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Olaus Murie talks at a meeting of the Tanana Valley Sportsmen's Association on August 14, 1955 in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Fairbanks, Alaska

Olaus Murie said what he has to say about the Brooks Range is somewhat hard to say. A lot of people Outside think of the Arctic as a not very interesting place except for dramatic events. He said people like the audience who promote proper sportsmanship understand the outdoors. The Conservation Foundation of New York sponsored his expedition over the past summer. He said he is president of the Wilderness Society. The Society promotes areas where people can go and get away into the out of doors. People are beginning to realize that that kind of enjoyment of the out of doors is a needed element of our civilization.

There were several other people in the expedition including Brina Kessel. Dr. Buckley led the expedition. They collected specimens and made observations of the area. Brina Kessel marked out plots for long term study. She was a good field person. Robert Currier was part of the team. George Saller was also on the team and hiked to the Hula River and the east fork of the Chandalar. He and his wife left the group for five days and hiked up to the Sheenjek River. It was an experience they will never forget. They were back in the arctic wilderness and there was serenity there. In the early part of the trip Dr. McCloud joined them. He is a busy physician from Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He was very excited about the little experiences in the wilderness. Dr. McCloud is also a skier in Wyoming. He thought the trip was the best in his life.

Justice Bill Douglas and his wife also spent a week with them. They were there during a rainy period. He wanted to climb all of the mountains despite his hip problems. They enjoyed the trip. Murie said when they sat around the fire Justice Douglas told him about his experiences from around the world.

Murie said there is a treasure in the wilderness. He read a letter from Mrs. Douglas.

Murie said they were there from June 1 until last week. The area had a short season. The vegetation was much more advanced than it is here. Being so far north the season is short. He said they loved the lichens and the moss. He said they could feel that the area was for the people. He said there are no keep out signs. It is open for anybody and everybody who wants that kind of experience. He talked about wilderness areas. He said the wilderness program is supported by sportsmen’s clubs throughout America. They support quality rather than numbers. He said the individuals experience should be paramount. We should have a few areas in original condition for those people who like to go into it. The wilderness areas permit hunting, trapping, fishing, and camping. They try to keep out more permanent urban structures. It is not kept from the people. There should be a few areas where there isn’t mass hunting. He said some of the wilderness areas in California are so heavily used that some areas are overgrazed by pack horses. He said when people begin to want these areas the use goes up. In 1948-49

He and his wife and son traveled to New Zealand to study the elk population. He talked about the conditions in the area and his experience there. He said many people were hiking in the mountains on the weekend. They traveled to the Southern Alps which had an introduced European hare problem. He talked about the hunters and gardeners in the area. In Wellington they had a native forest right outside of town.

Olaus Murie said it was wonderful for the Sportsmen's Association to support the scouting organizations. He had written to the Boy Scout organization in New York and told them that the Wilderness Society could bring Explorer Scouts on wilderness trips. He thinks it would be a good experience for the Explorer Scouts. He would like to get young people out to experience the quality experience in the out of doors. Last fall he was invited to Idaho to give a talk to the Bonneville Sportsmen's Jamboree. He said they were all interested in preserving their wilderness areas. He appeared on television while he was there. He said in Montana at a meeting of the Wilderness Society they had visitors from various organizations. They were all for the wilderness program. Olaus Murie said what they are striving for in Alaska is in line with what they are trying to do in other parts of the continent. He has talked with people in Fort Yukon, Fairbanks, Palmer and Anchorage this summer and people are thinking about the proper future of our country. He was in Alaska in 1920. He traveled by dog sled in the Brooks Range. He loved the country then. He said what impresses him most in Alaska is the beauty of the north country. He said Brina Kessel found 86 different kinds of birds above the Arctic Circle. He watched the migration of birds and caribou. They watched 1500 caribou pass by them. He would like to make a plea to designate a few areas like that for public use for the good of humanity. He thought democracy is based on the same principle of evolution and that is diversity. He would like to provide for those who have the ambition and desire to go into the back country to enjoy the nature as it was made originally. He doesn't know when he has been more encouraged by the sentiment found in present-day Alaskans to preserve wilderness.