By Russ Pankonin, The Imperial Republican Co-Publisher

Along-time friend of mine, the late Nebraska historian Dr. Robert Manley, ardently believed that to see where a community is going, one first has to look back at its past.

Manley showed me example after example of how history has a way of repeating itself. The challenge, he said, was to take that knowledge, learn from it and better your community because of it.

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As I look back on 2008, I continue to see a thriving Imperial community.
□□ We've completed a \$1.6 million pool complex project and we're on the way to completing the
football/track complex at the school.
□□ Imperial's the home of the Upper Republican Natural Resources District's new \$950,000
headquarters.
□□ The hospital added two doctors to the staff, along with a new nurse practitioner.
□□ The future continues to look bright for Imperial and Chase County.
☐☐ That outlook comes on the heels of one of the greatest economic challenges the baby
boomer generation, or any generation since, has ever witnessed.

☐☐ However, the generation that lived through the Great Depression knows all about economic woes and hard times. And as Manley predicted, history has a way of repeating itself.

Our farming economy is coming off two of its best years, maybe ever. Perhaps that spurt of success and growth can help insulate this region somewhat from the economic downturn that's crippling this country.

But we can't rest on our laurels to carry us into the future. Imperial and the area must continue its tradition of investing in our future, whether it's in new and innovative farming techniques or bold ventures such as a modern hospital and new clinic, a school that's only 11 years old, or a \$1 million library that some people called an impossibility.

I'm sure there were some who said the Champion Community Center plan was an impossible dream, but it happened. In Wauneta, there were likely those who said a new clinic building would never be built—but it was. As the great Walt Disney once said, it's fun to do the impossible.

It's that kind of pioneering spirit that Chase County was founded on and, fortunately, that same frame of mind has continued to thrive and grow over the generations. We only need to look back at what made us great to learn what will keep us great going forward into the future.

If we look back at the past, it's only to find the direction we want to forge out for ourselves in the future. That's a great way to start off the new year!