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“Convocation to witness the signing by Governor McCall of Senate Bill 65, establishing Portland State University, and to celebrate the occasion of the institution's fourteenth anniversary”
Portland State University
February 14, 1969

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[background chatter for one minute before program begins]

HOST: Welcome to the birthday and anniversary party. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you at this time the master of ceremonies for this brief occasion, Mr. Rudy Wilhelm: former state representative, former state senator, a man who offered a bill that was very vital in the history of this institution, and who is currently serving as president of the Portland State College Development Foundation. And, I am going to remind him before he leaves here, that he has to have a business meeting next month to change the name of the organization. Mr. Rudy Wilhelm.

[applause]

RUDY WILHELM: Thank you, Dean, Governor, and distinguished guests, students. Couple of messages first, here. From Edith Green, good friend of education, called Dean Anderson today and it was a little too late to get a telegram to him so she called him on the phone, and had the following message to send everyone here: “The people of Oregon have recognized excellence by challenging PSC to serve them on a new level. That is the highest compliment. It is a challenge that properly begins with celebration, and I regret that I am unable to lift a cup of kindness with you to mark this occasion. With three cheers for this day and best wishes for the brightest of all possible futures. Sincerely, Edith Green.”

From Mr. Dev Potts, president of the Oregon Senate: "I am very sorry that the pressing business of the legislature prevents me from participating in your program today. My sincere congratulations to Portland State University on this historic occasion. And it is indeed historic, because twenty years ago the first bill hadn't yet been signed, not until April 1949, which made Vanport—the then-called—permanent." There's one special guest here at the head platform that I'd like to introduce now, and that is Georgia Patterson, the wife of the governor of Oregon in 1955 when Portland.... when Vanport became Portland State College.

[applause]

Next, I would like to call on Senator Willner, who is the co-sponsor along with Representative Hansel of the Bill—what was it?—sixty-five, which is going to become law in a few moments. Senator Willner.

[applause]

DON WILLNER: Governor McCall, Mrs. Patterson, ladies and gentlemen, Representative Hansel deeply regrets that it was not possible for him to be here with you today; he is chairman of the Ways and Means committee—they're working very hard this afternoon; he very much wanted to be here—he asked me to extend his regrets and his congratulations.

Today Portland State accepts a new role and a new challenge. As a university in the center of the major metropolitan area of Oregon, this school will now be in a position to provide leadership in solving urban problems. It will become a center of advanced education and research. It will help attract and retain science-based industry in this area. It will increasingly become a focus for the educational aspirations of this community. This is the time of rededication to truth and excellence. It is the very nature of a university that it pursue new frontiers of learning. We in Portland deeply appreciate the confidence in this school that has been shown by legislators from all over the state. Oregon's future will reflect the growing contribution that will be made by this university. It is fitting that Portland State University comes into being on the birth date of our beloved state.

[applause]

HOST: Thank you, Don. I must make a few remarks about the way Don Willner handled this bill. To think that it went through this fast is just fantastic, but I know he's worked hard on it for many years and he certainly is entitled to all that applause. I'd like to introduce—well, he really

doesn't need an introduction, I guess—the president of Portland State student body, John Nolan. John, would you say a few words?

[applause]

JOHN NOLAN: Thank you. I would just like to thank the state of Oregon for formally recognizing a fact that we've known here for quite a while. I think we have perhaps the best student body and the best faculty in the state of Oregon. I have attended other state schools... [applause] and I think this is a fact. I came back to Portland State from a school down south because I like the student body better, and I like the caliber of education better. I think we've merited university status for quite a while; we can hardly take the thanks for... one man can hardly take the thanks for the efforts of so many for making Portland State the quality institution it is today. Once again, I'd like to thank the state of Oregon for formally recognizing, once again, a fact that we've known here for three or four years. Thank you.

[applause]

HOST: Thank you, John. And now from our president, Dr. Gregory Wolfe, please.

[applause]

GREG WOLFE: Governor, Mrs. Patterson, Senator Willner. I have mixed feelings about seeing classes dismissed on the moment... [laughter] moments before we become a university. However, [laughter] this gives me an opportunity to fracture a little Shakespeare and tell you about the two glorious days I remember in Portland State's history. The first of course, is the one only I hear about: the day of the Vanport flood. [laughter] The other day of course is going to be this one, for some years I'm sure.

