

Charles G. Kepler

by Julianne Couch
Alumnews Editor

“Loyal, kind, brilliant, thoughtful, steady, and fully engaged in the life of his city, county, state and beloved university.” That’s how retired Sen. Alan K. Simpson described Distinguished Alumnus Charles G. Kepler, and that view is echoed by everyone supporting Kepler’s nomination.

Add to that list of descriptors “tremendously honored, pleased, and extremely impressed,” which is how Kepler feels about receiving the honor.

Kepler has had a long career to show his character to others. He earned his JD in Law from the University of Wyoming in 1948 and a Master of Laws degree at the University of Michigan in 1950. He was a professor of business law at the University of Wyoming from 1948 to 1949 then an assistant professor of law at the University of Oklahoma from 1950 to 1952. He went on to serve as the general attorney with the Husky Oil Company in Cody, for eight years. Then in 1960 he joined Alan Simpson and his father Milward Simpson in the law practice of Simpson, Kepler and Edwards, and remained with the partnership for 40 years. He is now of counsel to the firm.

Alan’s brother Pete Simpson recalls Kepler’s transition from Husky Oil to the law firm. “Charlie was one of Husky Oil’s bright young attorneys when my father caught sight of him and talked him into joining him as a partner in his law practice in Cody.” Husky’s headquarters was moving to Canada, but Kepler and his wife, the former Ursula Manewal, (BS ’43) and their young daughter Loretta, had already made a home for themselves in Cody.

Kepler recalls that it was he who approached the Simpsons in Cody because he saw what an outstanding law practice they were building. But Kepler acknowledges that many years have passed since that event took place. Regardless, as Pete Simpson says, “Husky’s loss was Dad’s gain and definitely a gain for the community of Cody and the state of Wyoming. Charlie’s considerable contributions to his community might have been lost to us.”

Some of those contributions include Kepler’s work with the Paul Stock Foundation. Kepler was instrumental in a “complete reorganization” of the foundation to keep pace with



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changing laws affecting philanthropy. He became the foundation’s director and president after Stock’s death in 1972. The foundation has supported a numerous enterprises around the state, including the Buffalo Bill Historical Center (BBHC), the Wyoming Community Foundation for Park County, and the Paul Stock Aquatic Center in Cody.

Kepler’s efforts with the BBHC have included securing funding in order for a historic home to be converted into an education center for the museum. He also assisted in obtaining 100 acres of property for the museum. His efforts for the BBHC have gone beyond grant making. He is also a longtime member of its board of trustees, and has been since 1980.

He enjoys the BBHC and what it has to offer visitors. “It offers interesting, educational things to do and reaches out to people.” And although he enjoys all the galleries in the nationally noteworthy historical center, his favorite is the Whitney Gallery of Western Art.

Kepler spends much of his free time at home engaged in yard work and he ventures out to hike in the mountains when he can. He enjoys the lifestyle of Cody, which he describes as “very active.”

A fellow trustee at the BBHC, William C. Garlow, identifies a key reason Cody is a good place to be. “Mr. Kepler has made a considerable contribution to the betterment of the Cody community through his leadership, time, energy, legal and business expertise and personal funds. I have always appreciated his wise counsel, judgment, and integrity.”

Those traits have had their uses as Kepler has made the University of Wyoming a good place to be, too. For example, under Kepler’s direction, the Stock Foundation has provided mil-

lions of dollars in support, including endowed scholarships, chairmanships, visiting professorships and support for the L. Floyd Clark Fund and the Keith and Thyra Thomson Fund, among other efforts.

Kepler recalls his early days as a student at UW. “I enjoyed it and considered myself extremely fortunate to go to college. We didn’t have too much support in 1940. I was lucky to be able to go on a scholarship.” He remembers that his room and board set him back \$21.50 per month. He lived in the Kappa Sigma fraternity house. “It was tough financially,” he recalls.

Kepler explains why he desires to support his alma mater. “I believe it is important that Wyoming alums support the university’s activities, not only with financial contributions, but also by participating in its activities. The university can only be as strong as the support it receives from alumni.”

Kepler says he is “extremely pleased” with the education he received at UW. “When I got out of

law school I wondered how I’d do, coming from a small school. The dean wanted to know if I wanted to go on for my master’s. So I went on scholarship to the University of Michigan and met a larger group of people. I learned that we have an extremely good law school here.”

Kepler is a member of the Wyoming Bar Association, served as its president in 1975, and is a member and leader in various professional organizations. He received the Order of the Coif award for Wyoming in 1997, which honors distinction in scholarship and professional accomplishments.

Kepler’s connection to UW includes membership in the Cowboy Joe Club, supporting student athletes. Although basketball season is too long to allow for “long drives in bad weather,” he has season tickets to football. Home football games give him a reason to visit Laramie and to see his brother, Frosty. “It is a good way to keep the family together,” he explains. ♣