

**Call number: 01-80-01 PT. 1**

**Name: William R. Wood with Paul McCarthy**

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**Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen**

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**Notes: Original on 7-inch reel. Master copy on CD.**

Paul McCarthy introduces the recording with William R. Wood that is done in order to talk about his first 11 years at the University of Alaska. Paul asks Dr. Wood about the goals he had for his presidency. Wood says he came to Alaska because he wanted to and he was fortunate to have the opportunity. He had tried to come to Alaska previously too and the first time was when he was just out of College in late 1920s. He applied to teach in rural schools but there was a surplus of teachers and he didn't get selected. Later, he was in Washington D.C. where he learned that the presidency was open in early 1950s. He applied and got the job.

3:32 He had the rare opportunity – last one in the whole nation – to set up a comprehensive higher educational development for an entire state. All the other states had had already developed in variety of ways and Wood was going to try out some of his own ideas on how to build a whole state system of higher education. Wood thought that Alaska was an exciting place because of the size of the state, scarcity of population, and the proximity to Asia and Europe.

5:37 Wood tells that he has changed his aim throughout the years and the thing that has been the most exciting for him was the necessity of establishing a comprehensive state-wide system of higher education. Wood has come to see the vital position that Alaska holds in world affairs, it being on top of North Pacific, at the junction of North Europe, North America, and Northeast Asia.

Wood predicts that in the next century, accommodations between the East and the West are going to be made in the Pacific area. If it can't be accomplished, the whole world will suffer. The Asian nations are rising in importance and "we" must work with them and not against them.

8:07 Paul says that one of the themes of Wood's presidency has been the function of the University on the North Pacific Rim, and he asks how the University of Alaska and Wood himself have devoted their energy to solving the problems. Wood answers that first the university has to assist in bringing Alaska into

prominence. That would mean developing Alaska's people and turning the spotlight on the centrality of Alaska in the development of the relations between East and West.

Beyond training people to the positions in public service and business, they must also have an attitude among Alaskans that they are the people who bring others together. The University must reflect that in its instruction and attitudes toward world affairs. They can't be too narrowly partisan or nationalistic in their outlook.

10:40 A man's voice asks if Dr. Wood feels like that can be accomplished through education at University of Alaska. Wood says that they must provide great research that is used as basis for their other considerations. They are well on their way in developing their expertise but they have a lot to do.

It is difficult to conceive of what needs to happen and Wood wants the old disciplines to produce "the man of the world," who sees things in broad context. One of the ways in which University could develop this is to establish a North Pacific Cultural Center that would gather arts, philosophies, and languages.

13:49 Paul says that Wood has worked with presidents of universities in Southeast Asia, and asks how Wood feels about his personal contribution to that relationship. Wood says that he has stirred some interest and hopes that he will continue doing so, although he thinks that greater minds than his will come after, and draft the broad outlines of action.

Paul asks if Wood feels that the development of University of Alaska system is carrying out what he envisioned. Wood says that the most significant thing that they did was the adoption of Stanford Plan in which they deliberately broke up the old concept of college and went out to gain visibility for certain disciplines, and for tying theoretical and practical up into one community of interest.

They wanted enthusiastic leadership and development. They tied teaching with anthropology, sociology and so on, in order to train people in particular professions, and they did the same with engineering field. They tied journalism with humanities, and business with political science, government and history.

18:02 They did that after a study that was done by the entire faculty that were formed into 16 committees. The committees met virtually every week and they came up with a basic proposal that gave University of Alaska the chance to break out from the traditional shell that they were in. They also saved some administrative costs. There had been 10 divisions and 40 different departments of

instruction within a very fragmented, single college. They combined the 40 disciplines into 30 and combined the 10 divisions into 6 colleges. Now they should look back to see if they could recombine some more things.

The important thing was to keep the theoreticians and practitioners in the same general effort.

In the early stage, which [unclear] had seen the establishment of community colleges around the state. That was intended to develop outreach from university to state so that they would truly be a state institution rather than a local institution. They have exceeded the expectations.

20:37 At Statehood, which was a year before Wood begun his presidency, they had probably no more than 1,200 students and an effort was made to have people enroll in correspondence courses. Now they have 12,000 students working toward academic degrees and the great development has happened outside of the main campus, although the main campus has grown to nearly 3,000 students. Out in the state their enrollment has grown from about 400 to 9,000 or more.

They had a thirst for knowledge and education in Alaska, and they absorbed everything that was poured to them. They are geared up “in this campus” to take care of 50% of annual high school graduates, and the percentage is even less on other campuses. The percentage is increasing each year, and the University of Alaska has to bring their program up to national level of being able to admit 75% of their high school graduates. Their ability for taking in students is increasing. [Wood continues talking about their need to meet higher enrollment.]

24:27 Paul says that that he was surprised by the portion of Alaskans who “are touched” by the university through correspondence courses and such. He says that that must seem like an enviable record to other universities. Wood says that he feels a level of satisfaction because of that. Since the first day of its operation, UAF has had some off-campus programs, like the mining extension that has been popular throughout the years. They also have had agricultural and home-making extensions and such, but they have been minimal.

At the moment, University of Alaska is reaching annually at least 20,000-24,000 different Alaskans with some form of instruction. They reach even more through their public service and research. They also reach people through their radio station, concerts, and publications. Wood says that their reach extends to a significant portion of Alaskans, although he doesn't know the exact numbers.

