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## College

From Page 7A

"Yankton College began with the first Congregational church of Dakota; for out of that church came Yankton Academy, and from the Academy came the first public school system of Dakota, and then Yankton College, with not only the same spirit pervading them all, but the same men actually carrying on the work," Ward said, according to "Joseph Ward of Dakota," written by George Harrison Durand. "The trustees of the Academy became the first Board of Education, and later a large majority of them were trustees of the College."

## also

■ Yankton College Played A Key Role In Local Civil Rights Issues. **PAGE 8B**

By the time financial burdens convinced the Yankton College Board of Trustees to close the school in 1984, thousands of students had passed through its halls.

For many of them, it was a profound experience, Joan Neubauer, who serves as the chair of Yankton College's Board of Trustees, once told the *Press & Dakotan*.

"Everything we are or ever hope to be, we owe to the background we got from Yankton College," Neubauer, a 1957 graduate, said. "The faculty as a whole over the years were remarkable, absolutely brilliant people, many of whom had advanced degrees at a time when it wasn't all that common. For me, it was an extension of what I had at Yankton High School, which was and is a wonderful educational institution."

Dr. Joseph Ward III, great-grandson of the college's founder, was on the Board of Trustees in December 1984 and made the motion to close the school, according to Robert Karolevitz's "Yankton College: A Continuing Story."

In a 2009 interview with the *Press & Dakotan*, Ward said he believes the college lived up to the vision his great-grandfather had when it was founded in 1881.

"I think it was unfortunate the economics resulted, ultimately, in its demise," Ward, an alumni of the institution, said. "But in terms of the quality of the education and what (my great-grandfather) envisioned, I think the college definitely did live up to that vision. There's no doubt in my mind."

A lot of the college's history was contingent on the availability of money. The founding Ward spent an enormous amount of time until his death in 1889 at age 52 traveling the United States in search of funds to keep the college alive. Future stewards of the institution were also regularly burdened with the specter of financial shortfalls. However, according to Karolevitz, the trustees were told in 1984 that they would need to sell certain properties, hopefully collect receivables owed, and raise \$2.5 million for any chance at keeping the college afloat.

It wasn't the first time the college had faced financial woes — but it would be the last time.

"It's pretty simple," Ward said. "They were spending more than was coming in. There were financial commitments that weren't going to go away. I think what was happening was, they got too much indebtedness, not enough income and, unfortunately, although the alumni and the community had been very loyal, there's a point where I think you can only go back

"You hear these stories of people who were lost souls, but when they got on campus they found a group of people that they never imagined. They became great friends and those bonds remain."

JAN GARRITY

to the well so many times.

"Fortunately, the federal government purchased the campus, and I think that was a wonderful win for the community," he added. "Unfortunately, the college had to close, but the campus has never looked better. The federal government has put a lot of money into maintaining the physical entity that was once known as Yankton College."

The Yankton Federal Prison Camp opened in 1988.

Many stories of the campus's life as an educational institution are still shared during the bi-annual Yankton College all-class reunion.

With each gathering of the school's alumni, those memories grow older — but that doesn't necessarily mean they are fading away. Those who attended the school keep their stories vivid and alive.

Don Rasmussen was one of approximately 300 alumni who attended Yankton College events being held throughout the community in the summer of 2010. It had been almost 70 years since the 91-year-old Yankton resident graduated from the institution, but preparing for the reunion had his mind racing with lucid — and loving — memories.

One memory was that of Henry Potter, a well-known World War II hero who sat next to Rasmussen in a psychology class.

"We were seated alphabetically, and 'p' comes right before 'r,'" Rasmussen said matter-of-factly during an interview with the *Press & Dakotan*. "I got to know Henry pretty well. He was as friendly, warm, honest and open as anybody I ever knew. That was it. Henry was Henry. No embellishments."

Potter, a Pierre native, attended Yankton College during the 1937 and 1938 academic years before going on to the University of Oregon. He joined the Army in 1940, and was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in 1941 after completing navigator training.

On the morning of April 18, 1942, Potter was the navigator for Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle during his legendary bombing raid on Japan. Sixteen B-25 bombers operated by 80 men who had volunteered for the secret mission departed from the aircraft carrier *Hornet* located 600 miles east of Japan.

The bombing raid stunned the Japanese and boosted the morale of Americans four months after Pearl Harbor.

