

# What Makes A South Dakotan?



*Stories written about South Dakotans.  
By South Dakotans.*

40th Anniversary Special Edition  
Edited by John E. Miller and Lenora Hudson





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SOUTH DAKOTAN?

South Dakota Stories

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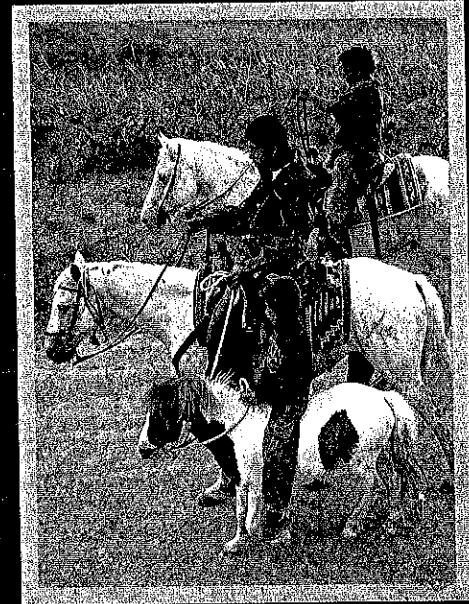
South Dakota Humanities Council  
Brookings, South Dakota

*"The social scientists and pop culture gurus who say we're heading for a homogenized global village have obviously never visited the Corn Palace. They're as wrong as a sun-struck prairie dog mistaking a badger hole for his home."*

*—Chuck Raasch from  
I'm from South Dakota and  
Other Tall Tales*

What Makes A South Dakotan? Opinions vary. In this compilation of stories, poems and photos submitted by current and former residents of South Dakota, you will find numerous unique responses to this question.

This publication is the fifth in a series of South Dakota Stories books created through the efforts of the South Dakota Humanities Council. Other volumes include *One-Room Country Schools*, *Country Congregations*, *On the Homefront* and *Life on the Farm & Ranch*.



*Crazy Horse Ride 2012, By David Michaud*

### *More Excerpts...*

*"I want my descendants to feel comfortable and truly accepted as South Dakotans."*

*—From Waiting for Respect and Acceptance, by Vi Waln*

*"In winter, South Dakota takes endurance. Some say it keeps out the riff-raff, but it might be what forges our social consciousness. The cold weather tests its inhabitants, and guides us to value and protect those within reach."*

*—From An Icy Welcome by Mary Flemmer Husman*

*"Ideally, this sense of being a South Dakotan isn't tied to a street address or occupation. It stems from a succession of experiences that foster familiarity and make you feel right at home, regardless of where you started."*

*—From My Life: Time to sum up 20 years in S.D. by Stu Whitney (Sioux Falls Argus Leader)*



**SOUTH DAKOTA  
HUMANITIES COUNCIL**

To order this book or any others from our South Dakota Stories series, call (605) 688-6113, email [info@sdhumanities.org](mailto:info@sdhumanities.org) or visit your local bookseller.

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But now I'd like to have it at the corner of my lot.  
 In that ol' log house  
 I'd hang curtains, calendars, and key,  
 Maybe a picture—two or three  
 Of pole corral and stall on Flintrock's bend  
 I'd wrap my arms around it all,  
 And give it one big squeeze,  
 That ol' log house, pole corral, and stall,  
 And years of memories.  
 Memories are forever,  
 While yesteryears and yesterdays all end,  
 Like the ol' log house, pole corral, and weathered stall,  
 On North Flintrock's Bend.

*Irene Clasen Jordan, Faith*



### *What It Means to Be a South Dakotan through the Lens of a Lakota*

From my perspective, South Dakotan defines a geographical area and how one fits into that place to bring meaning to one's self-identity of "Who am I?" I draw from the notion of South Dakotan in the context of identity. I think of inclusive versus exclusionary practices and how these sole forces impact and shape one's experiences as a Lakota. I often think of South Dakotan and capture the deep essence of what were once the indigenous lands of what is known as South Dakotan.

Who I am is first defined by my place within the boundaries of my Lakota reservation, all of which border the state of South Dakota and Nebraska. As a Lakota, my experiences were shaped looking from the inside of my reservation boundaries outward wondering about this place called South Dakotan, which certainly did not capture my world view. I think of South Dakotan as a place

so external to "my place" which I identify as "my home"—the Pine Ridge Reservation. As I reflect, many thoughts emerge, one in particular, the uncomfortable(ness) of being among those different from who and what I identify as people like me. However, contrasting that thought is the notion of being among my own Lakota people within those indigenous Lakota lands (reservation borders) as a place of comfort; as a result I didn't feel the need to step into that space of South Dakotan as a young girl. Today, I draw from the past experiences and convey that my identity lies not from being a South Dakotan, but rather a Lakota who had experiences drawn from South Dakotan.

*Maxine Brings Him Back-Janis, Oglala Lakota*



### *Our Living River*

In 1978, after moving into one of Vermillion's oldest houses, my husband, Jerry, and I learned from a neighbor that both our house and the one next door were built from lumber salvaged by its owner, Swede Swedeberg, from the Farmer's Home Hotel after the great flood of 1881. The Missouri River had lifted the hotel from its foundation and floated it downstream to Burbank. Mr. Swedeberg disassembled his old hotel, loaded it on a wagon, and hauled it to the new town being built on the bluff. A hundred years after that flood, we were introduced to the river's power by that house, which stands as a part of its legacy. In 1983, we moved out of that old house and built a house of our own design into a south-facing hill and faced toward the sun. On a clear day, from a second story window, we can see the Nebraska bluffs beyond the Missouri.

For more than thirty years, the river has been our main summer destination for recreation. We love to canoe and wade or float in the shallow water near a sandbar or island. We've seen shovel-nosed sturgeons, carp, beavers, cormorants, eagles, and herons—green and great blue. Life is abundant on our remaining fifty-nine-mile stretch of the wild and scenic Missouri. Together