



Celebrating Dakota Days: Part IV

The modern student, a grand Coyote

By Alan Dale
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***Editor's note:** Ted Muester was the president of the University of South Dakota's Foundation from 1998-2007, not the school president. The Plain Talk regrets the error.

Over the past 25 years, from 1989-2013, the University of South Dakota has undergone a multitude of changes that go hand-and-hand with a plethora of moments, tragic and beneficial, for the world at large.

As the last quarter century of happenings at USD have gone and continue on into a new millennium of Dakota Days, the world of the Coyote has been changed for the different if not the better or worse.

The campus has endured the explosion of personal computers, the Internet, and social media. It found a way to wade through the shock and horror of the Columbine Massacre and 9/11.

In between it all was the faux Y2K scare and growing over time was the increasing debt and pressures the youth of today are faced with.

It all adds up to a USD campus that survived and advanced as Dakota Days did as well. A hundred celebrations later and the Coyote Nation remains stronger than ever.

The last chapters weren't written without plenty of challenges and bumps along the way.

Yet it is 2014 and the University of South Dakota stands proud.

This year Dakota Days begins Sunday and culminates with the USD football game on Saturday, Oct. 11 at 3 p.m. against Northern Iowa at the DakotaDome.

Ahhh...memories forged and new ones ready to be made.

Recent growth a huge victory

James Abbott has been president of the University of South Dakota since July 1, 1997. The second-longest tenured president of the school, Abbott grew up in Yankton and saw a number of fellow youths attend USD in some part due to simple locality.

Now as arguably one of the more successful presidents in the school's history, Abbott has seen a great growth in the number of female students over the past near, 20 years, the advent of online courses, and an increase in non-traditional students.

He also watched the campus survive plenty of ups and downs the nation had to



There have been 100 years of Dakota Days ... and so far it's been quite grand.

(Courtesy of USD Alumni Association, USD Archives and Special Collections)

endure.

"Students didn't consider other states because it wasn't that easy to get to Lincoln, to NDSU, to the University of Minnesota so consequently I think there was a difference how the universities in the state had to do business," Abbott said of the days when he was a high schooler and after. "That's different now. It's a much smaller world now and that presents a wealth of opportunities and some disadvantages."

The advancement of travel and the improvement of a car's ability to trek in colder weather or survive longer trips helped get kids to go further away for college.

But USD also did plenty on its own to become more attractive to students near and far.

"We have become a national, regional

university than we were in the past," Abbott said. "That's not only in terms of attracting students, but also hiring. We conduct national searches for many of the positions and that makes a difference."

"The way we do business now is just different. That may be a good thing."

It didn't hurt that the founder of USA Today - Al Neuharth - was a University of South Dakota graduate.

"Al validated the University of South Dakota and the students," Abbott said. "The fact that USD was important to Al that meant a lot. If Al Neuharth thinks this is a great place then it must be."

"Al was certainly one of

our most nationally prominent figures and he wanted to talk about USD."

Abbott played a big role in the advancement of the USD campus.

"The Abbott era has been one of great progress here," USD President Emeritus Ted Muester said. "New buildings, the campus looks tremendously better than it was 15

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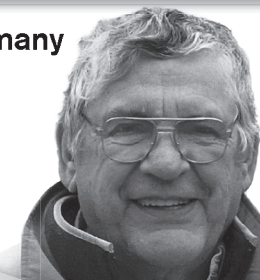
We want to give a big thank you to family and friends for all the wonderful cards and wishes on our 50th anniversary. And a very special Thank You to our children and grandchildren for all the love shown to us over these years. We are truly blessed to have all of you in our lives.

Craig & Darlis

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