

LARRY ROLFSON - A Love of History and Gift for Leadership

Larry Rolfson of BlackRidge Bank of North Dakota has a long history of supporting the state's history agency. Larry's Norwegian father loved history. Larry loved the old museum on the capitol grounds and spent many childhood days engrossed in the collections. His family business was involved in the first Heritage Center construction. This interest in history has led Larry to be a strong leader in the more than 10-year statewide effort to expand the resources for the State Historical Society.

Virginia Nelsen, executive director of the Foundation, remembers a chance meeting in 2001 with Rolfson, who was then associated with BNC National Bank of Bismarck. Tweed Roosevelt, great-grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, was looking for partners to support a statewide tour to bring Roosevelt's Medal of Honor to the people of North Dakota. Rolfson quickly volunteered to coordinate such a tour. Jan Nelson, who was involved in marketing for BNC National Bank graciously helped to plan these early events across the state.

T.J. Russell and Scott Russell, executives of the family-owned business, Cloverdale Foods, Mandan, signed on for the whirlwind Medal of Honor tour in June-July 2001, offering the Foundation and Society a platform to tell the Roosevelt story and seek the first History's Trustees at these luncheon events. Serving the best of Cloverdale's foods and meeting in locations like the newly opened BNC National Bank in Fargo or Cloverdale's personal corporate "museum" at their Mandan plant, the Foundation met many business leaders who signed on to be long-time Trustees and friends of the Foundation.

Cloverdale Foods and BNC National Bank also collaborated to support the Snow Angel event on the state capitol mall when North Dakota earned a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. T.J. Russell, Scott Russell and Cloverdale Foods and BNC National Bank and

Jan Nelson continue to be generous supporters.

Rolfson later joined Starion Financial bank and remained an advocate for the Foundation. When the planning began for the private fundraising campaign, he brought in corporate/business banker Mark Weide of Starion to help the Foundation. Later Jay Feil of Starion put together an asset management program for the Foundation campaign donations. Mark Weide, now with the Bank of North Dakota, along with Jay Feil of Starion proposed a joint venture to support the Foundation in the last stages of the expansion campaign.

"Rolfson believed in the Foundation's capacity to do what it proposed, and from this base of trust, he hand-carried the organization to the needed banking partnerships," said Nelsen.

In addition, Rolfson has nominated many, many individuals to the History's Trustee program, helping to

"We want North Dakotans to know that our business is on the front line, encouraging innovative partnerships that build pride and tourism in our state,"

T.J. Russell, CEO of Cloverdale Foods, Mandan during the 2001 Roosevelt Medal of Honor Tour



Tweed Roosevelt, left, stands by the commissioned portrait of his great-grandfather, Theodore Roosevelt, with North Dakota artist Andy Knutson of Towner. The SHSND helped organize Roosevelt's tour across the state in 2001 to display his great-grandfather's Medal of Honor. The prints were sold through the SHSND Foundation and at select galleries across the state.



“The benefits an expanded North Dakota Heritage Center brings to all of us throughout North Dakota are so overwhelming that it’s hard to imagine! This is infrastructure; this is economic development; this is tourism; this is for all North Dakotans, present and future. This is for those outside our state and who would or will be North Dakotans. This is for the discoverers of who we were, who we are, and who we will be.” – Larry Rolfson

create the income the Foundation needed to fund the early expansion requests with the State Legislature. As the expansion bills came forward in the legislature, he attended nearly every committee hearing at the capitol, and he kept his favorite legislators informed through personal email messages during the critical sessions.

Not only did he provide good advice, he also made donations to the Foundation. Larry and Faye Rolfson donated as Trustees to the Foundation and then made an additional commitment for \$10,000 as History’s Hero donors to the expansion. The Foundation is grateful to Larry Rolfson for his advice and leadership on very significant and important financial issues and his loyal support.

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*– Virginia Nelsen,
Executive Director*



The State Historical Society organized an event to set a record for snow angels in the *Guinness Book of World Records*, in conjunction with a “Winter Fun” exhibit at the Heritage Center. Above, a total of 1,791 “angels” converged on the State Capitol Grounds on March 23, 2002, to set the record. The record was upheld in February 17, 2007, with 8,962 North Dakotans making angels, again at the capitol grounds.