We were a small, light-hearted company, hardly more than a score of us; and all of us were young. We lived in a clearing in the poplar bush on the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River. On the sloping sides of the great valley and on the flats below the coyotes barked and howled at night, but on top of the bank we taught mathematics and physics, Greek and history, English literature, and biology. Along with some four hundred students and two red brick buildings, we were the University of Alberta; and we felt sure that the future belonged to us, not the coyotes.

RK Gordon,
*University Beginnings in Alberta*
Since its beginning, the students and faculty of the U of A have expanded a dream born in a stand of poplars.

Our alumni have gone on to become luminaries in both the private and public sector: the late Clarence Campbell became head of the National Hockey League; Richard Taylor was a co-winner of the Nobel Prize for his work in physics; William Thorsell became editor-in-chief of the Globe and Mail; and the late Yuichi Kurimoto founded the Nagoya University in Japan. We have also produced a Supreme Court of Canada Justice, Beverly McLachlin; a Premier of Alberta, Peter Lougheed; and a Prime Minister of Canada, Joe Clark.

Our faculty have become known across the nation for their skills as teachers and researchers. This is proven by the seventeen 3M Fellowships for Excellence in Teaching that U of A instructors have won—more than any other university in Canada. The most recent of these was awarded in 1997 to Anne Naeth in Renewable Resources. Also, last year, Tim Mosmann (Medical Microbiology and Immunology) was one of four U of A medical researchers to share a $1.75 million award from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. He also earned the William B Coley Award from the American Cancer Research Institute.

The artistic achievements of our faculty are nationally esteemed. For three consecutive years U of A professors were the recipients of the Governor General’s Literary Award: Ted Blodgett in 1996, Greg Hollingshead in 1995, and Rudy Wiebe in 1994. In 1997 Art and Design professor Walter Jule won the Superior Prize at the 10th Seoul International Print Biennial and the International Purchase Award at the Portland Art Museum International Print Exhibition.

This morning in Strathcona Ground, the University of Alberta without the least pomp and ceremony, entered quietly upon the great educational channel of the world and with such eminently capable pilots, who have already become imbued with the spirit of the West, it is safe to say that the infant institution will soon arrive at a stage of universal power and importance.

*Edmonton Journal, Sept 23, 1908*
Though the University of Alberta has faced many challenges over the last 90 years, our commitment to excellence in academics, athletics, research, and community service, has made us an internationally respected institution. Our external funding exceeds $100 million annually—we are one of only five universities in Canada with this level of external financial support.

Three U of A students—Catherine Dextrase, Vladimir Gomez, and Matthew Teghtmeyer—were among 30 students chosen to represent Canada at the 1997 World University Service of Canada international seminar in Peru.

Our sports teams maintain a tradition of continued excellence in athletic competition: our men’s and women’s volleyball teams won the national championships last year; the Pandas soccer team are the 1997 Canadian champions. And we lead the nation in Canadian Inter-university Athletic Union all-Canadians.

Our alumni are always active in improving the lives of people in Canada and abroad. Stephen Ramsankar, principal of Alex Taylor School, has been named a UN Global Citizen and a member of the Order of Canada for his leadership in making his inner-city school a place where children and adults alike can prosper. And for her continuing work with women and families in Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe, home economist Lila Engberg has been honored by home economics associations in Canada and Africa and received the distinguished service award of the International Federation for Home Economics in 1996.

Currently, we attract students from nearly 100 different countries. But whether they come from overseas or across the street, our students are prevailing in the community and in their studies.

At present, our Mechanical Engineering students are bringing their talents to the community through their creation of landmine detectors on behalf of the Defense Research Establishment at Suffield, Alberta and also through the development of a pediatric stand-up wheelchair.

Last year, the Pharmacy class earned the highest overall average in the nation on its Examining Board of Canada examinations. This marks the eighth time in the past nine years that our students have achieved this distinction.
Our vision, as we emerge from this and enter the next century, is to be indisputably recognized, nationally and internationally, as one of Canada’s finest universities.

Roderick Fraser, President and Vice-Chancellor of the U of A

As we near a century of academic adventure at the University of Alberta, our faculty and students continue to be pioneers in whatever field they explore. Together, we are charting an exciting course into the future.

In a project jointly funded by the Federal Government, Syncrude Canada Ltd and the U of A, research is being conducted into the extraction of bitumen from oil sands. This work spans a wide range of scientific expertise, holds the promise of important discoveries, and provides graduate students with an opportunity to continue their research beyond graduation at Syncrude Research Centre in Edmonton.

In 1998, an international conference, spearheaded by Timothy Caulfield of the University of Alberta Health Law Institute, will deal with the commercialization of genetic research and the unique implications it has on society. This conference will seek to answer questions about the ethical, legal and policy issues facing genetic researchers today.

The Orlando Project, directed by Professor Patricia Clements, Dean of Arts at the U of A, is combining literary scholarship and electronic technology to produce the first full history of women’s writing in the British Isles. The five volumes will integrate our researchers’ discoveries and new analyses with the current rapid progress in scholarly understanding of women’s writing.

With the use of a micropipette, a water droplet ten times smaller than the thickness of human hair is created in crude oil. At a later stage, water is sucked out of the droplet, revealing the “protective skin” that prevents the removal of unwanted water during petroleum production.

Photos taken by Tony Yeung
Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering
When Henry Marshall Tory announced that he would build a university on the banks of the North Saskatchewan, his friends and colleagues must have questioned his judgement. The site of his proposed academic institution was little more than farmland, surrounded by little more than wilderness.

And yet, as we stand on the threshold of a new millennium, the University of Alberta thrives. Our commitment to being a world-class teaching, learning and research facility is as strong as ever: our current fund-raising campaign will ensure our strength into the next century. And the university community will continue to benefit from the energy we invest in national and international activities including student recruitment and exchanges, reinforcement of alumni connections, and joint ventures with universities, governments and industry.

Today you are one of the heirs of our proud legacy. Through your studies and your research, you have the opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, the U of A’s vibrant and growing community.

It is 1998—a time to reflect on our history and to nurture hopes for the future.

We looked across the river to the newly-finished building of the Provincial Government, which in its wisdom had brought us into being and from which came our very modest monthly cheques. Just below the Government building stood the rather forlorn remains of old Fort Edmonton, but they were not long allowed to cumber the landscape. The new, raw, bustling city was not interested in a reminder of its humble beginnings. The future was the thing, and of the dazzling glory of that future nobody was so mean-spirited as to entertain the slightest doubt.

RK Gordon, University Beginnings in Alberta