

Kevin H. Tripp Distinguished Alumnus

by Julianne Couch
Alumnews Editor

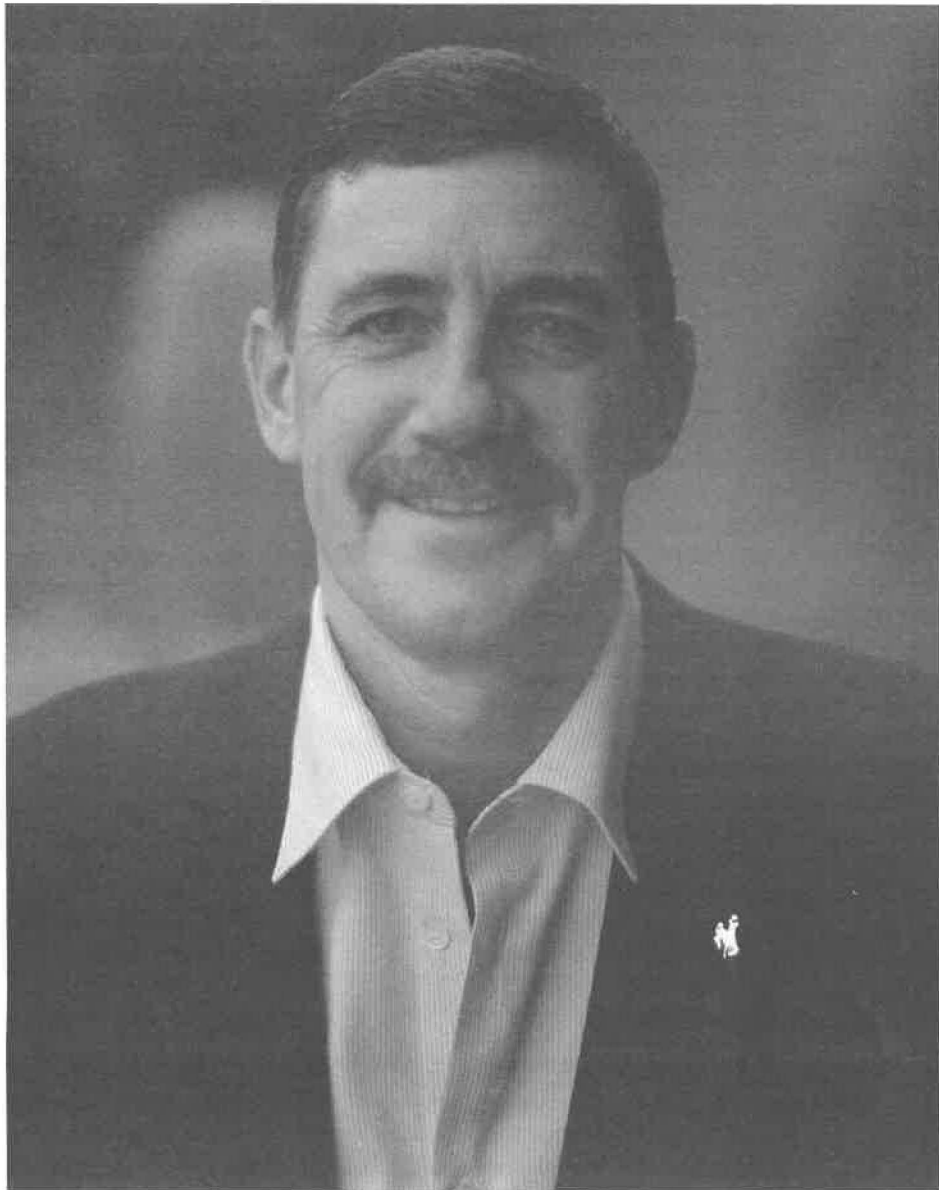
Fast Facts:

BSP Pharmacy '78
Resides in Scottsdale, Ariz.
Occupation: Executive Vice President; President, Retail Midwest Supervalu Inc.
Selected accomplishments: Distinguished Alumni School of Pharmacy, 2007, School of Pharmacy's Dean's Council; UW College of Health Sciences graduation speaker
Best known for: Simple Western truisms and analogies, which his colleagues have threatened to turn into a book.
Family: Wife, Linda (Wallace) Tripp (College of Health Sciences, '77), daughters Kaelin and Whitney
Hobbies: Spending time with family, fly fishing, playing golf, reading historical books, especially those related to Wyoming

