

Labor Has Interest in Education

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By Lael Morgan, Staff Writer

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the last in a series on the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

Robert Mc Farland had his first look at Alaska in 1915 when his father came up on mining business in Carcross.

"I always wanted to come back," he recalled by he didn't get his chance again until 1949.

McFarland was born and reared in Republic, Washington, where his father was a miner and later a judge. He went to high school there and attended the University of Washington for two years where he majored in fisheries.

To make ends meet he took construction work and by 1934 he was really interested in the labor movement. He became secretary to his union and from 1936 to 1940 he was business agent.

The next few years he was a construction superintendent. He also spent a year in labor relations. Then in 1945 he became field supervisor of safety for Labor and Industry for the state of Washington.

His Alaskan assignment came through the International Laborers Union which sent him to Anchorage as secretary-treasurer of that organization. Today he is president of the Alaska State Federation of Labor.

"I liked it and decided to stay," he said. He met his wife Juanita in Anchorage (she was running a dress and gift shop). The couple have two daughters and three grandsons.

McFarland's community activities have extended well beyond labor. He has served 16 years on the Democratic State Central Committee and is on the Salvation Army Advisory Board. He's also a member of the Export Advisory Committee for the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Last year on a cultural grant from the State Department, McFarland took a three week-tour of Japan speaking on labor and industry.

His appointment to the Board of Regents was made in 1963.

"Labor has a continuing interest in the education program," he explained.