in education and the arts," Clay says.

The Clays have been married for 62 years and have two daughters, Carroll and Diane, and four grandchildren. ¶

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John C. Clay



**Join A&S for a reception in their honor
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For more information, call the A&S Development Office at 307.766.2755, or send e-mail to asdean@uwyo.edu