

01-77-03

Dr. Ernest Patty is remembered by Ann Tremarello, Charles Keim and two unidentified people
1976?

Ann Maxwell Tremarello talks about her memories of Dr. Patty. She said they arrived in the same year. It was his second time around. When Dr. Patty became president of the university in 1953 she was a freshman. All during the four years she was at the university he was much a part of the student life. They all knew him very well and he knew them by their names. He was very friendly and they had occasions to visit his home. Her husband, Joe Tremarello, was a member of the basketball team. In 1957-58 the team had a successful trip outside of Alaska. They were gone for a couple of weeks. Dr. Patty and Mrs. Patty were at the airport to see the team off. They invited her for a meal while her husband was gone. They were warm and friendly. The interviewer asked her about the enrollment. She said there were about 350 when she started at the university. His office was located in the Eielson Building. He would make it a point to be out at all the functions with his wife.

An unidentified man talks about his memories of Dr. Patty. He said Patty had a keen insight into people and opportunities within the territory of Alaska. The opportunities could be given to young men and women receiving a higher education in Alaska. The very fact that he came as a member of a new higher education institution that had never operated before indicated his type of thinking. He accepted challenges. There's a story often told by Dr. Patty. On his trip coming to Fairbanks he met his fellow travelers on the boat. He didn't know much about the college. There were suggestions to get off at Juneau or other places and seek employment rather than going into the unknown. This did not deter Dr. and Mrs. Patty. When they arrived at Fairbanks he was one of six faculty members. There were six students. They located a place to live. Transportation between Fairbanks and the college was by walking along the railroad tracks or riding the railcars. Grouse would be encountered while walking. This led to hunting trips which supplemented the food situation. Funds for salaries were not available the first few months. The business people in Fairbanks gave them credit. The speaker said he met Dr. Patty in 1934 when he arrived as a student in the School of Mines. At that time Dr. Patty was dean of the college and head of the School of Mines. Dr. Bunnell left for an extended stay in Juneau so Dr. Patty assumed the deanship. The speaker said he took a class from Dr. Patty. Dr. Patty was a stimulating and inspired teacher. The interviewer, Phil, asked about Dr. Patty's influence. The unidentified speaker said his mind was made up before he arrived at the college. After taking a class from Dr. Patty his interest was further stimulated. The interviewer asked about Dr. Patty's innovations. The speaker said he used initiative when he used airplanes for fieldtrips. Arrangements were made for students in geology to take flights to view first hand geologic features. He discussed the practice of Dr. Patty to remove the overburden and expose the gravels. This would be exposed to the atmosphere and start thawing without points and water. It is still used to various degrees depending upon the deposit. He never went into the field to work for Dr. Patty, but he gained information through associations and discussions with him. Phil asked about some of the things that Dr. Patty accomplished. The unidentified man said Dr. Patty carried on the traditions of advancing higher education in the state. He gave as many people as possible to study as close to home as possible. He advanced the community college type of instruction within the state. On the Fairbanks campus additional facilities were added that enhanced instruction. He encouraged the expansion of programs consistent with student interests at that time. Dr. Patty offered instruction to the

practical prospector. He designed mining short courses. Men from the field would come onto the campus and spend up to six months studying. It was a great advantage to the people out in the field. Phil asked about any favorite stories. The unidentified man talked about the “eruption” of the Brooks Range. It started out with several students talking in a coffee shop. There had been a true eruption in the Alaska Peninsula and students were looking forward to observe the eruption. The transportation didn’t come through. Pete Russell made a claim that the Brooks Range was erupting. The story spread. The interest in going to the Brooks Range grew. The hoax was finally exposed. Phil asked about alcohol on campus. The unidentified man said this was a serious matter for Dr. Patty and he made a decision on the facts that he had. Drinking would be controlled. This led up to the “burying of tradition” on campus. There were a number of events revolving around this.

Phil asked “Bruce” for a story about Dr. Patty. Bruce said it has been thirty years. Phil asked about his influence. Bruce said Dr. Patty was a big influence. He worked for him for nine years right after school. Bruce said he worked in mining over on the Yukon with Dr. Patty. He worked various jobs including mining engineer. Phil said Dr. Patty was innovative with mining techniques in Alaska. Bruce said he was instrumental in stimulating imaginations. He applied techniques and expanded innovations. He was influenced by him. Phil asked about his teaching innovations such as using airplanes for geology fieldtrips. Bruce said the airplane was replacing the dog team and it was natural for Dr. Patty to become involved. Phil asked as a student was he impressed by the airplane. Bruce said he wasn’t. He was pleased to be able to go from place to place by plane.

