

# COL. ROBERT S. FIERO (RET.)

*Distinguished UW Alumnus*



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You never know who you'll meet in Wyoming. The rancher you talk to at the coffee shop may have played a quiet but pivotal role in some of the major events of the last half-century. That's definitely the case with Distinguished UW Alumnus Bob Fiero.

Fiero was born in Lander but grew up in Lyman near the family ranch. He came to the University of Wyoming on a track scholarship and earned a degree in agriculture ('60). But most important to his future were his military experiences. He took ROTC for two years, which was mandatory, but he also saw veteran students on the GI Bill who had been in Korea. "We called them the Grade Busters," Col. Fiero says. "They knew what they wanted and where they were going."

Humble beginnings for what became an auspicious career—Col. Fiero has been involved in many of the major military events of the last century.

He served in Germany and Vietnam, in Korea and on the home front. During his service in Vietnam, he trained Vietnamese Ranger Battalions and served in covert special operations in Laos and Cambodia. In his early work at the Pentagon, he was deputy chief of staff for personnel for training division, responsible for all basic training and professional development courses for the Army. He attended the Air War College and graduated with honors, as well as earning an MPA with honors from Auburn University. Later at the Pentagon serving the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Command, Control, and Communications and Intelligence, or C3I, he attended National Security Council meetings and served on President-elect Ronald Reagan's transition team.

After President Reagan's inauguration, Col. Fiero had the chance at a brigade command in Germany, but the president wanted him to continue: "How do you tell a president you

don't want to be his aide, that you're going to go command troops?" Luckily, Reagan understood: "I respect your decision. I'm just glad to know that there are people like you out there with our soldiers."

Col. Fiero was in Germany in August 1961, when construction of the Berlin Wall began. He was also in Germany in 1989 when the wall was torn down. Eastern Europe was like "stepping back in time," he says.

After his retirement, he began working for a government contractor, Cubic. The U.S. Army had not kept up with the times, and so he, a programmer, and six others were tasked "to transition the Army into the 21 century—manpower, equipment and structure." Their recommendations shaped the U.S. Army for the Gulf War and beyond.

After that momentous task, Col. Fiero decided it was time to return to the high country, but he did not rest on his laurels. He had started his own business, and so he and his sister and their mom ran the family ranch. He also became involved in the Cowboy Joe Club and its Steer-A-Year program, which has generated over \$3 million a year for scholarships to UW. He has also written, with co-authors, two books on courage: *Conquering Fear: Development of Courage in Soldiers and Other High Risk Occupations* and *Power of Courage in Combat and Danger*.

Lt. Gen. Robert Arter, U.S. Army, retired, says of Col. Fiero: "Sun Tzu, the ancient military theoretician, says in his treatise, *The Art of War*: 'The commander stands for the virtues of wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, courage and strictness.' Bob Fiero, in his extraordinary service to nation as a distinguished soldier, the selfless service he continues to project, has and ever epitomizes these characteristics. To the point, in a brief span of years, his contributions to community, Army, nation and the international community have become legend."