Joseph Drew
UW Distinguished Alumnus

By Julianne Couch
Alumnae Editor

Fast Facts:
EDUCATION: BS ’63
Business Administration
OCCUPATION: Owner and president of the Drew Auto Center
SELECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Time Magazine Dealer of the Year in 1988; Joseph C. and Katherine A. Drew Scholarship in the College of Business; College of Business Distinguished Alumni, 1997; Life member of the UWAA.

Joe Drew said he might have been a success even if he hadn’t attended UW. But there, he honed the skills and work ethic to rise to president of Drew Auto Center, a top selling, award winning Ford-Volkswagen-Hyundai dealership in La Mesa, Calif.

Drew grew up in La Mesa, where he lives today, but attended UW in part because he was a fan of the Old West, and also enjoyed the outdoor lifestyle. “When I was there a lot of students said, ‘You’re from California, what are you doing here?’” Drew thought students at UW didn’t fully appreciate what they had. The best answer he could give was: “If you need to ask, there isn’t a way to give you the answer.”

Drew joined Alpha Tau Omega fraternity, where he met future Wyoming governor, Mike Sullivan. “Joe was the quintessential California beach boy when he arrived at UW,” Sullivan recalled, “but rapidly adjusted to Wyoming, as is evidenced by his continuing love for the university, the state, and its wildlife resources. Consistent throughout Joe’s life has been his creativity and enthusiasm, his work ethic and integrity and his natural salesmanship. All of these traits have obviously contributed to his lifetime success in business and community.”

Drew Auto Center is the oldest family-owned dealership in San Diego County. Its services include new and used cars; automobile repair and service; automobile renting and leasing; parts and supplies and automobile body repair and painting. Joe Drew’s father, Elmer, started Drew’s Garage in 1927, and after the local Ford dealership in town folded during the Depression, Elmer was awarded a Ford franchise in 1934. “I grew up in business because our house was behind the shop for a while, which was very typical at that time.”

After Drew graduated from UW he entered the Army. In 1965, upon his discharge, Drew and his wife Kay (Klingaman) Drew (’62) drove to California and he started working at the dealership the next day. He said he chose to stay in the family business because he recognized his strengths. “What was easy for me was selling and making a business work. So that’s the field that I chose.”

Drew said he got an early taste of entrepreneurship when he discovered he could cross the California border into Tijuana and bring back from Mexico items UW students would eagerly buy from him. These included bongo drums, which Greek organizations would purchase for dances and other social gatherings. “There were no regulations in those days,” Drew recounted about his “import” venture. “That’s when I learned to buy low and sell high.”

In another episode, Drew and a fraternity brother obtained motorcycles to see how far south they could drive them. They ended up taking a semester off for their 44-day odyssey to the Panama Canal. Instead of driving that route back, they made a deal with an airline in Panama to fly them and their motorcycles back for $100. In exchange, the airline made a sales promotion out of it. They flew as far as Miami and rode the motorcycles home from there.

While the education he received and friendships he made at UW are irreplaceable, Drew said the best gift he received from UW was meeting his future wife. He and Kay try to get back to Laramie once a year to take part in College of Business activities. On occasion he addresses student groups. He believes they should “find what they are good at and be happy with. Life can be a great adventure but it is important that you be happy, enjoy your work, and allow the creative side to open up.”

The most personally important thing the Drews do during their campus visits is to spend a few minutes at the spot in front of the A&S building where they met. It happened just a few weeks into their first semester as freshmen. “She was sitting there when I walked by, and I thought she was the most beautiful woman I’d seen,” I said, ‘I’m from California and I’m lonely. Would you like to go out with me?’ I couldn’t believe she said yes.”

Former College of Business Dean Brent Hathaway compares Joe and Kay Drew to other Californians of his acquaintance: “They are the finest people I know in the state of California—and having lived there four years, my network is significant. Joe is well-respected in both California and Wyoming for many reasons. First, he is the successful owner of one of the largest auto dealerships on the west coast. Second, Joe and his family are known for being fair, honest, and reliable in dealings with their customers, employees, and community.”