It's said that the one member of an early class, now deceased, could speak of nothing else but that Vanport flood until the day he died. And when he arrived at the gates, St. Peter welcomed him and said, "Of course we always have a little ceremony here, or you can... people fete you with cake and cookies and punch, and you can tell any story of your late life that you wish to." People had warned St. Peter that this guy could only talk about the Vanport flood, and they were worried, and they said, "Please tone him down a bit if you can." So he said, "We know you have a favorite story but can you tell another?" And he said, "No, I can only tell that one story," and he did. He said he was going to at least, and as he stepped forward St. Peter said, "Just remember that Noah is in the audience."

[laughter; applause]

Today we celebrate the culmination of the loving labors of many men and women throughout Oregon. Of governors, of legislators, of teachers, students, and I hope some of you will forgive me if I even add administrators. We celebrate the first day of our university status. We also celebrate, as you have already been reminded, the hundred and tenth anniversary of the entry of Oregon into the Union, and I am hopeful as we go forward that this anniversary date coincident with our own will help us remember to keep perspective on our own age.

As a fledgling university, nothing may be more important for the first hundred and ten years than a sense of perspective. Finally, this day we have also dedicated this very building to the memory of a young man, Michael Smith, a student of Portland State. And may this day also therefore remind some of us of why we are here. Not simply to have a name, not simply to win contests, but to align our pursuit of life with the pursuit of ideas—not just those we like, or those we think are right or acceptable to a clubby few who claim infallibility. And finally I'd like to fracture that Shakespeare I promised you I would, since it is St. Valentine's Day, but I can think of no other quote suitable to this occasion than that of *Henry V*, in the fourth act. And instead of St. Crispin may I just suggest St. Valentine as a workable substitute with all these balloons overhead.

“This day is called the feast of St. Valentines. He that outlives this day and comes safe home will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named and say old men forget, ye all shall be forgot, but he'll remember with advantages what feats he did that day. Then shall our names familiar in his mouth as household words be in their flowing cups, freshly remembered. This story shall good men teach his son from this day to the ending of the world, but we in it shall be remembered; we few, we happy few, we band of brothers, for he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother. Be he ne'er so vile, this day shall gentle his condition. And gentlemen in England now abed shall think themselves accursed they were not here, and hold their manhoods cheap while then he speaks that worked with us upon St. Valentine's Day in Portland, Oregon.”

[applause]

HOST: Thank you, Dr. Wolfe. He's gonna be a great president for Portland State University, although I don't know how he's going to come out on trying to hold on to Young's gown shop. [laughter] Oh, and I could say something about Nixon's cabinet, but I won't say anything about that right now either. This is not the time. I'd like to introduce, at this time, our governor Tom McCall. Tom?

[applause, chatter in background]

TOM McCALL: Thank you very much. Chairman Wilhelm, President Wolfe, Mrs. Patterson, Senator Willner, President John, members of the faculty, ladies and gentlemen of the student body. I'm sort of a godfather of this operation, really, because there was one element that I think had more to do with it than the politicians or the administrators or the students. One element of the development of this institution, and that was the press, and really we were proud of this from the time it was in the incubator, and we covered it as if it were a magnificent university all the way even though they only had a few students living almost in tents. Because we had the pride and the vision, and I can speak as a press man, I've lost it as governor, [laughter] we had the pride and the vision to know what this could be. And on this day, it is going to be—and let me tell you that this is not some kind of a pro-forma judgement of the college because I can't run my administration without people from Portland State. I heard somebody laugh when I said I can't run my administration—they thought I was going to put a period in! [laughter]

But on this 110th anniversary I do confess to you that one of the kingpins of my administration is a Professor Rob Lee from Portland State, one of the most compassionate men I've ever known, and the great administrator Marko Haggard; Ron Cease was a member of my 1970s task force that is restructuring hopefully the shape of government in the state, we have also Carl Saltveit now who was a member of that same task force who is going to be the new executive assistant to your president, and two former student bodies are very closely... student body presidents, very closely associated with me: Ed Westerdahl is my administrative assistant, the top executive assistant, he's a former student body president, and so is Dale Ward who's with the coordinating council on education who serves the governor and all our public education.

