

March 14-15, 2024

ITEM 211-2002-R0324

Request for Authorization to Award an Honorary Doctorate to Paul R. Wylie; Montana State University

THAT

In recognition of many career achievements and the distinction brought to the Montana University System, the Board of Regents grants Montana State University the authority to confer an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters to Paul R. Wylie.

EXPLANATION

Paul R. Wylie was born in Livingston, Montana and graduated from Montana State College in 1959 with a degree in Chemical Engineering. Mr. Wylie began working in the rocket industry as an engineer where he garnered extensive experience with the famed Minuteman Missile, which is recognized as a U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile, in Utah. He subsequently became a patent examiner at the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, which eventually motivated him to return to college in pursuit of a law degree. While working full-time, he attended law school and graduated from American University, Washington School of Law.

From there, Mr. Wylie held a distinguished legal career as corporate counsel and in intellectual property law private practice, including high value infringement cases between large corporations: Polaroid v. Kodak on instant photography patents; Johnson and Johnson v. Boston Scientific on stents; and Texas Instruments v. Tandy on computer chips. He also served as chairman of the American Bar Association Committee on Patent Contracts. He is a member of the bars in Utah, California and Montana.

By 2007 he had become seriously interested in historical studies and decided to devote full-time to this passion. Mr. Wylie first authored *The Irish General: Thomas Francis Meagher*. He researched extensively the life and death of General Thomas Francis Meagher, and this work became a highly acclaimed read in the historical field. His writing is praised by historians in the United States and among readers of Irish heritage around the world. Mr. Wylie has received great honors both in Montana and in Ireland for his biography of General Thomas Francis Meagher. In 2015, the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, dedicated the Meagher Bridge in Waterford, the General's birthplace, quoting from Mr. Wylie's book. The mysterious death of Meagher also led Paul to write, produce and stage in several Montana communities a play, *A Coroner's Inquest into the Death of Thomas Francis Meagher*, based on documents from the time of Meagher's death.

He next wrote, *Blood on the Marias: The Baker Massacre*. In this book, he researched and uncovered as much as he could on what caused the Piegans and the Cavalry to meet on the fateful day of January 23, 1870, on the frozen Marias River in Montana. Paul has been of tremendous service to the Native American people and the Blackfeet Nation have honored Paul's work in several instances, most notably in September 2017 when representatives of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council and the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association, representing every tribal nation in Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota and Nebraska signed and presented a proclamation to the U. S. Park Service proposing to change the name of Mount Doane in Yellowstone National Park. While Doane was one of the groups promoting the establishment of Yellowstone National Park, he was notably the leader of the massacre on the Marias. The tribal leaders cited Paul's research as the documentary basis of this joint tribal petition.

Finally, he most recently penned, *Montana State's Golden Bobcats*, an epic story of the Golden Bobcats of 1929 who won the national basketball championship, and a study of two gifted African American siblings who were born in White Sulphur Springs at the turn of the twentieth century. Taylor and Rose Gordon have been known to Montana historians, but this was the first serious study of their remarkable musical connection to the Harlem Renaissance.

Mr. Wylie has contributed much to Montana State University and the citizens of Montana. He has served on the Board of Directors of Eagle Mount. His wife Arlene M. Wylie co-founded the Cancer Support Community in Bozeman and Paul was an early volunteer and significant financial supporter. He has donated over 1,000 hours of free legal services. He has donated significant funds to the MSU Athletic Endowment, has supported the Montana State University Library, and established the Paul R. and Arlene M. Wylie Student Endowment Fund for Native American students in the College of Engineering. He has hired history students to help with his research, providing them invaluable training and much needed income over the years, too. Mr. Wylie is a man of extraordinary achievement: a chemical engineer, an intellectual property lawyer, and a distinguished historic author from Montana. He is also a man of strong character, integrity, compassion, and generosity.

For these and other extraordinary contributions, the Board of Regents is pleased to confer an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters at Montana State University upon Paul R. Wylie and wishes him well for many years in the future.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1- Letter of Nomination from President Cruzado