

David Crum

By R. L. WOLVERTON, *Alumnews* Writer

"Wyoming is certainly a great place to live for so many reasons. I think its future is bright," said Distinguished Alumnus David Crum, who graduated with an Electrical Engineering degree from the University of Wyoming's College of Engineering in 1967.

Crum's focus, outside his own successful business, Crum Electric Supply, has been improving Wyoming's economy and business infrastructure. He finds himself in a position from which he can work to accomplish this goal not only through operating a successful business but also by serving on a number of boards and councils. Much of the credit, Crum says, goes to the University of Wyoming and early work experience he gained directly as a result of attending UW.

Crum was born in Newcastle, Wyoming, where he graduated from high school. He entered UW with a basketball scholarship, but a knee injury in his freshman year sidelined him. Crum channeled his energies into becoming an outstanding electrical engineering student.

With intercollegiate athletics no longer an option, extracurricular activities played a part in Crum's days at UW. He participated in intramural sports and enjoyed a wide range of social activities through his fraternity, Sigma Nu.

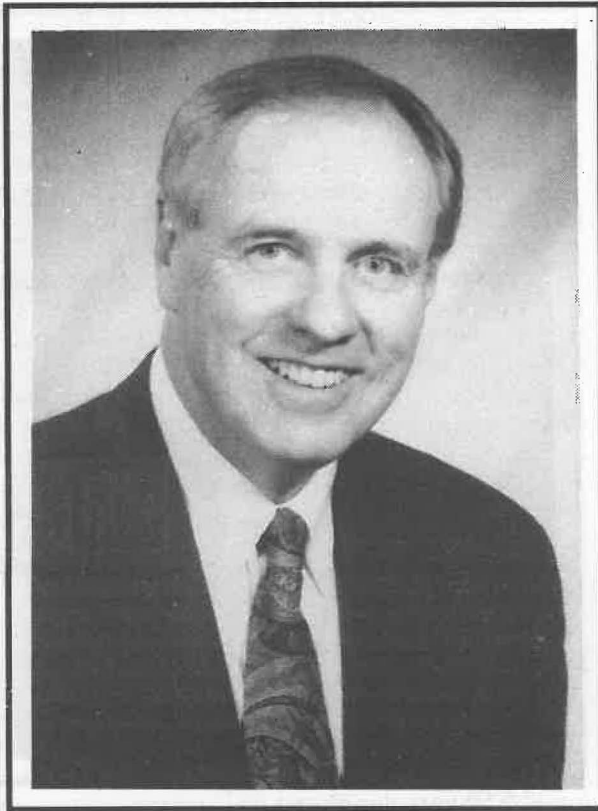
When asked if he had a particularly fond memory from his days at the University, Crum said he couldn't identify one incident as the most important. "It was such a broad experience it's hard to pin one particular thing down. I certainly had good experiences in the College of Engineering. I appreciated and enjoyed that. My experience with Sigma Nu and the relationships I developed there have been lifelong and valuable. My university years certainly did define what was going on at that time. We had great athletic teams then, too, in football, basketball and track. I long for some of those successes now," he said.

Crum deeply appreciates his University of Wyoming education. "From my standpoint, it turned out to be invaluable," he says. "I credit UW for the foundation I needed to succeed in business as I have. If anybody short-changes the University of Wyoming as a quality school, they're wrong, because it does a great job. Assigning a value to a UW education in dollars and cents is difficult. I think the foundation it gave me and my family is a real reason we should support UW and I think that understanding should be spread a little more. Graduates need to spread the word about the University of Wyoming."

When Crum graduated, he accepted a position with Cutler-Hammer, a major manufacturer of electrical control and distribution equipment. Crum credits the quality of the University's engineering program with his being hired. He says that Cutler-Hammer and many other major companies recognize the value of a UW engineering degree. Major companies still come to UW to interview prospective employees because they know they'll be getting top notch employees, Crum said, adding, "it's possible to come out of UW with a great job."

After a few years with Cutler-Hammer, Crum was ready to go into business for himself. He and a partner formed Control Equipment Corporation in Denver, Colorado. The company designed, assembled and installed electrical process systems and distributed industrial control products for automation of industrial process machines.

1976 was the year Crum was able to return to Wyoming. Wyoming lacked a locally-owned electrical products distribution company and Crum took advantage of that need. He opened Crum Electric Supply Company in a small warehouse in Casper. Crum Electric provides electrical equipment to industrial and construction firms.



