



Documentary Chronicles the Beginnings of the Biggest State

Fairbanks, AK – Just over fifty years ago, the “colonists” of Alaska took a stand. They were frustrated seeing the profits of the territory’s resources going to the Lower 48 and discouraged by their inability to vote as American citizens.

The 49th Star: Creating Alaska, airing on American public television stations nationwide starting November 8, 2006 (check your local listings), tells the story of a populist push to recognize the country’s northernmost territory—Alaska. The documentary centers on the experiences of Alaskans who were part of the state’s Constitutional Convention in the frigid winter months of 1955-56, and weaves their observations with a contextual perspective from noted historians.

Frustrated by Congress’s inaction on statehood legislation, Alaskans decided to demonstrate their readiness to join the union by creating a framework for state government. Fifty-five elected delegates gathered in Fairbanks, Alaska to craft a state constitution the National Municipal League has called “one of the best, if not the best, state constitution ever written.”

Vic Fischer was one of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention. He says it’s hard to explain, “the dedication, the vitality, the exhilaration and the idealism that...characterized Alaska’s constitution-making process.” The delegates included business people, attorneys, ministers and housewives. Some were Republicans, some Democrats and ten delegates had never served in elected office.

The Convention lasted long 75 days that were notable for a grueling schedule of meetings and sub-zero temperatures. The delegates studied, debated, held public hearings and penned the framework for state government. They decided on the structure of the state courts, the Alaska Legislature and Governor’s Executive branch. They set out the basic principles that would guide resource policies, the rules for taxation and basic rights that all Alaskans should enjoy.

The 49th Star offers first-hand accounts of Alaska’s remarkable journey to statehood and the integrity, citizenship, creativity and consensus that exemplified the process. *The 49th Star* is a production of KUAC-TV in Fairbanks, Alaska and is distributed to public television stations across the nation by American Public Television.

About American Public Television

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