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**Narrator: William Cashen at the Alumni Association Portland Chapter Meeting**

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**Summary created by: Varpu M Lotvonen**

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**Series: William Cashen Collection**

People are telling stories that relate to the University. First of them relates to the time when the name was changed from Alaska Agricultural College and the School of Mines to University of Alaska. The speaker was the president of the Alumni Association and Dr. Bunnell called him and asked that the Alumni Association requests a name change, which they did.

Another man's voice says it's difficult to recall all the things that happened at the University but his first experience with Dr. Bunnell was when he first went to inquire about the College and the first chap he asked said that the president is at the boiler house. The speaker went down to the boiler house and saw the president helped in shoveling out the remaining sand from the back end of the boiler room so they could put in some wood. They hadn't been able to fire the boiler except for a little bit in the morning to take the chill off. At that time the speaker was about a month late in starting [school].

There was a general small school atmosphere. During the annual meeting of the Grand Jury who would come to visit the University, regardless of what class everybody was having, they had to go down to the chemistry lab because that looked a bit more impressive. Not knowing much about it, since the speaker had only been to school for a month or so, they put a bunch of stuff into the test tubes, and they had smoke going. When the people [from the Grand Jury] looked, everybody was trying to look serious as if they knew something and the speaker thinks that that helped a little to impress on the people that the University was something that was going to stay.

Sometimes it requires a four or five fellows and a bottle of scotch to remember all things. After hearing all the things people have talked about Bunnell, the speaker is still convinced that he put more gray hair on Bunnell's head than anyone and yet they all had great admiration for him because he always had a few dollars to lend, or a friendly advice that they all needed.

Another speaker told that he learned something about coal shoveling, freight handling, barbering, clothes-pressing and a number of other activities "while chasing the dollar." One thing he has always been curious about and never satisfied came when he was in front of the old building and Judge Bunnell and Larry Gasser were standing there on the gravel. Speaker was looking at the wrong direction, but just as he turned it appeared that Judge Bunnell was landing on his feet after a summersault. The speaker

always wondered if he had been an athlete of some sort. "That was about my greatest curiosity in connection of the College."

A woman's voice tells about politics which were "hot and heavy." Bunnell was a Democrat and a lot of the people who were Republican were not in favor of him being the president of the College. The speaker remembers how just after graduation his father came home and said that he had met the father of one of her fellow graduates from the high school. Her father had asked if Jim's father was going to send Jim to college, but he told that the College is not good enough for his son. The speaker didn't see the son in many years, but he stopped by at her house "not too long ago" and so she asked him how long he stayed in the University of Washington. One semester, was his reply.

The rest of them survived the college, which they couldn't have done without Judge Bunnell because all of them "were going on a shoe-string and a darn rotten shoe-string at that." They didn't have any money at all but Bunnell came along with lunch tickets – Mrs. Sullivan had the lunch—and he would put them in their laps. They didn't even have lunch from the bakery, from [?]'s bakery or from [Prieses? Sp?] bakery which Marshan [unclear?] "Eternal, infernal cheese sandwich and one cookie." They sat at the cornerstone and ate their own home-made lunches. The speaker remembers how the Loftus brothers had very interesting concoctions. They had sourdough hot cakes that were spilled [filled?] with mush, and one in a while they would bury it – perhaps they had been to the agricultural college – or they would fill them with cabbage, tastefully put between the sourdough hot cakes. The speaker went more for mustard or ketchup sandwiches. When Dr. Bunnell would come with a handful of lunch tickets to eat something warm inside, it was something that the speaker would never forget.

The speaker played the piano sometimes and they would gather around the piano and sing. Bunnell went to get his trombone and he wanted to be with the all of them and do things they did and it was a privilege. Today campuses are big and nobody "really gives a hoot" about each individual. During the speaker's days at the College, they were important, and needed somebody to help them, and that somebody was mostly Judge Bunnell. A man's voice introduces the speaker to have been Dorothy Roth Loftus, class of 1927.

In 07:15 Jim Ryan introduces himself and tells that he went to the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines in the fall of 1928. He had a catalogue that said that he was the professor of education and psychology, director of athletics, and instructor in physical education. He tried his best to do all those things but sometimes he let his "coat tail going around the corners." One of the things that made a great impression on his life was that he met Dr. Bunnell and came to know and love him as a great man. No one who has been even remotely connected to the University can doubt Bunnell's greatness, whether they went there in 1922 when the school was established, or whether they went there in 1917. His persistence and courage are well known and he was a man of many moods as many people know from first-hand experience. There was no question about who was running the place. If there were any questions, one was soon put right.

