

Gerald E. "Jerry" Schuman Medallion Service Award

By Julianne Couch
Alumnews Editor

FAST FACTS:

EDUCATION: B.S., Agriculture, UW '66
M.S., Soil Science, UNLV '66.
Ph.D., Agronomy, major in Soil
Science, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
'74.

OCCUPATION: Soil Scientist, retired,
Adjunct UW faculty, active

SELECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS: W.R.
Chapline Award, Society for Range
Management; Plass Award, American
Society for Mining and Reclamation;
Sustained Lifetime Achievement Award,
Society for Range Management; Fellow
Award, Soil Science Society of America,
Soil and Water Conservation Society,
American Society of Agronomy and
Society for Range Management.

BEST KNOWN FOR: Work on mine land
reclamation and carbon sequestration
research; mentoring students.

FAMILY: Wife Joann.; Late wife Mabel,
married for nearly 40 years prior to
her death in 2004; son, William and
daughter, Kara.

HOBBIES: Following the Wyoming
Cowboys! Hunting, fishing and
traveling; especially foreign travel.



Gerald E. "Jerry" Schuman, Medallion Service Award

Most Wyomingites are aware that our state is a key player in the energy industry. We know what happens to the materials that are mined in Wyoming. However, many of us give little thought to what happens to that land after the mining operation has moved on. Gerald "Jerry" Schuman is known as a leading international authority on mined land reclamation and carbon sequestration. He has helped spread that knowledge to others throughout his service to UW.

Schuman has devoted a large portion of his career as a soil scientist to the problem of restoring mined lands to their previous condition. His research led to the development of a reclamation technology that has been used to revegetate more than 14,000 acres of former bentonite mined land.

Another emphasis of Schuman's research looked at interseeding yellow-flowering alfalfa into rangelands for enhanced forage production, improved forage quality, and enhanced sequestration of atmospheric carbon dioxide into the soil. Additional research emphasis is the use of small grain stubble mulches rather than straw or hay mulch to aid in the

establishment of the permanent plant community on the restored land.

Schuman's research career has also emphasized carbon sequestration. He was appointed by Gov. Jim Geringer and then by Gov. Dave Freudenthal to serve on the Wyoming Carbon Storage committee, representing rangeland-soil research in Wyoming. The primary objective was to establish carbon as a commodity on the Chicago Climate Exchange, a goal they reached.

Schuman was born in Sheridan, Wyo. He attended school for 12 years in the small town of Clearmont. "There were five of us who graduated together, and we all went on to college," he said. He entered UW in 1962 and earned his degree in Soil Science. He worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Reno, Nev. From there his work with the ARS took him to Lincoln, Neb. After earning his Ph.D. there he intended to go back to Sheridan to work the farm.

"Two of my brothers went to the farm, and my father decided there wasn't room for all of us," he said.

In 1975, Schuman began leading a research program in mined land reclamation and soil and water conservation with ARS in Cheyenne. He was research leader and director of the High Plains Grasslands Research Station/Rangeland Resources Research Unit from 1976 to 1998. He returned to full-time research in 1999. He retired in 2005 but continues as an adjunct professor in soil science at UW.

Several UW institutions have benefited from Schuman's involvement. He has served as an adjunct professor in the Department of Renewable Resources, participating in chairing/co-chairing and Ph.D. graduate committees for more than 30 students and helping younger colleagues develop their own research funding. He has served on countless search committees and was one of the coordinators to solicit contributors to endow the Dr. Lee Painter Memorial Scholarship. He serves on the steering committee for the Abandoned Coal Mine Land Research Program administered by the UW Office of Research. He has given numerous research seminars on

the topics of mined land reclamation and carbon sequestration in several UW departments. He has assisted the School of Environmental and Natural Resources with a workshop addressing protocol and methodology for assessing coal bed methane product water management to prevent land/soil degradation. He has been a member of the UW Alumni Association since 1966 and is a member of Gamma Sigma Delta and Sigma Xi, both honorary fraternities.

Schuman was named an Outstanding Alumnus of the College of Agriculture in 2000. His nominators for that award included Tom Thurow, professor and department head of UW's Department of Renewable Resources. "Given the large areas of land impacted by mining in Wyoming, we are lucky to have someone with Dr. Schuman's skills and drive working to creatively meet these needs. Dr. Schuman loves Wyoming and its people; I know he gets a great personal reward from knowing that he is a positive force in helping restore beauty and function to Wyoming landscapes after the minerals have been extracted."

Schuman was recently recognized by a ranch-cooperator's family from northwestern South Dakota, where he has carried out research for several years. The establishment of the Jerry Schuman-Bud Smith Rangeland Improvement Graduate Student award will help students at UW's Department of Renewable Resources.

Steve Horn, former dean and a professor in Animal Science, speaks of Schuman's dedication to UW. "Jerry always finds the time to assist his alma mater. He raises money for undergraduate student scholarships and never turns down an opportunity to share his work and experiences with UW students."


As an example of this generosity, Schuman is in the process of establishing a soil science scholarship that will assist graduate student travel to technical meeting here and abroad. It should be funded by 2010, he said.

Stephen E. Williams, former dean of the graduate school, recalls a personal story about a trip to visit surface mines in Mongolia with Schuman. "We had traveled by very rough roads 140 miles west of Ulaanbaatar to the Zaamar Gold Mines to view several reclamation trials in the area. When we arrived, we discovered that we did not have a shovel, but still we needed to sample plant roots and some soils. Jerry proceeded to find a rock that he could use for digging. With a lot of effort and much persistence he took soil samples using this Stone Age tool. And there he was, like a prehistoric being, wrenching

Continued on page 10

his willingness to sacrifice his own personal ambition for the public good – was shaped by a great institution: the University of Wyoming.”

Woodard recalls the first time he was aware of the award. “That was during the fall of 1959, halftime at a UW football game – a moment I clearly recall. The award was presented to John Bugas, of the Ford Motor Company. As a newly enrolled freshman at UW I was struck by the magnitude of the recipient’s career. I knew this recognition was something important as I watched the ceremony, but it never crossed my mind that someday I might also be so honored,” he said.

“I fully understand the importance of the UW Distinguished Alumni recognition and the honor it surely held for those exemplary UW graduates who came before. It is no less important for me, now finding myself in the same enviable position. This is a proud moment for me and my family and I want to thank the UW Alumni Association for making this the special day it is.” 

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Continued from page 9

the soil from the ground with his primitive tool, loving every minute of it.”

George F. Vance, Distinguished Professor of Energy and the

Environment at UW, was Schuman’s nominator for this award. “Dr. Schuman’s research and service contributions to Wyoming, the region and national/international efforts are truly impressive. He has continually provided high quality, practical research for the land manager that address contemporary issues, while concurrently advancing the state of knowledge in soil carbon and nitrogen recycling,” he said.

Schuman attributes his success and ability to help others with his work in large part to his academic preparation at UW. “I went to two other large universities but I believe my UW education prepared me the best for what I went on to do.

In spite of his professional and personal accomplishments, Schuman said he was “a little overwhelmed” when he received a letter from the Alumni Association. “I got a certified letter and thought now what! When I look at the list of others who’ve received the award I’m not sure what I did to deserve it.”

Perhaps one answer to this question can be found in his feelings about working with students. “It makes you feel good to see those young people you had when they were in their 20s and they’re out there working and keeping in touch with you because they enjoyed working with you. Advisors gets a lot of credit because they bring in the money, but all the work I did with students and colleagues was truly a team effort.” 