

Wayne Aspinall and Lowell Thomas speak at the commencement exercises at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, Alaska in May, 1962

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SIDE A

Opening prayer.

President Wood welcomes everyone to the 40th commencement exercises at the University of Alaska. He reads one of the letters of congratulations he has received. He talked about the land-grant college system and how it has revolutionized education in the world. He introduced Wayne N. Aspinall. Wayne said he was glad to return to Alaska after eleven years and talks about Alaska achieving statehood status. He discussed the success of the land-grant college. It denotes a group of sixty-eight educational institutions which were founded and developed under an education program which celebrates its one hundred year anniversary in 1962. The first college in the United States was a public institution. He talked about the history of colleges in Colorado. The United States was the first country to introduce the idea of a land-grant college system to the world. He talked about the reasons why President Buchanan vetoed the act at first. In 1862 the congress voted for the land grant bill that President Lincoln signed into law. The purpose of the law was for endowment, support and maintenance of at least one college. There are now 58 total land-grant colleges. The act was first intended for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts but encouraged a much broader liberal education for all. He talked about well-known politicians and military leaders who have received degrees from land-grant colleges. He concluded with comments about the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

President Wood introduces Lowell Thomas. Lowell Thomas talked about receiving a letter from a professor in Florida who wanted a copy of his speech. He also had a request from UAF asking what his subject for his speech was which he didn't have. He said he planned to write his speech on the plane up to Alaska. He talked about changing his speech as he sat on the stage during the earlier ceremonies. He talked about the origin of the written speech. He said it came with the electronic era. He never learned the technique of writing speeches. He has long been interested in aviation. He had a list of the most important flights to the history of man. First, the flight of the Orville brothers in 1903, second, the first flight around the planet, third man's first flight in exploration, Noel Wien played a part in that, fourth, the breaking of the sound barrier, and fifth, man's first orbit around the Earth. He talked about Donald Douglas and his part in the first flight around the planet. They used four planes to attempt the flight around the world all named after cities in the United States. It took them nearly six months to make the flight. They spent a month in Alaska. They made seven stops along the Alaskan coast. They left from Santa Monica. One of the most dramatic incident occurred in Alaska. The planes were flying from Seward to Dutch Harbor. They flew into rough weather. Major Martin slammed into a mountainside. Washington assumed they were dead. Twelve days later the accident survivors walked out to a cannery on Bristol Bay. The other three planes went on with the flight.

Lowell Thomas first came to Alaska forty-eight years ago. He knew Dick Richardson who was a man of triumph and spirit. He talked about Hubert Wilkins.