

Distinguished Alumni

Art collector and construction magnet receives DA award

By Marty C. Padilla
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His home is a gallery of Western Americana. His collections represent generations of artists that have captured the American West. Lloyd W. Taggart, BS '39, and 1988 Distinguished Alumnus, says that collecting Western Art has been a "fascination" that not only enriches his life, but his family, friends and community.



To visitors of Cody, the Sage Brush Gallery, housed within the Taggart home, is a must see opportunity. The structure itself has been in the family for generations. Taggart leads guests through each room naming the individual artist, title of the piece, and an anecdote or two about when he acquired it. He loves to point out his particular favorites, that include a wood carving of his grandfather, George Henry Taggart, and a wall size original painting by Wilson Hurley entitled "The Red Wall, Grand Canyon at the mouth of Elves Chasm."

Taggart does not know exactly when he acquired his passion for art, but he did recall that when his dad was on the Buffalo Bill Museum Board, "he collected art, and I remember his art." Art, books, family history, and many traditions have been handed down from generation to generation in the Taggart family. "I think that's important, and that's why I'm making sure my children and grandchildren have some heritage to carry with them," he says.

There is the special part of the house that Taggart says represents what he is truly about. The room is full of rare and first edition books, volumes upon volumes. Taggart says he loves to read; "it's a disease." There are books and more books. Taggart says he wants to be sure that someone goes through his book collections, "my books are just too important." There are old cameras scattered about, rifles and guns displayed in a case, and a one-of-a-kind braided rope collection that money could



never replace. But the tour does not stop there; outside rests a completely restored log cabin that looks reminiscent of the 1800's, furnished with originals and replicas from that era.

Collecting the art is one hobby, sharing the art is a second. Taggart has extended his love of art to many throughout the years. The most prominent example of his generosity is displayed within a rare collections room in honor of his mother, the late Louise Welch Taggart, at the John Taggart Hinckley Library. John Taggart Hinckley was Louise's cousin as well as a longtime political science professor. You could say, the library located at Northwest Community College in Powell offers visitors the best of Lloyd Taggart and his heritage.

The entire room is furnished with Tom C. Molesworth furniture built almost sixty years ago and completely restored. There is also an extensive collection of Molesworth's Indian artifacts, primarily of the Plains Indians. Taggart says his mother wouldn't have had it any other way, she was a favored customer of Molesworth. The room is also graced with a rosewood Knabe square grand piano, built between 1850 and 1860. There are collections of music that represent his mother's favorite works, and books of art that Taggart recalled looking at as a child with his mother. He will sit down and play a few bars on the piano, or tell you the story about the two Indian women responsible for the room's original "grease-wood" rug that measures 14 feet by 20 feet.

But the avid collector of Western Art has also been a most successful entrepreneur, as leader of the Taggart Construction Company in Cody for many years, and later, heading up the thriving WMK Transit Mix Concrete Company of Las Vegas. "We probably sold more concrete in one year than the states of Wyoming, Montana and Utah combined," he says proudly. With 300

employees and three locations in Arizona, three in Las Vegas, including two block plants, the WMK Transit Mix Company had a hand in the major development and construction of Las Vegas and southern Nevada for more than a decade while the Taggart family ran the business.

While at the helm of WMK, Taggart was honored with the "1981 Free Enterprise Award" by the Greater Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, The Las Vegas Kiwanis Club and by the Employers of Southern Nevada, in recognition of his contributions to the growth and progress of southern Nevada. Taggart was praised for the principles of American capitalism he adhered to in his daily business activities and was also noted for his initiative and inventiveness. In 1981 the family made the decision to sell the WMK Transit Mix Company. Taggart stayed on as consultant for several more years. He currently maintains an office within the family business office, headquartered in Cody, and spends a good deal of his time enjoying the things he loves most, family, friends, and of course, Western Art.

Looking back, Taggart credits getting involved with extra curricular activities at UW as a main driving force behind his collegiate

and professional success. "Students should be as active as possible when attending the university." While studying for a civil engineering degree, Taggart was president of his freshman, sophomore, junior and senior classes. He was a member of the UW Student Senate, Iron Skull, the Swing Out Staff of 1936 and the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity.

The Union was built during Taggart's days at UW. Apartments were rented on the top floors. There were approximately 2,000 students back then. Recalling the many close friends and associations of the day require additional time for Lloyd Taggart. He has carried a number of those friends a lifetime. "It seemed that I was always running into Wyoming people after I graduated," he laughed. "Everywhere I traveled, China, Africa, India, there were always Wyoming people around."

Now to have been named a Wyoming Distinguished Alumnus, Taggart says, "I'm so proud to be among my old friends. I represent one of many distinguished alumni from Wyoming, I don't believe that I deserve anything." Taggart's ties to his alma mater have remained constant and his efforts to advance and support the institution have been strong. Efforts that are paving the way for a secure second century.

Of particular interest to Taggart is UW's plan for the new complex to house the American Heritage Center and UW Art Museum. "We need a proper structure to house the art and collections of the University of Wyoming and show them properly," he said. "We need to dramatize the phenomenal collection of materials that the University has available about our great heritage."

With his wife of 48 years, Adele, six children and 21 grandchildren, Taggart said that tradition and heritage must be preserved for the family unit. "We are responsible for passing a legacy on to future generations."

