

WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL, SIOUX FALLS, SD
Serving The Classes of the Great '50's Decade. Photos & Stories Welcome!
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**SIOUX FALLS IS A
RED HOT
“WOW”
CITY!**

Every opportunity I have had to revisit Sioux Falls over the past 30 years I have grown more and more impressed with my beloved home town. Along with my Mom and Dad, I moved to Sioux Falls from Coalgate, Oklahoma in 1947. I was just entering the 6th grade and then moved away right after college but I have always considered Sioux Falls my home town and love returning as often as I can. However, since my Mom died in 1992 and my Dad in 1993 I have only returned every 3 to 5 years for WHS Reunions, but with each visit for at least the last 30 years the number of proud **“WOWS”** that I utter on each visit continue to increase during my loving tours of Sioux Falls.

I already feel remiss trying to list my major “WOWs” in Sioux Falls. There are so very, VERY many! All of the many WOW’s are what makes Sioux Falls such a very, VERY SPECIAL CITY. But regardless, here are a few of my special WOWS that I look forward to seeing every time I am back home.

Both the **Sioux Falls Airport** and the **Freeway Interstate system** always draws a silent WOW from me when I come home. I would think that the average Sioux Falls citizen probably doesn’t think too much about how important they both are to the growth and vitality of Sioux Falls, but at the same time I would bet that the movers and shakers of Sioux Falls never stop appreciating them.

I will always remember the “WOW” I uttered when I first saw how beautiful our old Washington High School auditorium had become as the **Mary Woods (WHS '52) Sommervold Theater** in the **Washington Pavilion**.



Over the years I have always been impressed with how the **Downtown Sioux Falls** decision makers were able to keep downtown Sioux Falls so seemingly strong, successful and thriving. Immediately after leaving USD I served as Executive Manager of three Chambers of Commerce, one in Wyoming



and two in California and I have seen first hand how many downtowns suffered and many died with the advent of the large shopping centers and malls.

Sioux Falls's due to it's creative minds and forward thinkers always seemed to not only prosper, but to also successfully compete with the outer limit developments of downtown. Downtown Sioux Falls has always seemed as popular, vibrant and thriving as ever.

An extremely popular and important addition to Downtown Sioux Falls today is **"The Sioux Falls SculptureWalk"**.

The ***SculptureWalk*** is an exhibit of original outdoor sculptures displayed year-round in downtown Sioux Falls. The sculptures are owned by the sculptors and loaned to the exhibit. From May 4, 2019 through September 30, 2019 the public voted for The People's Choice sculpture and the winning sculpture will be purchased by the City of Sioux Falls (up to \$20,000) at the end of the exhibit year.

I always give another silent WOW to the City fathers, The Sioux Empire Arts Council the Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce, and/or the Downtown Merchants Assoc. and any one else who has had a hand in making Sioux Falls into a WOW CITY, and for the masterful job so well done. Or I am sure I should say, "for a job so well started!"

Without a doubt, **"Falls Park"** has now become a must see on everyone's tour list, and every visit always demands several LOUD WOWS! All of us who remember what the falls area looked liked before the miraculous and beautiful makeover must agree that it is one of the best changes / improvements ever made in Sioux Falls. It is now indeed a beautiful and proud improvement to our beloved namesake. Kudos plus loud WOWS to the City Fathers for this overdue beautification.

As most of us probably know, **Denny Sanford**, has now donated millions and millions of dollars to Sioux Falls as well as to many other cities across our nation. The enormous financial contribution Mr. Sanford has made to just Sioux Valley Hospital alone is totally beyond my comprehension. But this most generous man has not stopped with just donations to Sioux Valley Hospital. His name and donations are now pretty much every where you look while driving across Sioux Falls. I don't even feel qualified to write about the gratitude I feel for what

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this most generous man has given to Sioux Falls and the countless number of lives he has so favorably impacted. Every time I see another piece of his donated legacy I have added *"Thank God for this benevolent and generous man" to my WOWS*

The Parks and Recreation program in Sioux Falls has always excelled as far as I was concerned. Growing up in Sioux Falls in the '50s I truly loved spending time at our wonderful and beautiful parks. The Sioux Falls population in 1950 was 52,696 and **Sherman Park, McKennan Park, plus Drake Springs and Terrace Park Swimming pools** were our major parks and I so enjoyed them all. In 2018 the Sioux Falls population reached 181,883 and as I now drive around Sioux Falls on my city tours on every visit I see many new beautiful parks. But I still always check out my original favorite four and even though I no longer recognize Drake Springs or Terrace Park swimming pools, they all are still as warmly appealing and as beautiful as ever and I am sure they will definitely always get a warm nostalgic WOW. The only thing that would take some getting used to for me is that they don't call them swimming pools any more, they are now **Aquatic Centers**.



Mr. Denny Sanford



The Downtown Sioux River Development is something I never envisioned would happen. Without



a doubt it came from much greater creative minds and imaginations than I possess. It is beautiful and such an improvement to the downtown area. I truly find the potential of continuing to beautify the river area both exciting and limitless. MORE KUDOS to these visionaries.

The “***Arc of Dreams***” is the latest addition of the beatification and atheistic development of the Sioux River and all of downtown Sioux Falls. The Arc of Dreams spans the river just North of 8th Street.

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ARC^{OF} DREAMS¹⁷⁸


Installed on this historic site in 2019, the *Arc of Dreams* is dedicated to the dreamers of the past, the present, and as an inspiration to the dreamers of the future.

Crafted from 60 tons of stainless steel, rising nearly 7 stories and spanning 295 feet, the *Arc of Dreams* is the creation of South Dakota Artist Laureate, Dale Claude Lamphere.

The *Arc of Dreams* represents the belief in ourselves that it takes to dream big and the gap in the middle symbolizes the *Leap of Faith* needed to make those dreams come true. The sculpture is dedicated to the people of Sioux Falls and South Dakota to have the courage to dream even bigger for their community.

This sculpture was made possible by these donors who believe the power of public art will have a positive impact on generations to come.

DREAM BIG • LIVE BIG

 SCULPTUREWALK[®]

Arts: In the beginning of the 21st century, Sioux Falls experienced a **renaissance of cultural** interest. The Sioux Empire Arts Council continues to lead in the Sioux Falls area arts scene and gives out Mayor's Awards each year in several categories for excellence demonstrated by Sioux Falls residents.^[70] **The Sioux Falls SculptureWalk** was the first visual evidence of the renaissance and is an attraction for both visitors and resident artists, hosting over 55 sculptures.

Just so you know, I am not the only one who thinks Sioux Falls is a pretty neat city. **In 2019 Sioux Falls was named the 7th Best Place to live in the United States.**

The above "WOWS" are only "*a few of my favorite things*" about Sioux Falls. There are so many, many other reasons Sioux Falls has repeatedly been named one of America's Best Places To Live". I have had the really good fortune of loving and observing Sioux Falls for 72 years now and I am confident that, **"The Best Is Yet To Come"!**

On January 24, 2019 Ben Kuhns published, **"10 Reasons NOT To Move To Sioux Falls"**.

- You'll Have to Get a Bike. There's **no** way to avoid it. Over 25 miles of paved trails loop around the city.
- Too Many Public Parks. ...Over 80 now.
- Too Much Great Food To Try. ...
- Our Local Sports Teams Aren't in the Major Leagues. ...
- Downtown is too Much Fun. ...
- You Can't Take the Majesty of the **Falls**. ...
- The Commute is Too Short. ...
- First Class Art and Culture are Everywhere.
- All the Genuinely Nice People
- Living Big in a Small City
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