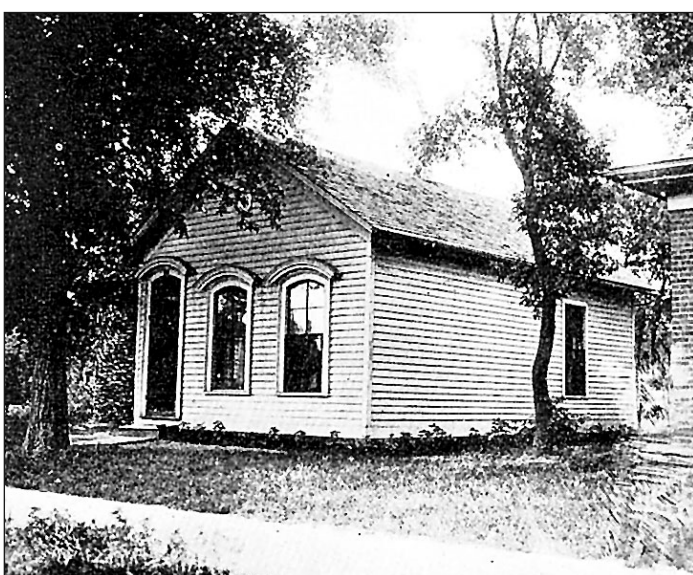
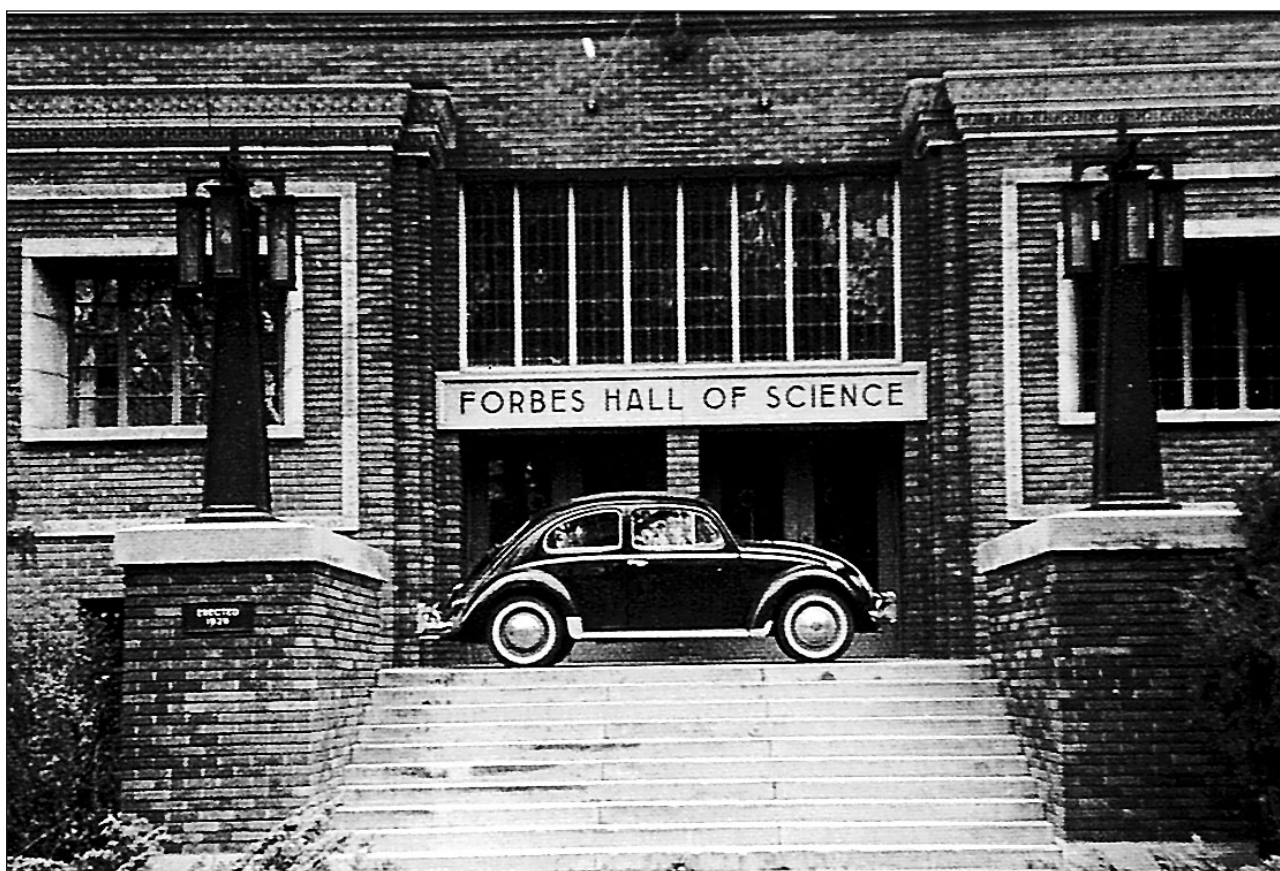
Such stories of deep affection for the college, as well as alumni who went on to achieve great things, are common at the bi-annual gatherings, according to Yankton College Executive Director Jan Garrity.

"The bar for excellence was set pretty high at the college," she said. "People went away and had very successful careers as a result of that education."

"You hear these stories of people who were lost souls, but when they got on campus they found a group of people that they never imagined," Garrity continued. "They became great friends and those bonds remain."

Those sentiments were backed up by Rasmussen.

"Yankton College is deep in our hearts," he said. "We can't describe it. We are grateful to the fine staff and professors we had. It was a remarkable institution."



TOP: A Volkswagen finds a unique parking space in front of Forbes Hall on the Yankton College campus (year unknown). ABOVE: These two people pose with a greyhound serving as the school's mascot back in 1962. The nickname "Greyhound" was originally proposed in 1916 on the logic that anyone wearing the school's black and gold colors had to win "by speed and courage rather than by physique." According to YC officials, the nickname also became the name of the school's yearbook, replacing the "Okie." LEFT: This was the first building to be used for the purposes of learning at Yankton College. The school closed down in 1984, then was purchased for \$3.1 million and converted into a federal prison camp in 1988. Prison officials have taken great pains to preserve the campus's historic buildings. (Yankton College photos.)



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