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"Building the company was exciting and sometimes harrowing with Wyoming's boom and bust cycles," Crum said.

Crum's idea that a local distributor was needed in Wyoming paid off. The company soon expanded statewide, with offices currently in Casper, Gillette, Evanston, Rock Springs, Cheyenne and Cody. Crum Electric's exemplary service and willingness to do what it takes to help customers made the company strong enough to survive the oil bust of the 1980 and continue to grow.

Crum Electric is stronger than ever and still growing, with offices throughout Wyoming and in South Dakota and Idaho. The company opened a new office in Colorado this August.

"It's gratifying to be able to take my University of Wyoming education, couple it with experience in a start-up company in Denver and come home to Wyoming as the state's first electrical equipment wholesaler," Crum said. In fact, the company is continuing to grow and Crum happily reports that he has recently hired another University of Wyoming graduate who worked outside Wyoming three years and brought his experience back to Wyoming. "My son, Dave, joined the firm in July, after gaining experience with Pacific Scientific Company in California," Crum said.

The Crum family is a UW family. Crum's parents both attended UW. His father, David N. Crum graduated from the College of Law in 1948, and his mother, Lorraine, studied music at UW, but her studies were interrupted by World War II. Crum's brother Thomas received a BS in education in 1970 and a Master's in 1972, and brother Richard earned a petroleum engineering degree in 1973.

Crum's wife, Mary (Payne) Crum graduated with a BA in education in 1967, and both their children graduated from UW. Young Dave is putting his electrical engineering degree to work at Crum Electric and Stacy earned a BA in education in 1993 and is teaching middle-school Spanish.

When asked to single out his proudest accomplishment after leaving UW, Crum didn't hesitate in answering. "Raising Stacy and Dave is my proudest accomplishment," he says, stating that business and community involvement both take a back seat to family life.

Community involvement has played a strong part in Crum's career, as he has served national, local and state-wide organizations. He served as chair of the National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED), headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, for the 1996-1997 term. NAED is made up of virtually all electrical wholesale companies in the United States and several in Canada. As chair, he was instrumental in bringing the electrical equipment distribution industry in the United States and several foreign countries into the world of electronic commerce. He was a strong advocate of streamlining the equipment distribution chain so that suppliers could work well with both manufacturers and customers. Under Crum's leadership and with the assistance of the National Electric Manufacturers Association, NAED formed IDEA, Inc., which developed two major projects that are foundations for electronic commerce in the electrical industry. One is an industry data warehouse that provides information to manufacturers and distributors and the second is a private extranet that communicates information from the central computer to individual electrical distributors' computers.

The electrical industry will be three to four years ahead of other hard goods industries in the electronic commerce area because of Crum's leadership.

Other national posts held by Crum include membership on Philips Lighting Company's Distributor Advisory Council, the General Electric Company's Distributor Advisory Council, the Affiliated Distributors Board of Directors, the National Association of Wholesalers and the National Federation of Independent Businessmen.

Closer to home, Crum serves on several boards and volunteer positions, including the First Interstate Bank of Wyoming, Advisory Board of Casper; The Wyoming Business Alliance (formerly the Wyoming Heritage Society) Steering Committee and as the University of Wyoming Foundation Board Secretary. Speaking of the UW Foundation, Crum says, "They have a great group of professionals in the Foundation. They've really stepped up to the plate for UW."

In addition to these boards, he co-chairs, with Wyoming Governor Jim Geringer, the Wyoming Business Council, a public-private partnership with the goal of improving Wyoming's business climate.

"The Wyoming Business Council is making an effort to do something truly profound to diversify and improve community for the benefit of Wyoming's people," Crum says. "We're trying to make the economy more resilient, to move to a higher growth pattern and create an opportunity for our younger people to either stay in the state or to be able to bring home experience gained outside the state."

Crum is optimistic about the future of the University of Wyoming, too. "UW is facing a great new time. We have a wonderful group of professionals leading us, including President Philip Dubois and Vice President of Development Ben Blalock. I think they are doing a great job with the academic review and recognizing the realities of Wyoming and UW. I think what they are doing is logical, it needs to be done and I think UW will be better for it. I look forward to continuing to help build UW into what it can be."