I think as best as Wolfe pointed out, it is especially significant that we have this signing on this day, the hundred and tenth anniversary of the state of Oregon—its 110th birthday—and especially fitting that it should be signed in a building renamed just a few hours ago, after a student who'd been a part of this campus. I think it's one of the very few times in the history of higher education in America, that a student has been so honored, and I can only say I hope that the ecumenical spirit in which this new university is born will always characterize its life.

Portland State, as you know, is the third in the Oregon State system to be a university, and each university meets the special needs in a special way each according to its own location and its own interests and its own talent. After a relatively short but agonizing struggle, it is coming to age. It is now an equal partner, even if some of the perquisites of that partnership of which we're so well aware have not arrived, we want you to know that the state knows the vital

importance of a great metropolitan university; it does know your needs, and the size of the legislative vote in your favor shows that the entire state is joining in the effort to meet those needs. I'll see you shortly, pen in hand. Thank you.

[applause]

HOST: Thank you Governor. I was impressed with that list of Portland State people that are on your staff, and I wondered if there were any room for somebody from the University of Oregon or Oregon State down there. [laughter] But... this is a day when we think back, and I'm not gonna mention any names, because I'm afraid I'll mention some and forget others, but there certainly were many people through the last twenty, twenty-four years when Vanport started, including many who are still on the faculty, that should be given a good deal of credit for what's happening today. Now there are a few guests here at a table over there—I can't see it because of these lights, but I have a list—and first of all, if Dr. and Mrs. Millar would stand up.

[applause]

Certainly I know that applause speaks for itself for all you've done for Portland State. Then, representing the county commissioners and one who has a close association with Portland State, Dan Clark. I can't see him, but he's there. [applause] Then as you know this building was renamed today, and Michael Smith's mother is here, Mrs. Alice Smith. [prolonged applause] Also I understand Reverend and Mrs. Smith, the grandparents of Michael Smith, are here. [applause] Representing the Portland State Mothers' Club, Mrs. George Denfeld. [applause] The Dads' Club, Mr. Hal Doeman. [applause] And representing the alumni, Mr. Robert Zimmer. [applause]

Now, this year as in the past, there are a good number of people in the Chamber of Commerce that were helping in the effort to get this legislation through, and there are four gentlemen here today; I'll read their names, and if they would stand: Mr. William Weber, vice president of the chamber of commerce, Mr. Burt Williamson, the industrial department, Mr. Oliver Larson, the executive director, and Dr. Wayne Coon who was chairman of the chamber industries committee.

[applause]

And now it's time, Governor, to move over to the table here and make Portland State College Portland State University. We'll give the TV people a minute to get in place.

[chatter in background]

McCALL: Are you ready, gentlemen? Ladies and gentlemen, it is my high honor and privilege now, to engage in the signing of Senate Bill 65. And even though I wanted to give my old college and the press great credit for this day today, we also must remember that it was the people who are in elected office who actually had to take the final steps to make this day possible. And I'd like to read you therefore the names of the sponsors of Senate Bill 65: First name, Senator Willner, Representative Hansel, Senators Bane, Bateson, Burns, Cook, Ivers, Flagel, Hallock, Homestrum, Gernstead, Lent, Morgan, Raymond, Roberts; Representatives Aicksen, Bowle, Bradley, Chenard, Dougdale, Elliot, Graham, Haas, Harton, Howard, Lang, McCrady, McGilferman, Peck, Priestly, Roberts, Skelton, Stevenson, Thornton, and Willis. Almost enough signers and sponsors to get the bill through. [laughter; applause].

One of the pens with which I will sign my name—and I don't mean to prolong the agony here—but this is a terrifically interesting one historically. [laughter] I won't go all the way back, but it says this pen was used by Governor McKay to sign the Wilhelm Logan Bill to make Vanport Extension Center permanent and acquire Lincoln High School for its building. So that is really an old timer. I hope it writes. [laughter]

[chatter in background]

McCALL: I'm sort of a country version of Lyndon Baines Johnson. [laughter; applause] So, Mr. President, this has to go to file with the Secretary of State, but we do want to present it to you and Senator Willner, just as a symbolic gesture of the fact that we are now Portland State University.

[applause and cheering]

HOST: Okay, the audience is invited to refreshments, dance in the rear, and the party's on!

[cheers; balloons popping; band begins playing]

[program ends]