

Not Slowing Down – Catching Up with Diana Ohman (AA, '70)

By Danica Sveda (AA, '09)

There is security in small-town life, and many people choose to stay and raise families in that security. Others leave and venture far from home. **Diana Ohman's** (AA, '70) journey away from small-town life began at Casper College. Her mom drove her to college with the faith that Ohman had the tools to succeed even if Ohman herself was unsure of her newfound independence. "It was that freshman year of standing on my own two feet with the caring guidance of many faculty and staff that I began to believe in myself and know that my life could be worthwhile," she said.

Ohman immersed herself in college life. She was elected to the student senate and became acquainted with then Casper College Housing Director and later CC President **LeRoy Strausner**, Ph.D., (AA, '60)

whom she considers to be synonymous with the college. She looked to him as an ideal leader and rock that helped guide her through her time at Casper College. The admiration was mutual as Strausner was the person who nominated Ohman for the honor of distinguished alumni in 2009.

After leaving Casper College, Ohman went on to be an accomplished academic earning her bachelor's in elementary education and her master's in education from the University of Wyoming. She also earned her private pilot's license. After college, she began her career as an educator teaching in a K-8 school. She developed exceptional organizational skills by meeting the needs of all the students who were at different grade levels.

Her experience as a teacher and principal in a rural school gave her the confidence to run for office as the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Wyoming. After winning the election, she found that Wyoming's unique geography and the unpredictable weather added special challenges to overseeing all of Wyoming's schools. Trusting her workforce to meet her high expectations without being micromanaged was a must. Thankfully, her staff was up to the challenge making her time as superintendent a successful one. She was most happy in that term attending high school graduations, spending



lunchtime with the students, and speaking to educators and citizens.

After her term ended, Ohman decided to run for Wyoming's second highest office, secretary of state. She felt that her time as the superintendent of public instruction gave her the tools needed for that office. She won handily, and that term became a fascinating four years of her life. Despite encouragement to run for governor, she chose not to. Her belief was, and still is, that political officials should perform no more than two terms to give other citizens the opportunity to serve.

While she was looking for a new position after her governmental service, she was sent a newspaper clipping by a former boss. It was a job posting for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools for the U.S. military bases in Europe. She applied, and after surviving three grueling interviews, she accepted the position as the director of U.S. Military Schools. She spent 10 years in Europe



Wyoming Secretaries of State: Thyra Thomson (left), Diana Ohman (right) and Kathy Karpan (seated).

Photos courtesy of Diana Ohman.

and two years in the Pacific. During her time in Europe, 9/11 occurred, and while in Japan, the tsunami at Sendai and the ensuing nuclear crisis at Fukushima took place. In those trying times, she used the experience gained while working in Wyoming – having good organizational skills and trusting experienced staff.

After her time overseas, Ohman returned to the United States to become the director of the National Cemetery Administration Midwest District. She managed 47 national cemetery sites in 12 states. She retired from federal service in January of 2018. Since then, she has been anything but retired. She is an avid traveler and has explored many parts

of the world including Prague; Seville, Spain; Heidelberg, Germany; Edinburgh, Scotland; St. Petersburg, Russia; Seoul, South Korea; Sapporo, Japan; Singapore; Sydney; Ottawa, Ontario; Cusco, Peru; and many others.

One of her favorite trips was her recent walk of the Camino de Santiago. It is a 500-mile pilgrimage from St. Jean Pied de Port, France, to Santiago, Spain. Standouts of the pilgrimage were the poppy fields and vineyards. The people she met along the way were cordial and friendly. “It was a trip that will be hard to top,” she stated. She is currently planning an African safari in July, with future trips in mind to Japan, Korea, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil.

Love of adventure and knowledge have led Ohman to fascinating experiences in her long career in public service. “No matter what I was doing or where I went, the backbone of my career was the marvelous people with whom I worked: students, educators, parents, and employees. The joy of my career has been in their accomplishments, and I had 46 wonderful years of working with amazing people. I am blessed,” she said.

Casper College is lucky indeed to have been a small part of her journey, and it is an honor to have her as one of our very own alumni.



Diana Ohman spoke at the 2009 Casper College Autumn Gala when she was honored as the Casper College Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni for 2009.