The College was very small, as well as the staff. It was customary for Dr. Bunnell to invite each of the faculty members for dinner at least once during the year and it was also a custom that each of the

faculty families would have Dr. Bunnell for dinner and sometimes twice a year. Many times Dr. Bunnell didn't keep too good a record of his social engagements because many a time his secretary Mrs. Keyes called 6pm in the evening and asked if Dr. Bunnell was there, if he was expected there, or if they knew where he was. Oftentimes they knew where he was supposed to be and they would supply the information. Calling was Mrs. Keyes' way of finding out where Dr. Bunnell was supposed to go for dinner.

Jim Ryan continues by saying that the following story might not benefit Cashen's book but it tells about the character and the greatness of a man [Bunnell]. Jim went into the office to see Dr. Bunnell and Mrs. Keyes told that he was tied up for some time, that Judge Wickersham was visiting and they were talking in the office. Judge Wickersham and Dr. Bunnell were not politically on the friendliest terms. Bunnell was a Democrat and Wickersham a Republican when they ran for Delegate to Congress. Jim was talking with Mrs. Keyes when Wickersham and Bunnell came out of the office. Judge Wickersham was saying to Dr. Bunnell: "Nothing, my dear Dr. Bunnell, is dearer to my heart than this College," to which Bunnell replied with a smile: "I know that, Judge Wickersham, I've known that for years." Then they went out into the hall and quickly Dr. Bunnell opened the door, stepped back into the office and closed the door. He looked at Mrs. Keyes and Jim and said with a wink: "That old devil, thinking he can get ahead of me."

Next speaker wants to give a viewpoint of a one who didn't live on the campus or in the dormitories, but "who rather lived in a shack out in the brush." He wouldn't have had a chance to go to school even in those circumstances. He introduces himself as Bob Duncan and he went to school during 1939-1940. He had never realized why he admired Dr. Bunnell so much and why he felt like they had so much in common until the day Bob learnt that Dr. Bunnell was a Democrat. "He just had to be a great guy under those circumstances."

Bob and his friend bummed their way up to Alaska during the Depression and walked from Fairbanks to the campus on one morning and ran into the same chap in muddy boots, still same shovel in his hand, but instead of shoveling sand, he was mucking up something in front of the building. They asked where they can find the president since they want to talk about going to school, to which the man replied that he will be up in a little bit. Directly they met the same old guy with muddy boots, and talked with him for an hour or two. Bunnell explained that he had been an athlete, and that he had caught Christy Mathiesen during the days both of them attended Bucknell in New York. That gave Bunnell and Bob a bond of friendship since Bob thought he was on his way of being a major-league ball player and a catcher. They approached the campus and noticed at a foot of "those big, long, step" and old shack that looked like a tool shack in a place where there is now a four-lane highway. They laughed and wondered why somebody hadn't burned it up but thanks to Dr. Bunnell, in about two hours Ted Cox and he were living in it. They stayed there for the winter. There were others too: Ernie Wolf, Ray Smith and Loyd were living back on Dead Man's Slough in an old cabin, again put up by kindness of Dr. Bunnell.

Dr. Bunnell asked them to work at the Eielson Building which is now to be torn down. Their job was to salvage the lumber that was used for form, in order to save shipping lumber from the states. They got all the nails pulled out and then Dr. Bunnell asked them to take it inside and out of the weather. When it was all neatly stacked, he came and said he had made a mistake and that the lumber needed to go up

on the third floor by which point the boys doubted his sanity. They moved lumber up on the third floor but Bunnell came and said: "I don't know what's the matter with me, I'm just not planning well. It's gotta get down to the second floor!" It wasn't until many years later when Bob realized that Bunnell didn't care much for where the lumber was stacked. He was keeping them in "beans and flour" through the winter.

As Bunnell put them up in the cabins, had told them that they could cut down all the spruce they wanted but that they shouldn't touch the birch. Periodically he visited them just like he visited faculty and shared their sourdough and caribou with them, or whatever they happened to have. Bob remembers how on a Saturday evening when they had all gone to the cabin at the Dead Man's Slough for dinner and Dr. Bunnell came in uninvited and of course they were surprised and 2/3rds of afraid of him. He sat down to join them, and ate their dinner with them and as he got up and put on his parka to walk back to campus he said: "Boys, that birch makes pretty good fire, doesn't it." The boys agreed.

