

Martha Brown Wyrsh

by Julianne Couch
Alumnews Editor

English majors, take heart. Distinguished Alumna Martha B. Wyrsh proves that a liberal arts degree makes an excellent starting point for a successful professional life. Being president and chief executive officer of Spectra Energy Transmission is to have succeeded, by anyone's definition.

Although her professional life is a long ways away from her days with Shakespeare and Ibsen, Wyrsh highly recommends that students pursue liberal arts degrees. "It helps you think broadly, be curious, and comfortable with a wide range of issues. You can always learn the business side of things later," she advises.

Wyrsh started learning about business after she completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in English at UW ('80). She joined Wyoming Sen. Alan Simpson's staff and served as his legislative assistant for three years. She then attended George Washington University School of Law, graduating in 1986. In 2002, Wyrsh graduated from the Harvard Business School Advanced Management program.

In addition to the influence of Shakespeare, Sen. Simpson may deserve some credit for Wyrsh's success because he encouraged her to pursue law school, predicting that she was a natural for that type of study and would do very well. But he missed her presence in his office.

"She was an integral part of my Washington years and served me faithfully, loyally and professionally as my legislative assistant handling banking, public works and finance. She was pure class - and gained the

respect of all senators, other staff members and the government relations community, also known in the trade as lobbyists." After receiving her JD, Wyrsh practiced law with the Davis, Graham and Stubbs law firm in Denver, handling acquisitions, mergers, securities and finance. She then joined KN Energy, Inc. (now known as Kinder Morgan, Inc.) and was named vice president, general counsel, and secretary in 1997.

Wyrsh moved to Duke Energy Corporation in 1999, first as senior vice president and general counsel for Duke Energy Field Services in Denver and then as group vice president, general counsel, and secretary for Duke Energy Corporation, in Charlotte, N.C.

Wyrsh became president and CEO of Spectra Energy Transmission (formerly known as Duke Energy Gas) in 2005. Spectra Energy Transmission is Spectra Energy's natural gas transmission, storage, gathering and processing and distribution business. Wyrsh also serves on the board of directors for Spectra Energy Corp, and is chairman of Spectra Energy Partners, LP and Spectra Energy Income Fund. Prior to Spectra Energy's spin-off from Duke Energy, Wyrsh served as president and chief executive officer of Duke Energy Gas Transmission (DEGT).

"I love the natural gas business," she explains. "It has a wonderful history, and it ties me back to the state of Wyoming. I like the honesty, integrity, and work ethic of people who work in it. It is not fancy or sexy, but it is absolutely needed for day to day life."

Wyrsh started in her top leadership role with Spectra Energy Transmission just before the storm season that spawned hurricanes Rita and Katrina hit the Gulf Coast area.

Continued on page 7

Martha Brown Wyrsh

Continued from page 6

After each storm, she flew down to visit the company's employees in the affected areas.

"I'll never forget flying over a little town and seeing nothing but the goal posts on a high school football field. Many of our employees who had lost their homes sent their families away while they worked to restore our infrastructure. Their personal lives were turned upside down."

Wyrsh grew up in Laramie and recalls plenty of summer adventures at the family cabin in the Snowy Range Mountains west of town, which the family still maintains. She recalls her first job, at 16, as a camp counselor in Moose, Wyo., near the Grand Tetons. That period taught her a lot about her own values and helped her decide what direction to go in life. "The campers came from big cities and private schools and had a worldliness that was foreign to me, and the other counselors talked about traveling to Europe. It made me curious about life outside Wyoming."

Wyrsh considered attending an out-of-state college but received an



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Alumni Association Scholarship to UW. Here, she realized, she "could be a big fish in a small pond." Like her father before her, she was ASUW president for a year, and thus served on the board of trustees. "I saw the business side of the university, which provided a perspective on running a large, complex organization."

During her college career at UW, Wyrsh was a member of SPURS, Mortar Board, and Delta Delta Delta sorority. She was once

an employee of the Alumni Association, and her duties included writing Wyogram announcements of the sort that still appear in this publication today.

Occasionally, she returns to UW to conduct workshop for the students on women in business. "I like connecting back to students and sharing experiences, and finding out what they are thinking." Wyrsh formerly served on the UW College of Arts and Sciences advisory board and is now a member of board of the William B. Ruckelshaus Institute of Environmental and Natural Resources. She was selected to the UW College of Arts and Sciences 2005 Outstanding Alumnus roster.

Wyrsh has contributed to her professional community as well as to the University of Wyoming. She is involved with the United Way of Greater Houston and the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America. She was a member of the American and Colorado bar associations and formerly served on the George Washington University Law School board of advisors.

Wyrsh lives in Houston with husband Gerry Wyrsh their two teenage children, Molly and Peter. "I really appreciate the support of my family and friends in Wyoming and

beyond," she says. She's excited about riding in the Homecoming Parade accompanied by family members, especially because both her parents and her sisters are UW grads.

Wyrsh says she feels "honored and humbled" to receive the Distinguished Alumni award among "so many people who have accomplished things that matter in the world." No doubt other recipients would view her with the same attitude, such as her former boss Alan Simpson.

"She is a woman of complete integrity, honesty, perseverance, patience, loyalty, professionalism - and she is a friend to her friends. There is nothing she can't accomplish. Ask the folks at Duke Energy Corporation." ❖

