

## Peter K. Simpson Medallion Service Award

By Julianne Couch  
Alumnews Editor

### Fast Facts:

**EDUCATION:** BA, '53, History;  
MA '62, History; Ph.D., '73, History,  
University of Oregon

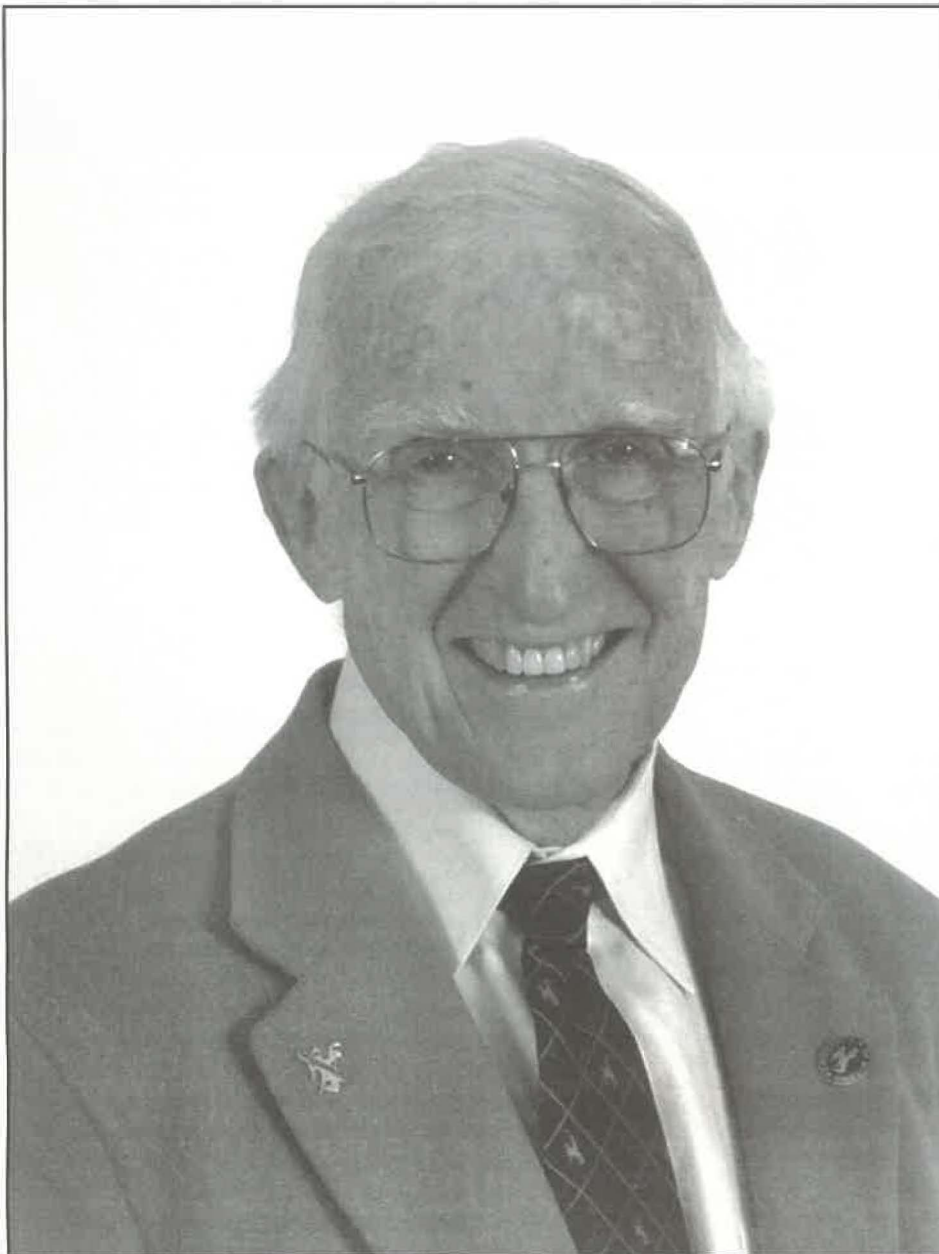
**OCCUPATION:** Emeritus  
Vice President for University  
Advancement, Distinguished Simpson  
Professor of Political Science

### SELECTED

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** 1976-77,  
Coordinator of Inaugural Joint Upper  
Division Program (UW & Casper  
College); 1980-1984, Wyoming state  
legislator; 1984-1986, Vice President  
for Development, Alumni Relations  
and University Relations and  
Executive Director, UW Foundation;  
1986-1997, Vice President for  
Institutional Advancement and  
Executive Director, UW Foundation