Phil asked “Ernie” what his relationship was with Dr. Patty. Ernie said that he arrived at the university in 1938 which was about four years after Dr. Patty had left for his mining operation. He heard all about Dean Patty. He was a model mining operator. He showed what could be done with ability. He returned after WWII as president of the university. Ernie said he was an instructor at the university. He said Dr. Patty was very straight forward. Ernie talked about the drying out of the campus. He changed the image of the campus. He talked about engineer’s day on campus. A teacher was attacked personally and professionally in the newspaper. Dr. Patty called a convocation of all the students and faculty and said that there would be no more of that. The two students involved were put on probation and that was the end of that. Ernie said students were always welcomed by Dr. Patty. He still had contact with his students years later. He helped a great number of people. By the 1950s the university wasn’t struggling for its life like earlier. Within the last four years they purchased Dr. Patty’s old mining property. He was very straight forward, but also very understanding.

Bruce said for years Dean Patty recommended open pit mining down at Healy. It wasn’t until the advent of WWII that they actually starting open pit mining. It had been shafts up to that point.

Ernie said that he provided an example of what can be done by people in Alaska to establish mines. In his generation it was believed that this was the best thing a person could do – finding a mine and develop it.

Bruce talked about a fire drill when he was a student. He was encouraged to unroll one of the hoses. He ran down hall and ran into the gymnasium in the Main Building. He was getting ready to go back and water started coming out the hose. He ran over to the window and shoved the hose out the window. He continued shoving the hose out the window and didn’t realize it was going into Dean Patty’s office. Dean Patty was understanding. He said Dr. Patty lived a full life.

Charles Keim said when he got out of the University of Washington in 1950 he told the School of Journalism that he planned to get five more years of experience before he began teaching. He was a news editor. After five years he got an offer from the state of Washington, Arizona and a call from Dr. Patty in Seattle. He was born and raised in Montana. He was accustomed to cold. His wife was not accustomed to the cold. She hardly seemed the type of person to come up to Alaska. Alaska appealed to him. He felt that a new frontier would expose him to challenges and to fulfill a vow to himself that if he was spared by the war that he would try to make it a better world. He felt teaching would enable him to do that. He and his wife were invited to the Patty's new home in Seattle. Dr. Patty asked him why he wanted to teach. He taught while he was in the Army hospital. He felt ready to teach at the university level. Keim said he had to think of his wife and family, too. Dr. Patty said he understood what he wants to do in life and why he wants to do this. He told Keim to take a look at him and now he felt that he was entitled to slow down, but he accepted the presidency at the University of Alaska. Dr. Patty told Keim he could do the same. Keim said he got up to Alaska and became acquainted with Dr. Patty. Keim taught at the university and was the director of the information office. He was familiar with Dr. Patty's successes and problems. Alaska was changing from territory to state. Dr. Patty was very strong in his support for statehood. They talked about having the Constitutional Convention on the campus. It would focus attention on the campus. They had the library and facilities. They had a new student union. The Constitutional Convention did take place on campus. It did help the university and helped them come up with a good constitution. They were geographically the center of the territory. Dr. Patty had terrible struggles getting funds. The territory had a small population. There were tremendous demands for limited funds all over the territory. The Alaska Public Works Program was established which provided the university with matching funds for the construction of dormitories. Dr. Patty recognized that in order to enlarge the student body and to get the support for the student body that they had to have more students. Dr. Patty concentrated on building dorms and programs. Many people have said that each of the presidents came along at the right time. Dr. Patty was a builder of buildings, but also a builder of programs. Keim talked about Dr. Patty's inaugural address. It was titled "Be bold." Dr. Patty said one must be bold, you can't just sit back and watch the world go by. He recognized that a leader has to march out in front and sets the pace. Keim said that President Patty had the vision to recognize that people do follow a good leader. Keim talked about Dean William Cashen. Keim and Cashen designed the bronze plaques around campus including Bunnell's plaque. Keim said Dr. Patty was a practical idealist and he believed that the greater good had to prevail. Dr. Patty knew Alaskans. He worked with them a long time. Dr. Patty wanted support from Alaskans when he came back to Alaska. He was a very humane man. Keim said he was sensitive to other people and deeply attached to his family. Dr. Patty always spoke highly of his wife, Kathryn. Kathryn Patty supported him as a wife and contributed to the university. Charles Keim said just as the buildings on the campus became the center for teaching research and public service Kathryn Patty turned the president's residence into a classroom, laboratory, and a home for students, faculty, administration and all the stray Alaskans who came to the center of the state and the university for whatever possible reason.