Michael A. Jording, M.D. Distinguished Alumnus

By Julianne Couch
Alumnus's Editor

Fast Facts

EDUCATION: EX ’76, Chemical Engineering, ’80 M.D., Creighton University
OCCUPATION: Family Practice Physician, Newcastle, Wyo.
SELECTIONS ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Selected for Contract program in 1976 to attend medical school at Creighton; teaching in Wyoming Family Residency program; Wyoming Medical Society Board of Trustees 2001-2009; Wyoming State Historical Society Board of Trustees and President; Wyoming Historical Foundation Board of Trustees and President
FAMILY: Wife, Peggy Jording; sons, Alexander Jording and Joseph Jording
OTHER INTERESTS: Author and historian

Michael Jording recalls that his four years at UW included “times that were particularly good and times that were particularly bad.” The bad might include his first few days as a freshman, being asked during registration what college he was there to enter. Not realizing the correct answer was engineering, he replied that yes, indeed, he was going to college.

That answer is probably typical for a young person not used to the ways of higher education. Jording survived that early confusion to go on to excel at UW as a chemical engineering major emphasizing course work he’d need to enter medical school. In fact, he was accepted into the contract program UW had with Creighton University and headed to med school in Omaha even before completing all the credits for a Bachelor of Science degree.

That would count in the “good” category, although today his would be an unusual way to enter medical school. “My scores in college and my course work in biological sciences were good enough that they showed ability, and I had good reference letters from Dr. William Pano, UW professor of Zoology and Physiology and Assistant Dean of Students in the College of Human Medicine” Jording explained.

Jording was obviously a good prospect, because over the years he has gone on to be a physician, an educator of future doctors, and a leader in the Wyoming medical community from his home in Newcastle.

Jording are aware of his knowledge of Wyoming history, they may not know about his leadership at the state level in the Wyoming State Historical Society. Wyoming Historical Foundation treatment Lucille Clarke Dumbrell (BA ’49, MA ’50) has frequently worked with Jording and has referred to his work when working on historic preservation projects.

“He has a way of working with local citizens to achieve their cooperation and stimulate their interest in history associated with Wyoming and the local area,” she said.

Jording said working with the WSHS gave him opportunities to do things he never would have had been able to do otherwise. One of those was to help develop the first website of WSHS with the technical assistance of his brother-in-law, Rolf Anderson. “It was timely and necessary,” he said, and something he couldn’t have done alone. “Quite fun and quite an accomplishment.”

Jording started his college life a bit torn between studying engineering and medicine, but he has been able to combine his interests in medicine and history as elements of a fulfilling life. Indeed, he credits his leadership role in one field with opening doors in the other, and vice versa. He believes following multiple interests in college is more difficult for students now than it was during his college years. “There is more emphasis on focus and specialization, even within a major,” he said. But he cautions: “You can’t live your life all in engineering or business. When people get out in life and participate in communities they’ll be asked to serve on boards and committees that take them outside of their trained field of study. Whether you start preparing for that process in school or later, becoming a leader and giving time enriches your life.”

As a UW student Jording chose to get involved by participating in the UW marching band and concert band. He became active in engineering student organizations and helped establish a formal program for students to work within their industry during the summer. Now these internship programs are so common that students don’t realize how challenging it once was to find relevant summer jobs.

In spite of these accomplishments, Jording said he was “terribly surprised by it and honored” when named a UW Distinguished Alumnus. “We’ve stayed tied to UW with our children going to school there,” he said. “Our family’s story is identical to many families in Wyoming, so it is a bit of an emotional thing to be recognized by the UW Alumni Association.”