

ORAL HISTORY 00-00-43 SIDE A

Bernt Balchen and Henry D. Schmitz speak at the commencement exercises at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, Alaska in 1954

Series title: University of Alaska Fairbanks commencement addresses and exercises

Installation of Dr. Patty as the third president of the University of Alaska.

Elmer Rasmuson talks about being filled with memories. He talks about the commencement from a year ago. He said the board of regents was about to choose a new president. It is probably the most important thing that a board of regents is required to do: select a president. The president is first a leader. It is a leadership more demanding than any other walk of life. Presidents of universities constitute a class by themselves. They have the responsibilities of spending huge sums of money, choosing faculty of diverse interest, appreciate and distinguish between the needs and desires of the student body, and in a land-grant university the president must be conscious of his public trust and legislative treatment. They must have a high dedication. He told a story about Dr. Lowell who was president of Harvard. He talked about the choice of president a year before. One of the speakers last year was the first dean of mining. He was an Alaskan and was the choice of the regents for the president of the University of Alaska, Dr. Patty. The speaker officially installs Dr. Patty as president of the University of Alaska.

Dr. Patty addresses the crowd. He said he appreciates the confidence that the board of regents has placed in him. He talked about the value of the young people who were students at the university. He said we are entering a new atomic era and within their lifetime decisions will be made to use it to destroy or remake the world. Science and engineering have made tremendous advances in the past few years. Many other fields have been outdistanced. He talked about people devoting time to the affairs of their country. He talked about public service.

Elmer Rasmuson introduces Colonel Bernt Balchen. Colonel Balchen is grateful to be invited to give one of the commencement speeches. He is proud to have been a resident of Alaska. It is similar to his home country of Norway. He was involved in the rescue mission of the 1925 Amundsen expedition when he was one of the search pilots. He said this affected his life. He later participated in expeditions in the Arctic and the Antarctic. He talked about his time during WWII. He became more infatuated with the Arctic. He talked about the early pilots of Alaska and the history of aviation in the Arctic. He discussed about the strategic position of the Arctic and high north and defense of our country. The coldest spot of the northern hemisphere may be the hot spot. Direct flights from Europe were expected soon.

Dr. Henry D. Schmitz is introduced. He is the president of the second largest company in the state of Washington. Dr. Schmitz talked about the cordial relationship between the University of Alaska and the University of Washington. He and Dr. Patty both attended the University of Washington. He talked about the significance of commencement day. He also congratulated the

parents of the graduates. He discussed the term commencement and its meaning. He said the graduates should be mindful of the unique opportunities and responsibilities that are theirs in the Territory of Alaska. He hopes they will measure up to these opportunities and privileges. He hopes they will never forget their responsibilities to the university. In the future many of the graduates will occupy positions of responsibility. Dr. Schmitz talked about recent criticism of the education system and the history of higher education in the United States and its purpose. The establishment of the University of Illinois was instrumental in the beginning of the land-grant college. The passage of the land-grant act in 1862 was a milestone in education in the United States and in the world. It resulted in land grant institutions like the University of Alaska. Higher education was available for the masses. He talked about the criticisms of public colleges. For more than ninety years public colleges have served America's needs effectively. He has faith that the American people will continue to support the idea of public universities. The University of Alaska opened its doors to students in 1922 and in 37 years it has made more rapid progress than any other university in the United States. Much of this progress is due to Charles Bunnell. UA has justified the support that the people of Alaska have given it. Under President Patty's leadership it will continue to do so. He said there were great possibilities for the students of the university in the state of Alaska. He asked the students to have faith in various aspects.

The candidates for degrees are asked to rise and presented to President Patty. Diplomas are presented to Alfhild Kjorstad, Brooke Marston, Kay Morgan, Michael Harabee, Eusebio Urbano, L. Frank Cross, Allie Murphy, Irvine Edward Fairbanks, Donald Graves, Robert Hinman, John Harding, Leonard Isberg, Nancy Loftus, John Ickles, Karl Roberts, Higgins Stanley, Donald Stein, Richard Zagers, Richard Gregor, Douglas Huber and James Brooks.

ROTC candidate's commissions are presented

An honorary degree is presented to Bernt Balchen. End of tape