He was a great guy and one of the people who had a great influence on the speaker's life and to the lives of all people in the room.

Iris Ryan introduces herself and explains that she doesn't often speak in public but that it has been mentioned that Dr. Bunnell was some kind of an athlete and some know that he was quite the football player in his early days. Iris remembers in early years of the college that when they were having dinner at the College dining room which was at the basement of the girls dormitory. The basketball team had just won some victory and during the dinner hour Dr. Bunnell gave a little speech and showed them his football uniform which he had saved from his days at Bucknell. It was his great pride although a little moth eaten around the edges, and he was sorry he couldn't demonstrate by putting it on. It was impossible.

A woman's voice [Later identified as Maxine Frits [Fritz?], then known as Maxine Fits, sp?] tells that they were homesteaders and that their father was homesteading at the Steel Creek Road. One time Dr. Bunnell and his driver Herb Brazil came out to see them. They didn't know Dr. Bunnell cared about them but he might have heard that speaker's family was "in little desperate straits." They had nice time talking and then Bunnell asked if any of the girls would like jobs. Her sister Irma was interested. The University was building a new power plant to replace the old one that had burned and Irma went to work as a waitress in the dining room which, like Mrs. Ryan was saying, was in the basement of the women's dormitory. Irma was a waitress, and had never done anything like that before so it was interesting to her. Some of the guys who worked at the power plant got names from the girls. One fellow used to reach across the table and he was called the Dragline. Later Dr. Bunnell came to see them at the homestead and asked their mother if she would like a job and offered her a job as a laundress. She took the job. They lived in that the old Eielson building, where the college laundry was at the time. It was called Unit 5, and they lived at the basement of the Unit 5. Irma and their mother ran the laundry while Irma was going to college and the speaker took the bus to Fairbanks to go to high school. They saw quite a bit of Dr. Bunnell who stopped by to see how they were doing. They heard the boys upstairs in Unit 5, and once in a while they'd get on a rampage and come tearing down the stairs. Sometimes they'd come and visit them at the laundry. Dr. Bunnell had Herb Brazil for a driver and Maxine would

ride down to the old railroad station at the College where they picked up things that needed to be picked up. Maxine went to College in 1940-1941 and Dr. Bunnell was like an old friend. Someone asks her name and she introduces herself as Maxine Frits who used to be Maxine Fits. [Laughter.]

Paul Wickstrom introduces himself and says that while he doesn't have material for Bill's [Cashen's] book, he thinks it will be good. Dr. Bunnell had lots of headaches from his students, but he had the fortitude to withstand it. One thing that bothered him was that old fog horn that they had in the dormitory disappeared. The freshmen had to blow the horn in the morning to wake everybody up and it probably woke up everybody at the campus and the noise got even to the Judge's place. Paul heard a rumor that he was instigating the disappearance of the thing, but doesn't know for a fact. Then Paul wishes Cashen good luck with his new book.

Alice Nordale [unclear sp?] speaks and says it would be better if she would go back to times when the College just started. She was a little 7-year-old who handed the flowers to President Bunnell when the ribbon was cut. She will say no more.

Audrey Loftus speaks next. There aren't too many things left on campus that would remind of Dr. Bunnell, except for a plaque in the Bunnell Building, given by the University of Alaska alumni and a lovely birch tree which Dr. Bunnell had students plant in the very earliest days of the College. The Loftus-boys planted the birch which you can see when driving to the campus.

Audrey has often heard that Bunnell should have never taken a wife and family because the university was his one love, and that he had no room or time in his heart for wife and family. One day she had her mind changed on that. She was walking down the hallway and Bunnell called her into the office. He looked very sad and told about the news of his wife's death. He also talked about his wife and Jean and how they had grown apart since he was so busy and had let the University take that part of his life. He showed affection and care towards Jean and his wife which Audrey hadn't known he had.

Next speaker thanks Frank Barr who brought the recorder today and made the tape for Bill. Frank is an old-time bush pilot in Fairbanks, a former legislator, and also a delegate to Constitutional Convention.

[End of the recording.]