We all know pharmacists dispense medications and visit with patients about what they can expect from various drugs. When Kevin Tripp earned his degree at UW, the young man who grew up in Cody, Wyo., might have anticipated that traditional path as a drugstore pharmacist. Instead, he was hired out of college by Osco Drug to be both a pharmacist and a

“
WITHOUT A DOUBT,
IT IS AN ABSOLUTE
PREMIER UNIVERSITY. IT
IS SMALL ENOUGH THEY
CAN STAY FOCUSED ON
EDUCATING STUDENTS.
”

management trainee. Since then, he has worked in grocery and drug store operations, pharmacy operations, managed care, marketing and management. In his early career he worked in Wyoming for Buttrey/Osco. In 1988, he was appointed director of pharmacy marketing for the Osco headquarters



Kevin H. Tripp, BSP Pharmacy, '78

Tunnel Photography

in Oak Brook, Ill. Later he was vice president of advertising and marketing development, vice president of pharmacy operations and marketing, and senior vice president of pharmacy sales and operations. He then attended Harvard University's graduate school of business. That education helped him advance to his executive position with Albertson's, where he headed nearly 2,000 pharmacies in 37 states. About two years ago, most of Albertson's merged into Supervalu, so while the company has a new name it is in some ways the same company he's worked for over many years.

Tripp didn't grow up knowing he wanted to enter the pharmacy profession. "The reason I chose pharmacy was I liked and was good in chemistry and liked health sciences. I really didn't have much an idea of a career beyond that." He thought it would lead to medical school but says his "pharmacy got in the way." Tripp sees a lot of value in following one's nose in career planning, as opposed to setting a path early in life. He advocates considering what he calls "adjacencies": those fields that are close to a field or

degree that might offer unexpected opportunities. He uses his own business career as an example. "I've been associated with pharmacy but haven't practiced it very much. Careers are interesting things – how they get started and where they lead are unpredictable."

One way to manage that unpredictability is to work closely with mentors. "From the beginning the company I went to work for which was then called Osco Drug had a strong people philosophy – all the education in the world doesn't help – you need mentors to show you the way." Tripp says he benefited enormously from mentoring early on and is a strong advocate of it now. For example, he is one of the founders of MESA, group that supports and mentors women within the Supervalu organization.

Tripp plans to speak to students in the College of Pharmacy this fall and talk to them about careers. He believes his career benefited from attending UW. "Without a doubt, it is an absolute premier university. It is small enough they can stay focused on educating students. My UW educa-

tion was so different from what I see around country – it was a very much a personal education. Our professors knew every one of their students and did their very best to make us successful. Sometimes that meant having a party on Friday night and getting the class together." His pharmacy class was approximately 43 students who knew and helped each other. He was also a member of Rho Chi, the pharmacy honorary organization.

He also remembers his days in Laramie outside of school fondly. He and his wife Linda were already married when they arrived here from New Mexico, and they lived in married student housing. "We could see the wind blow through the cinder blocks" of the housing on Coe Ave., he recalled. "It was a terrific time for us. We were very engaged in academics but I also had the opportunity to coach an AAU swim team, one of the best in the Rocky Mountain area. (Tripp swam a year at UW and had been swimming at New Mexico prior to coming to UW.) "We were able to engage in the community and got to know many dozen of families in Laramie. Many parents of the kids were professors of mine and I got to know them and their children on a different level. As much as I enjoyed competing as a swimmer, the most valuable thing I got was those years of coaching – because that's what you do all your life if you have a leadership job."

Tripp has stayed in contact with UW, especially with the School of Pharmacy. Dean John H. Vandel said: "You can observe that Kevin Tripp has made significant contributions to the advancement of pharmacy and to pharmacy retail operations. He cares about pharmacy and has made certain customer's health care needs continue to come first as the pharmacy industry shifts from independent pharmacies to more chain pharmacies. He is a great ambassador for the University of Wyoming as those in the health industry know of his roots in Wyoming of which he speaks often."

In spite of that praise, Tripp said he was humbled to be named a UW Distinguished Alumnus. "I have been so lucky to work with so many terrific people. I've been lucky from early on with a terrific family, mentorship and leadership, great high school teachers and coaches. You learn leadership by observing other good leaders."

Tripp's only regret in his life and career is that he hasn't been able to spend more time in Wyoming. "I feel very fortunate that circumstances led me back to the university to complete my education." ❖