**FAMILY:** Wife, Lynne (Livingston)  
Simpson; daughter, Maggie Simpson,  
sons, Milward Simpson and Pete  
Simpson Jr.

**OTHER INTERESTS:** Actor, author



Peter K. Simpson, Medallion Service Award

When a young man grows up in a famous family, with a father who would be both a governor and member of the U.S. Senate, that young man might feel some pressure from the outside world to succeed. For Peter K. Simpson, son of Milward and Lorna (Kooi) Simpson, bearing the family name came both with advantages and expectations. Simpson said expectations are not always a bad thing, especially when the family is supportive of one's choices. His decision to "run away and become a historian instead of a lawyer" wasn't what his family expected, but it led to his becoming an individual who has used his breadth of interests and abilities to serve the University of Wyoming.

Maggi Murdock, director of UW's Outreach School, remarked on Simpson's contributions to UW over the years. "What significant contributions of time, talent, and support of the University of Wyoming has he not made?" Specifically, Murdock described the enormous undertaking that led to UW developing a relationship with Casper College, led in large part by Simpson. The end result was that UW provided

upper division courses on the Casper College campus, paired with the lower division courses already provided there on site. Wyoming's culture, politics, and business climate during the mid-1970s made this institutional marriage, which would be called UW-CC, a difficult one. Simpson was appointed to coordinate the program in its first year. "The real key was the front line, in the trenches, the professors," he explained. He recalled that five professors from UW and several who taught at Casper College were invited to a two-day retreat "to talk about the teaching game." The challenge they faced was how to deliver education to site-bound housewives for instance, or to young men who had just started careers and couldn't leave to come to Laramie to finish their four-year degree, he explained. But once the classes were offered and students were taking them, Simpson said the administrators and others could see it was working.

Simpson was invited to speak to

the first graduating class of UW-CC. He recalls there were a few dozen graduates with the ceremony held comfortably in a small hall. Then he was invited many years later to give a commencement address to a graduating class and audience so large it had to be held in the Casper Events Center. Looking out at that crowd was a powerful experience ~ "it blew my mind," he said. "This was one of the good things that happened."

Murdock, who took over the coordinator position from Simpson, describes his role as "the essential work of creating a belief in the possibilities of UW that tapped into Wyoming citizen's belief in their university—and opened their minds, and their wallets, to the need to support the university financially."

Simpson's own belief in his university has translated into involvement with the UW Foundation Board of Directors, the A&S Board of Visitors, the Symphony Association board, and

as a major donor to the university. After he retired from his UW administrative post, he and his brother Sen. Alan Simpson (A&S '54) were asked by the political science department to team teach a course on a one-time basis. But the course was so popular it was extended into a 12-year run for Pete. He explained that his brother enjoyed the work "but the CNN truck kept pulling up behind student housing so he just came as guest. His being there was fun and enlightening for the students, because Al was in the center of some pretty profound action in this country."

Simpson has officially retired from teaching and has returned to Cody with his wife Lynne. He says he's going to miss contact with students "like fire." He said that working with students—both in and out of the classroom—is a passion. He had a chance to work with students in a non-traditional way by appearing in several UW theatre productions. UW professor Leigh Selting directed Simpson as King Hamlet's ghost in a recent production of Hamlet. "Each night, rather than leave when his two small scenes were completed in rehearsal, he watched students, talked with them, and involved himself in every way in the production," Selting said. Not surprisingly, in 2001, Simpson helped establish the Peter Simpson Acting Scholarship, which has provided partial tuition to over 15 students over the years, according to Selting.

Simpson's interest in theatre grew up along with his interest in history. He explained that he and a friend with whom he served in the navy both played guitar and frequently entertained together. When their cruise area was in the Mediterranean Sea, Simpson would suggest they visit some of the hot night spots in places like Athens. But then his friend would suggest they visit the Oracle Chamber at Delphi.

"Pretty soon I was learning things first hand in the cradle of western civilization that I'd only seen in books." That sealed for him the course he'd study at UW, making him a member of the second generation of Simpsons to attend school here. He followed the family footsteps joining Alpha Tau Omega fraternity. Now the number of generations is up to four, since he and Alan have both had children and grandchildren attend UW. And while Simpson's teaching and administrative careers at UW have ended, he still intends to be involved.

"I don't do heavy lifting any more but I do open doors," he said.