27:14 Every year more and more requests come, asking them to provide some kind of special service while at the same time Wood gets more and more pressure about why they spend so much money. There is a price to the services and that falls on general tax payers.

Paul asks if Wood feels that parents are encouraged to send their children to the University because of the outreach, and if that is why Wood wants the University of Alaska to take care of its own high school graduates. Wood says that they aren't doing as much with parents as they should. They assume that the best recruiting device is good teaching in the classroom. They try to provide student services on their campuses, like housing and activities that give the students a total learning environment that compliments their instruction.

30:04 Paul asks if provincialism has significantly limited Wood's execution of programs. He says he thinks that University of Alaska is the most cosmopolitan university in which he has served. Their faculty has at least 25 different nationalities represented.

Wood went to a picnic with their Indian community and there were at least 50 people at the picnic. Wood has also had dinners with faculty members whose wives were from different countries. [Talking about their international relations and international conferences.]

Their cosmopolitan faculty has an effect to the students, and the number of students from other countries have increased too.

32:40 Wood thinks that while their student body shows maturity beyond what is typical of many other campuses, it is also quite cosmopolitan. Furthermore, Alaska isn't very provincial as a whole. Wood says that if one wants to have an exciting experience, they should go to a Pioneers [of Alaska] annual convention and see that they are very broad-gauged.

Paul wonders if Wood feels pressured by citizens groups to bring university to a certain direction. Wood says that the University is a statewide system but there's no rivalry between communities. The major communities need adequate facilities and through them, the smaller communities and community colleges develop. They are trying to avoid the notion that one place should receive more attention than some other. The headquarters will always be in College [the town adjacent to Fairbanks where UAF campus resides]. They will have to have major developments in Anchorage and Juneau to meet their local and regional needs.

Fairbanks campus will be the center for environmental studies, although studies are done also in other communities. There is some national and international research in Fairbanks, including European Satellite Corporation that operates at Gilmore Creek. Fairbanks is the geographic location for understanding the environment of the north.

36:14 Paul mentions that every president has to go to the legislature every year and asks Wood how he feels his relationship with the legislature has evolved over the past 11 years. Wood says he thinks it has deteriorated. They have had fine support from the legislature for all the time he has been in the office, and only one year out of the eleven, the legislature didn't increase the governor's budget recommendation for the university. The governor has always concurred.

Their relationships have always been very good. Of course they have been subjects to attack. Every time when a student group "goes on a deep end about something," it has an effect on the budget effort, and every time an individual faculty member exercises the right to effect the budget while keeping their name associated with the University, the university "gets slugged." If someone does something that irritates the public, immediately the governor and the legislative leaders know about it since Alaska is such a small place. Wood will learn about it only after that.

38:43 They have had a great break in the state, and that is to have a critical but stable press who have given University of Alaska enormous coverage and editorial support. The fact that Alaskans believe in education, unlike some other populations in USA, has only increased as the University has become more visible. Part of that effort has been that "we" have been helping people where they are rather than being "the castle on the hill." They have decentralized and taken education where it's convenient for the people. They do something for people who will support them in their part.

The key to their support has been to take the University to the people rather than asking the people to come to them.

41:15 Paul says that some critics at the legislature have been highly vocal and asks Wood to discuss their differing opinion as a philosophical difference. He says that the overriding consideration is always the political one and if something that has a long-standing success, like motherhood, gets attacked, the attacker is going to have his name on the paper. In last decades, if anyone opposed the university, they didn't get re-elected and the politicians knew that. There was a saying that one shouldn't touch the university because it is "a motherhood issue."

Wood says it isn't a motherhood issue but the University has to stand on its own merits of whether it provides a service that people are willing to pay for or not. It is inevitable that somebody is eventually going to attack the university to gain publicity.

43:12 Then there is lack of information about the university. There is also a remembrance of how college was when the legislators were in college. People [legislators] haven't needed to understand higher education and its contribution for living in Alaska. Legislators remember more of the things that went wrong than things that were good. Wood tells that politically, one negative voice in the legislature will offset 16 positive ones.

In recent years, there has been more than one negative voice. They are a result of lack of understanding of higher education, which Wood and his staff are going to remedy by spending more time explaining the university to the legislators. Part of the outcry against the University in some corners of the legislature has come from desire "to gain political preferment among ones constituents." They want to use the monies from higher education to further projects in their own locality. It's a political matter and all the presidents will have to deal with the issue.

45:46 Paul asks if Wood feels that [unclear] relationship with the governor's office has been better in terms of party [?], personality of the governor, or his understanding of higher education. Wood says that that is a difficult question, but he has had a warm and friendly relationship with the governors. Wood questions if any of the governors have looked at the university as the university looks at itself.

Wood's experience with political parties has been that both parties, house, and the senate have supported the university, but all of them, on occasion, have also attacked the university.

The ability to know the chief executive of the state on personal basis has been very important in Wood's mind and they share mutual respect.

47:56 Wood says that they have a very strong board of regents and that causes some disgruntlement in the legislature because they like to dictate to the president of the university who should be hired and who fired. Some of them go as far as telling people what courses they shouldn't teach and what equipment they should buy.

[Recording ends abruptly.]