

Call number: 01-80-01 PT. 2

Name and place: William R. Wood interviewed by Paul McCarthy

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

William R. Wood continues his interview with Paul McCarthy. He says that the single most important thing is the strength of the board of regents. There have been almost ceaseless attempts, some from the people who work at the executive branch of the government and the people working for the legislative branch, to tell the University how to do things. One time Wood had a note on his desk that told him to fire somebody.

They have aroused some frustration in individuals in the legislature and there have been attacks made upon the backbone of the state university system by the way that they have tried to break the university into smaller bits so they could have more direct impact on those bits.

2:30 All of the three governors have appointed as many from the rival party as they have from their own party, which speaks well for their objectivity. That has been one of the most encouraging things about coming "here," and it must continue unless they want to make higher education into a political football game.

Paul asks if Wood's career as a basketball player and a coach, dodging, ducking, and attacking, has been helpful to Wood as a president. He tells that he looks back upon the years of being in competitive sports as having been very valuable for him. [Talks more about his experience in sports.] If one can teach, that shows on the play floor. His experience in coaching was valuable and his time in playing was valuable for understanding human psychology.

6:00 Wood talks about Rudyard Kipling's story about polo game called Maltese Cat that illustrates all human conditions that might happen in competitive sports. In sports, all emotions are accentuated and that's why sports experience is a good learning situation for an administrator.

8:16 Paul says that one of the things that has been in the news has been the relationship with Alaska Methodist University [AMU] and University of Alaska, Anchorage. He asks if Wood thinks they are competing with the Methodist University. Wood says they have upheld them but they have made a great effort in resisting marginalization.

For a private institution of higher learning to succeed, it must have some touch of realism and they have to determine exactly what they want to do and for how many people. They must have a unique approach that the public institutions couldn't do as well in the same manner. Methodist University has not done that. They have followed what worked for the University of Alaska without being able to take in all the students.

Wood tells that every student spends more money from the university than they pay in tuitions and a university needs a good budget in order to keep going. [Wood talks more about how private universities can thrive by being different from state universities, and he also sees a possibility for AMU to collaborate with UAA.]

15:18 Paul asks if Wood could envision system like in Canada where religious colleges are [Wood starts talking]. Wood says he'd like to see that and what he has seen that in Australia and New Zealand. He'd love somebody [a religious group] to take over the dormitories. The instruction they have is mostly in ethics, moral living, and religion, and they don't really get into the sciences but just run dining, dormitories, and athletic programs. They don't compete with institutions.

Paul asks how Wood sees the development of the university in Anchorage and if AMU has slowed development of things like the law school. Wood says that they have been slowed down to the point of embarrassment simply because they haven't been able to get a place to build buildings in. Wood says that they need buildings with top-quality equipment to get people to work for them and without top-quality faculty they won't have outstanding programs or revenue. That's why they need adequate facilities first.

18:15 Wood continues that they have been held up for 10 years on getting the land that they want in Anchorage because the Methodists who lived outside of Alaska paid for AMU's land in a spot that UA wanted. Now they [the legislature] are

blaming Wood for not being able to serve the students in Anchorage due to lack of facilities and programs.

Paul asks if the problem is that programs like nursing are very expensive. Wood says that they could have done it properly if they had followed the formula of finding the unique functions.

20:43 Paul says that the University seems to be free from the [unclear] conflicts that have wrecked other universities. Paul asks if Wood's personal involvement with the society has been valuable in creating at least some understanding of the university among local population. Wood answers that there has been close association between him, Mrs. Wood, and the community, and he thinks that it has been on truly unselfish basis. On the other hand, they knew that if they would help people, people would support them.

Their faculty has been involved with the community to a significant extent. Wood says they have a segment of the faculty who almost ignore the community. People who do something for others are the ones who find support when they have ambitions or needs.

23:03 The University has provided something in last several years for the community that the community couldn't provide for itself: a cultural center. The library of humanities and fine arts did more for Fairbanks than it did for the university but it's the heart of the educational setting at UAF.

Secondly, the University has provided a core for the scientific community. The emergence of great research institutes has drawn in federal institutions. As a result, they have a pool of scientific and technological expertise that makes Fairbanks a unique community in the North, which benefits Fairbanks.

It's important that when there is a great need for scientists elsewhere, they have run ads in Fairbanks.

Third thing is that they have been increasingly the main portion of the economic base. Wood isn't sure but he thinks that 1/3 people in Fairbanks depend almost wholly on the University for their livelihoods. They put a million to two million dollars per month to the economy and they are the biggest single impact to the economy, airlines and the military being the other two.

26:30 The university is also an added expense to the community that has to do things on a little bit different plane. They need better stocked stores, better restaurants and hotels, better transportation and so on. It's a mixed blessing for the community and the good things mentioned are offset with the cost of getting them and the taxes in Fairbanks would be much lower if the University wasn't there.

Paul says that most college president aren't celebrated by their respective townspeople but Wood is. Wood tells an anecdote from his childhood: When he was a boy, they moved from a farm to a rented farm and later bought a farm. They moved in February and Wood got to stay out of school and help his family with moving. They got plenty of help and Wood got a lesson from his father that one never knows what his neighbors think of him until he is ready to move. [Laughter.] "They are always glad to help you on your way." Wood thinks that that's the same thing with local interest.

30:44 Paul asks what Wood sees as the major direction for the University in following years and where he sees their budget coming from. Wood says that the question is difficult to answer and, with the increasing population, the University will have to move up on the priority list of the state. Wood thinks they have to find ways of increasing instruction and they may have to cut off some of their special programs to stick with fundamentals. They need larger professional productivity from teaching faculty by means of having an educational TV station, students studying independently and so on. [Listing other means.]

One of the most significant things that may happen to them is to have a lower division community college type of a system and then the upper division program that would start from sophomore year. People who can meet the educational qualifications will come directly from high school into the program and will get their bachelor's degree in 3 years while others could take a technician type of a training. They could decide to leave it at that or enter the academic disciplines. That would reduce time in which academically qualified students can earn their baccalaureates.

34:20 Also, education is increasingly seen as a thing that spans over a person's lifetime. They do education every month of the year and reserve September and January for special programs with serious teaching starting in October so that the

fishing and construction seasons would be over by that time. Lot more people could graduate in 3-3.5 calendar years at the convenience of the individual.

37:10 This would be a change to the rigid pattern with which the University schedules its classes where it has 50 minute class and 10 minute break. [Wood talks more about his ideas of restructuring class patterns.]

41:08 Paul thanks Mr. Wood for the recording.

[End of the recording.]