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Elizabeth and Robert W. Hiatt

Reg Emmert and Paul McCarthy, interviewers

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One of the interviewers asked Mrs. Hiatt if it was difficult to be a president's wife and also a chancellor's wife. Mrs. Hiatt talked about her role on the campus. [most of this section of the tape is muffled] She talked about a project she worked on while they were living in Hawaii and serving on a committee in Fairbanks.

One of the interviewers asked Dr. Hiatt about working with the various state agencies. Dr. Hiatt said this had its origin in the idea that the university should related to Alaska and Alaskans. He said Alaska has the potential for being the largest fishery in the nation and discovered that the university was not doing anything related to the fisheries. He engaged Clifton Atkinson to come up to Alaska and do a study about how the university could help the fisheries program. They discovered that the Fish and Game did not have a single person from the University of Alaska. All of them came from the lower forty-eight states. They developed a plan for fisheries education. They thought it had to be compatible with federal and state requirements so they would employ the graduates from the University of Alaska. Dr. Hiatt talked with Jim Brooks who was a Commissioner with the Department of Fish and Game and with Harry Reach who was the head of the local division of the National Marine Fisheries Service. He wanted to determine what kind of people needed to be trained and what programs the graduate students needed to study that fit in with fishery management in the state. He, Jim Brooks and Harry Reach decided to also include someone from the governor's office and a representative from the legislature. They meet about three times a year. They have developed analysis of research going on in the state. With all of this information they developed a fisheries program that utilizes the whole state system to support it. There was a fisheries technology program at Kodiak including fish processing and technical aspects of fishing. In Juneau they have established the fisheries science program. It is the headquarters of the federal Marine Fisheries and the state Fish and Game. They are trying to get a freshwater fisheries unit on the campus. He said this is a non-political group. He said this is part of an effort to develop education in the state.

One of the interviewers asked about his style of leadership. Dr. Hiatt said since this is a statewide system and he was given the job of putting it together in a coordinated fashion he had to think about how the college president would function. He said people who are in charge of programs like to feel that they are in charge. When they decided to set up the three separate campuses each with their own chancellor he wanted each chancellor to feel they were in charge. He talked about Cutler, Lindhauer, and Ferguson. He feels it is better to have a high degree of autonomy.

One of the interviewers asked if he feels uncomfortable to be on campus when there was also a chancellor on campus. He said when he came here students and faculty were used to going right

to Dr. Wood's office. Earl Beistline had been named provost and was being bypassed by the faculty and students. He had to set up a section in the hallway that had "statewide system" on it. After a while everyone got used to going to Chancellor's office. He said trying to move out of the Bunnel building to the Chapman building was criticized. He wanted to physically separate the statewide system.

Question from one of the interviewers about regions and politics. Dr. Hiatt said other states have had polarization by region. He said what we have in Alaska is not unique. He talked about the different regions. He thinks Fairbanks will grow and develop. He said Anchorage is strategically located. He believes there will be regional concerns. He talked about getting money for the Fairbanks campus. He said the regional problem would always be here.

Mrs. Hiatt talked about her different roles in the places she has lived.

One of the interviewers asked him about the financial aspect of his job. Hiatt said distribution of decision-making in the power of the various units made it difficult made it more difficult to handle a financial problem. It was difficult to communicate adequately. He said with the campuses so spread-out problems were to be expected. He said for a system to run correctly the system has to be manned better. When money is in short supply there is a cry to not put money into administration but rather to put it in the programs. Dr. Hiatt said you need the support personnel, too. He said they got out of balance. Dr. Hiatt said when he first came to meet with the regents there was never a mention of financial problems. He began to detect a problem after he had been here for a year or so. Most university presidents are selected because they have some kind of academic credential and not for their financial skills. At the end of each year there was an auditor's report. He has never seen a status report. He wasn't worried because there was an auditor's report every year. He said the regents would go over them. He talked about difficulty with their old computer system. They contracted with a company that would develop a general ledger. Then their payroll system broke down. There was a decision to go to a bi-weekly system at the same time. He talked about the advantages and disadvantage of a bi-weekly system. They got into a series of problems and that delayed the development of their general ledger. He became aware of the problem until he heard that all of their state funds had been drawn and they would be out of money in April. He worked on a solution to the problem down in Juneau. He suggested that they leave it in a benign state. The legislators pounced on it. The regents sacrificed the president. He said the state is moving in on the university's governance. Dr. Hiatt said this is a dangerous thing. He hopes that the regents do not sell out their rights to govern the university as a separate board.