

Frank Mendicino

UW Medallion Service Award Recipient

The name Frank Mendicino II (B.S. '62, J.D. '70, Honorary Doctor of Law '05) is a household name to many in Wyoming, especially so in Cheyenne and Laramie. There are many in Colorado and even California for whom his name is familiar. That is because throughout his career as an attorney and as partner in the firm Access Venture Capitalists, he has made an impact in all those places.

Mendicino grew up in Cheyenne. However, he did not immediately choose UW for his college. Instead, he started at the University of Colorado in the fall of 1957 on a partial tennis scholarship. "I was thinking I wanted to leave Wyoming. It only took me a semester to realize it was too big, and it was too different from how I was raised." He made the switch to Laramie, which he calls the start of a "fantastic experience." He joined Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and got involved in student government. In between completing his bachelor's degree and starting law school, he served in the Army.

Mendicino practiced law in Laramie, and in 1972 he was elected to the state Legislature representing Albany County. He served one term, then was asked to co-chair Ed Herschler's first gubernatorial campaign. "Defying all the odds, he was elected," Mendicino says, "so I became his attorney general."

That period gave Mendicino the opportunity to run what he says was in effect the biggest law firm in the state. He did things lawyers in rural states rarely get to do, such as arguing before the U.S. Supreme Court and getting involved in complex rule making.

"When I went back into practice, it was not nearly as exciting and challenging as serving as attorney general," Mendicino admits. As he was deciding what to do next, he heard from an old friend from Cheyenne who'd gotten involved in a venture capital



fund in California. Unlike Mendicino, this person and his partner had never managed money on behalf of limited partners. So in 1981, Mendicino joined them in California. Even while working at the firm, he continued to practice law in Wyoming, commuting frequently.

"Whenever people in California started thinking that's where I was from, I knew it was time to make a trip back to Wyoming," he says. When in the late 1990s the firm opened offices in Texas and in Denver, Mendicino took that chance to return to the Rocky Mountains. Now, he has homes in Denver and Laramie and is very involved with various projects at UW.

Mendicino turned 76 this year and says he's trying to decide what the next phase of his life will be. "I have never said no to any request ... that's part of my problem!"



Alumnus Runs 50 Marathons

UW alumnus Jerry Rief (B.S. '91, accounting) completed a marathon in each of the 50 states in under three hours by the time he turned 50. Read the full story at uwyo.edu/profiles/alumni.