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Commencement Ceremonies, 5/14/72

Summary created by: Summer Dougherty

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Candidates are read (names may be misspelled):

Raymond Darwin Cameron, III, Doctor of Philosophy in Zoophysiology. He received his Bachelor's degree from Ursinus College, Pennsylvania in 1963.

Duane Russell Packer, Doctor of Philosophy in Geology, Geophysics. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from Colorado College in 1969.

Arnold Lee Snyder, Jr. Doctor of Philosophy in Geophysics. He received his Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from George Washington D.C. in 1960 and received his Master of Science degree from Colorado College in 1966.

Lieutenant Colonel Lucien Prokopowich, Professor of Military Science presents the candidates in the United States Army Reserve (names may be misspelled):

Mark D. Anderson, Robert. E. Hillard Jr., G. Tailor Jones, Thomas W. Monk, Frederic S. Roebard, Michael S. Rugani, Samuel R. Dualark

Dr. Wood(?) addresses the class of 1972, telling them that they are the historic 50th graduating class of the University of Alaska and that they are honored by the presence of Governor William A. Egan and former Territorial Governor Ernest Gruening. They are the only chief state officers who have, while in office participated in the commencement ceremony. The speaker is grateful to Governor Egan and to Dr. Gruening as well as to Mrs. Egan and Mrs. Gruening for their presence.

Thirty-six years ago Dr. Gruening gave the commencement address at the University of Alaska. Statewide, University of Alaska 1972 academic graduates number more than about 800. This is greater than the total number of full time students enrolled in the university just 12 years ago when the speaker first came to the campus. In 1960, there were 101 graduates. In 1948, when William O'Neill was first appointed to the board, there were 28 graduates.

This great growth in the number of students is not merely the result of increased enrollment in our population, but the holding power of a vastly enhanced learning environment. For all of this and more, we are indebted to the taxpayers of Alaska and to their elected officials and representatives. The speaker is convinced that the graduates of the university are the finest thing that ever happened in Alaska and fully justify every cent that has been spent on the university throughout the state. He says everyone in education, students, faculty, staff,

administration, and regents, can work at their mission in better, more effective ways. Better and more effective ways are an urgent necessity of all aspect of our national life. He tells the students that no one yet has found a way to distribute that which has not yet been produced. The assumption that one can continuously demands a greater return for a lower rate of production is self-defeating. There is no way for any nation, or any enterprise of that nation, to sustain higher wages and increased human benefits without increasing productivity. This basic principle applies to higher education in all its functions.

The way to close the productivity gap that has been developing between the U.S. and countries such as West Germany and Japan is not to reduce productivity, he says. No amount of political power or political maneuvering can give to even the best causes what has not first been produced by someone, he says. Individuals try though, thinking there is a way to defy a fundamental law of economics and get away with it. People dream that, with political power, they might get whatever they wished. But always from what someone else has produced and not from what they themselves have created. They assume there is abundance and that further production is both unnecessary and undesirable.

But he encourages everyone to not rely entirely on political power. He urges people to solve problems through common sense, determination and goodwill and to turn from status seeking, striving for possessions and power and instead to try to do as much as possible for the common good as well as for self and focus their intelligence, competence and enthusiasm upon doing and production.

Dr. Wood praises the faculty and staff of the university. He feels that this faculty of genuine quality will see the university through this time when universities everywhere are being challenged by the public. The university is working on improving the content and method of instruction. Dr. Wood announces that he has requested permission from the Board of Regents to retire from the presidency by 1 July, 1973. Looking back, he has only one regret and that is that the time ran out too fast.

Dr. Wood finishes his speech and Terry Smith(?), representing the class of '72, gives a response:

“Although I have been asked to speak on behalf of the vintage graduating class of 1972, I find that that is nearly and impossible thing to do. What could anyone say that represented the views of an entire class? For a class is made up of many individuals, each facing an infinite variety of situations and looking to find an infinite variety of different things. At this university, more than at others, the road to graduation is a very individual trip. There is not a cohesive unit that goes through four years together, experiencing the same things and facing the same problems. There are may transfer students here and many who took off several years between their first and their last year. All of us have very different reasons for wanting that diploma. It is no longer an exclusive pass to a high-paying prestigious job, although for some that is the reason for getting a diploma. My mother once told me that any woman with a college education could tell any man to go to hell. And I am sure for some that is the reason for getting a diploma. But the fact is we are not one single unit, a class uniquely distinct from other classes, beyond the fact that we are all unique individuals. So, to say that I speak for the class of 1972 would be a mistake. I speak of what I, as one member of this loosely defined class, have seen at this university and what I see as a possible direction for us to take away from this university. The university is a very temporary environment, and any activity within

