

# Naming rights great deal for Kibbie; what about UI?

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

The deal William H. Kibbie cut with the University of Idaho 40 years ago has to rate as one of the best in the annals of naming rights arrangements.

For Kibbie, that is.

Since 1975, the name of the late Utah construction executive - he died in a 1988 automobile accident - has been affixed to the UI's covered stadium.

Kibbie made a \$300,000 contribution toward the project - far less than UI officials reportedly wanted. In fact, Kibbie provided a mere 4 percent of the overall construction costs - then put at \$7.8 million, not counting the renovations that followed.

Kibbie's timing could not have been better.

Since then, naming rights have become big business.

Consider CenturyLink Field in Seattle, where the communications company will pay \$4 million to \$5 million a year through at least 2019, and possibly through 2024, to have its marquee at the Seahawks' home field.

Or how about Denver, where Sports Authority has anted up an average of \$6 million a year to host the Broncos?

In Phoenix, JP Morgan Chase is paying \$2.2 million a year through 2028 to claim Chase Field.

Sure, there's a world of difference between NFL franchises and a state university in the West.

But here are some other examples:

- The University of Louisville plays its home games at Papa John's Cardinal Stadium. The pizza enterprise pays \$468,750 a year for the privilege.
- TCF Bank is paying \$1.4 million a year through 2034 to put its name on the University of Minnesota's stadium.
- Texas Tech University at Lubbock - home of former UI President Duane Nellis - plays football at AT&T Stadium. For naming rights, AT&T is providing \$800,000 a year through 2019.

Sure, each dwarfs the UI by comparison. Texas Tech operates in a community with three times the population of the UI's immediate vicinity. But if you scale down the rate to the UI's market size, it still would come to about \$266,000 a year.

Or you can look at a few Idaho examples.

At Boise State University, Taco Bell figures the naming rights to what had been known as the Pavilion was worth \$4 million during a 15-year run.

Over at the football stadium, Albertsons name is on the door - under a \$12.5 million, 15-year contract.

And in Idaho Falls, Melaleuca got naming rights at a new baseball park after donating \$600,000.

Yet, the UI averages about \$7,500 a year when you divide the past 40 years into Kibbie's contribution.

Strangely, there's nothing locking UI into that predicament. Speaking to the Lewiston Tribune Monday, UI President Chuck Staben observed that Kibbie's deal was not in perpetuity.

Staben went no further than that. And when pressed, he stressed the dome's naming rights were not up for grabs.

Why not?

This is not the case of the university recognizing one of its own, as Idaho State University did by renaming its Minidome in honor of long-time athletic director Milton W. "Dubby" Holt.

Kibbie was at the UI briefly. There is no historic attachment to the name. He made a contribution and got a good return for his \$300,000.

But in today's market, that amount might be enough to keep his name on the dome for another year or two.

Besides, Idaho higher education is hardly flush with cash. Last time anyone checked, the UI relies on tax dollars and student fees to cover its athletic programs.

If another company is willing to fork over a couple hundred thousand bucks a year for giving its name a higher profile, why not look into it?

Of course, the UI may want to hold off until the Vandals' win-loss record improves.