“For me it was never about money,” Drew said. “Money is the result of the way the Lord has blessed us and has a lot to do with Kay and me working together as a team. Success has been the result of this teamwork but it is not the central thing. The first thing is to be of service to others. If there is any relationship that’s going to stand, it has to be bilateral or trilateral, not unilateral where you gain all the benefits and the

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Thomas M. Botts UW Distinguished Alumnus

he was appointed by Gov. Matt Mead to the Wyoming Governor’s Energy, Engineering, and STEM Integration Task Force for UW. In April 2012 spoke for the UW School of Energy Resources Distinguished UW Alumni in Energy Speaker Series.

He is part of a group driving the integration of the School of Energy Resources and the Engineering school. “The governor and the legislature have a vision that is really unique,” he said. “It will be difficult to pull off, but the determination and drive and the way the governor has chosen to go about it is exciting.”

Part of the concept is to gather a group of industry leaders who went to UW, such as Botts, and explore what it takes to create a top tier engineering school. Top tier usually refers to being in the top quartile of rankings issued by national magazines or other rating institutions. Botts explained that part of the approach is to consider what industry leaders look for when they go to universities to hire. “When you start peeling the onion on the questions, you look at what kinds of students you attract, what kinds of faculty, the programs you execute, the research that you do: these all dial into what it is to be Tier 1.”

Botts said when he learned he’d been named a UW Distinguished Alumnus, he thought, “Holy mackerel do you have the right guy?” But he said he was very honored and pleasantly surprised. “Especially later in my career and since I’ve retired I’ve wanted to give back to the university. I attribute a large part of the success I had to the experience I had at UW.”

Joseph Drew UW Distinguished Alumnus

others don’t also gain from it. The main reason we exist is to serve customers, then to provide good solid employment, and as a result, the company benefits.”

Drew admits this approach is “somewhat backward to what the world thinks about good business practices.”

Drew said that if his UW professors were still alive they could attest to the fact that he was not a great student. “I had the feeling that I could have come out of high school and gone to work in the shop and done fine, but there were so many things at the university that I was exposed to.” Possibly because his academic career was less than stellar, Drew says the idea he was “surprised” by being named a UW Distinguished Alumnus is an understatement. “It is a humbling experience. When I think of all of the people who’ve graduated from UW I can hardly imagine being nominated. It makes me blush to think about it.”

Joseph R. Geraud UW Distinguished Alumnus

intercollegiate athletics and worked with a succession of five Directors of Intercollegiate Athletic to assure on-campus compliance with rules of governing athletic associations, as well as certifying the eligibility of each student-athlete for competition.

He was designated by the College of Law in 1958 to represent it on the Board of Trustees of the newly organized Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation, a consortium of western law schools and bar associations. He was elected to the Board’s executive committee in 1960 and served until 1969. On behalf of the Foundation, he directed the study of oil and gas leasing on federal public lands as a part of the U.S. Congressional Public Land Commission’s study of public land law.

In 1958 he was appointed by the Southwestern Legal Foundation to its board of editors for the Oil and Gas Law report, a position he retained until 2006. In 1999, he was a recipient of the Foundation’s prestigious John Rogers Award in “recognition of the remarkable commitment to the oil and gas community and the educational mission of this Foundation.”

After retiring from UW, Geraud returned to Riverton. He had initially given some thought to returning to sheep ranching, the vocation of his youth. Instead, he found the sheep industry greatly changed over the years, “parted company with the idea of raising sheep. I said I was going to retire, and that’s what I did.”

The Hon. Rita Meyer UW Distinguished Alumna

der盎 the difficult task for the glory. She took on the challenges and rigor of the military because Rita cares deeply about our country, and our freedoms. She cares just as deeply about the State of Wyoming she where she has served in government in many different positions.”

Although Meyer’s public life is exceptionally so, her private life, while active, is what she calls “quiet.” Her husband passed away in 2011, and her son Charlie is married, living in Baltimore. “Family time is important to me. I’m protective of the private side of my life,” she said. Meyer ticks off a short list of details people might not know about her. “I love the music of Luciano Pavarotti and Patsy Cline equally well. I delight in watching barroom brawls in old John Wayne movies as much as I enjoy watching a Russian ballet. My preferred shopping experience is not in a clothing store but rather a hardware store.”

Meyer said she was in “shock and awe” when she learned she’d been named a UW Distinguished Alumna. “I’m always happy but never fully satisfied with my personal and professional accomplishments. I look back at past recipients and the important places they hold, the things they’ve done, the service through corporate and public jobs or other pursuits. I was humbled be chosen.”