

Bishop busy with consulting, fishing excursions

By DEBRA BAKER BECK, ALUMNEWS EDITOR

While most retired individuals might be tempted to hang up the “gone fishin’” sign, 1995 distinguished alumnus Floyd Bishop (BS ’42) of Cheyenne still manages to juggle a full consulting load between trips.

Bishop has been officially “retired” since 1985; but he still maintains an office and a hefty work schedule while consulting on various engineering projects, most related to water rights issues. (He also finds time for those fishing trips!)

Pre-medicine was his original UW major, but Bishop decided after a quarter of zoology classes that engineering was more to his liking. He changed his major to civil engineering and developed under such “top-notch” instructors as H. T. Person and A. J. McGaw.

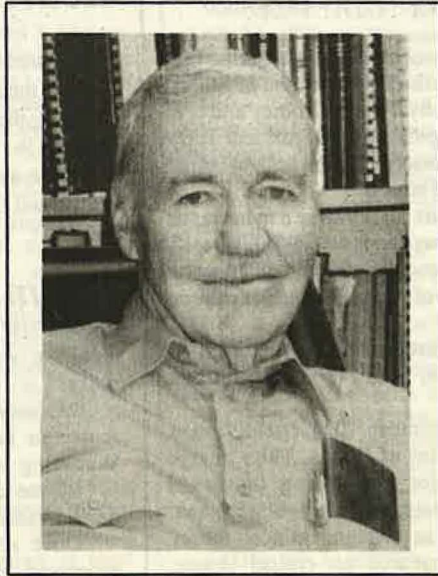
“They (Person and McGaw) had a facility for being able to teach students that I had never experienced before—or since,” he says.

Bishop also took a course on water law for engineers from then-Dean R. D. Goodrich. That was his first official training in an area that would become a specialty for him. Bishop’s father was state engineer, and Floyd took particular interest in water issues.

Remembering World War II

Bishop’s distinguished engineering career was put on hold following graduation, as he was called into active duty with the Army. With a new ROTC commission in hand, he headed first for training at Ft. Knox. But before he could complete that session, Bishop was transferred to the Army Corps of Engineers at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., and Engineering Officers School. He served in a unit based in Yukon Territory that built the Alcan Highway from 1942-43, then transferred to the Aleutian Islands to build airfields.

In the midst of that work, Bishop’s application for pilot training was approved. He returned to the mainland and transferred to the Air Corps, graduating from multi-engine pilot school in May 1944. Bishop went through B-



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17 transition then took an assignment with a B-29 unit headquartered in McCook, Neb. His unit headed to combat duty in the Pacific in December 1944, flying from Tinian in the Marianas Islands.

Bishop participated in the first major low-level bombing strike on Japan. He flew in the middle of 500 bombers in the mission; about 200 miles off the coast, Bishop could see a huge smoke cloud and searchlights from the ground. It was a “fearsome sight,” he says, recalling how high winds and Japan’s lack of preparation expanded the devastation. Bishop acknowledges his military service as his patriotic duty but adds, “I was glad to have it behind me.”

Returning to Wyoming

With 35 bombing missions completed, Bishop returned in 1946 to his wife and new son. He worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service as an irrigation

engineer from 1946-1950. He then quit the SCS to enter private practice in Lander. Bishop’s firm handled all types of engineering and land surveying assignments in Fremont County and elsewhere around the state. He took on a partner, Chuck Spurlock, in 1953; and the practice developed into a sizable operation. Among the projects under their supervision: a major irrigation project in the Green River Basin, pavement of Lander’s streets, and engineering of the city’s water and sewer systems. They took on several water rights jobs, too.

Bishop operated his Lander business for 13 years, until newly-elected governor Clifford Hansen called in 1963 to offer him the position of state engineer. He hadn’t anticipated entering the public sector, but Bishop eventually agreed to take on the state engineering post. He originally planned to serve one six-year term. But the next governor, Stan Hathaway, persuaded him to sign on for another six years. Bishop remained in public office until 1975.

Though he was involved in several multi-state negotiations as state engineer, the project that dominated most of his time in office was the Central Arizona Project on the Colorado River. Negotiations involved seven states, each struggling to protect its share of water rights from the Colorado. Bishop spent “an inordinate amount of time” meeting with his counterparts from the other states to come up with an agreement that would meet everyone’s needs.

Wyoming’s major goal in the Central Arizona negotiations was to maintain its previous rights level, even though it hadn’t used all that it was allocated to that point. Bishop’s job was “to be sure that any aspect of the Central Arizona Project was not violating the allocations that had been made under the Colorado River Compact.”

Bishop left public office one month shy of completing his second six-year term.

“I enjoyed it,” he says of time in public service. “It’s a good experience, but I would not want to be a career state employee.”

Bishop reentered the private sector with Banner Associates. His former professor, H. T. Person, was Wyoming manager at Banner and he asked Bishop to join him. When Person died shortly thereafter, Bishop replaced him as manager.

It was an active period at Banner. One of the bigger projects Bishop took on was construction of the Grayrocks Dam, which provided water needs for the massive Missouri Basin Power Project in Platte County. He also supervised Banner’s portion of the Cheyenne Stage III water project.

Bishop remained at Banner for 10 years, then retired in 1985 and began his current consulting business. Most of the work he takes on now involves water rights, including litigation involving water.

Bishop’s “retirement” isn’t all work. He manages to fit in several fishing and hunting trips every year, including trips abroad to fish for exotic species like bonefish, tarpon, dorado and sailfish. Bishop’s adventures have taken him to places like Belize, Costa Rica and the Mexican Baja. He doesn’t mind dropping his line in the rich waters of Wyoming and Montana, either.

Bishop has been active in professional and service organizations over the years. Among his affiliations: Young Men’s Literary Club of Cheyenne, Cheyenne Rotary Club, Wyoming Pioneer Association, Wyoming Water Development Association, Wyoming Engineering Society, Wyoming Association of Consulting Engineers and Surveyors and the Wyoming Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Bishop also is a fellow and past member of the American Society of Civil Engineers Board of Directors.

Bishop and his wife, June (EX ’47), have two sons—David (BS ’67) and Richard (EX ’85). A third son, Jay (EX ’70), is deceased.