that sphere is, by nature, limited and temporary also. There is only so much that students can do because there is only so much that students can understand. The biggest problem however, is that a student movement only has a limited audience. You can only talk to other students, for only other students know what we are talking about or care what we are concerned about. And there is no group, excuse me, there is no group that is more powerless than students because, for a time, they are not a part of the larger society and they do not have access to the real power sources. Student movements tend to be artificial because the environment in which they are created is also artificial. And the problems students encounter pales beside the problems of the public at large and the world outside the university. In fact, most of the public could care less what the students are doing or what they are thinking. Who would really care if every student went on strike to protest the situation we find on our campuses? Student movements are built of ideas and philosophy and historical proof but the movement of society in general is built on the job, the rent and the price of food. And these are the things that we must now concern ourselves with. The one inevitable fact which dooms any student movement and which the administration knows and relies upon is that eventually all student activists will graduate and leave the university. All they have to do is wait. No matter how willing a student is to confront the reigning authority, which in this case is the university administration, this does not automatically carry over to the larger society outside, but it should. There is a war going on out there. People are dying and people are starving. Men have been festering in prisoner of war camps going on ten years. For some of us, that is the time since we've been in junior high school. Most of the world is concerned merely with survival and we concern ourselves with drinking in the dorms or even such worthwhile causes as student representation on the Board of Regents. As students we are bound to face the problems of the campus. But beyond the campus the problems are larger, more complex and far more serious. And the problems outside of our academic sphere will not be solved by logic, reasoning and philosophic truth. It is up to students to change the environment they find themselves in and it is up to non-students to change the rest. If we allow society to concern themselves only with what the students on our campuses are doing there is no hope for any meaningful change in the society as a whole as long as we let students carry the burden of the anti-war issue or the other vital questions that we place, the movement is doomed for a student's outlook is narrow and his concerns are limited. Don't look back with nostalgia on these university days as a final fling of freedom and action for students have no monopoly on activism and by its very nature, student activism is not the kind that will ultimately make any difference. The university is a training ground for many things. Mostly, however, it is a session in developing powers of observation and developing a critical outlook and a resistance to the devices that those in power use to lull the people into passivity. For the forces that move the university leaders are the same that move national leaders. I have spent the better part of the last two years trying to point the finger at hypocrisy, mismanagement, and unconcern as I saw it. The almost daily interactions I had with those who run this university and the information I had access to through the student newspaper taught me much about those forces. I gave me an insight to the motives and mannerisms of those who assume control of other people. I'm sure many people got tired of listening to my one-track pursuit of the administration. In fact, I can think of about a half a dozen journalism majors which the school will be quite happy to get rid of. But the university cannot graduate its problems away by getting rid of those who choose to talk about them. Let's

not fool ourselves into thinking that the problems here are the ones that will be important when we graduate and leave the university. The graduating student activists would do well to divorce themselves from the student movement and student tactics, for that is not where the solution lies to the rest. This is not to discount the student role in the anti-war or civil rights movements. But even war or racism are not the real problems. They are but products of a system; a giant complex, ingenious, inhuman system that has taken the ideals of this nation and twisted them beyond recognition. So where do we go from here? In the end it comes down to each individual coming to terms with the environment and the society in which he finds himself and having the individual strength to face up to it. It is a frightening thing to have to take responsibility for the state of the world or even for our own actions. But if we deny that responsibility, we are denying our individual worth. In saying that one person can do nothing, we are striking out the very principle upon which this country was founded and that is that every man is unique and does have worth. It is important for the individual to act, to do something about what he sees around him, no matter how small the problem may seem. For if we ignore the small ones, who can expect us to take on the larger ones? Do not depend on the people to rise up and act for you. The great movements of the people are a myth. What good is there in fighting for the rights of the people? Have the people ever fought for you? Don't cry for the poor people of Vietnam whose lives are so cheap in the face of Big Government. Cry for yourself. For it is your own dignity and worth that is assailed by the loss of every human life in that war. Don't act for the people, act for yourself. The activities that we engage in while at a university should be for your own betterment. The battles we fight should be very personal ones for it is not the rights of the student that get violated every day, it is your rights as an individual. It only takes one person to effect changes: one person with his eyes open and a mouth big enough to tell the truth as he sees it. It was your individual initiative that got you that diploma you are holding in your hand right now. No people earned that for you. So, don't waste it on them; use it for yourself. And do not trust those who say they are only working for the good of the people. So many of this university's shortcomings are due to the public insistence, of its officials, that they really care about the people, in this case, the students. They feel compelled to form committees, agencies and activities for the students but, their actions have shown, time and again, that it is not the students they are interested in at all. The university is a well-organized company and the only purpose of its junior and senior executives is to keep the boss happy. If there are complaints from the consumers for an improved product, they may make minor concessions, but only to keep the rabble quiet. So why do they keep up the pretense of working for the students? It would certainly be easier to cope with them if their intentions were out in the open. But instead, it is shrouded in the appearance of the business-like activity. Excellence in the classroom and all that it implies may be the stated purpose for their jobs but judging from the way those jobs are performed, education in the classroom must have a very low priority, indeed. To cut costs, they suggest cutting class offerings by one third. For, supposedly, administrative cuts would have a negligible effect on the budget. Even the student union building is not that at all. It is a business investment with a money making potential. Students are important to that building only in the amount of money they can spend there. So let's not kid ourselves; they didn't much care about us when we were passing through this university and the powers that be outside of this university don't care much either. So, we've got to care about ourselves and we've got to take on the responsibility of fighting our

own battles for no one will take them for us. The administrators of this university are pursuing their own interests, so why shouldn't we?" Here the tape cuts out.