



VOICE EXPEDITION INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

The Oral History of Nephrology

Richard Thomas "Dick" Wiess

Interviewed by Dugan W. Maddux, MD

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (0:03 - 0:33)

Alright, earlier today I was talking to Julia and Sandy and Mother about places that we have stayed and slept and we got to talking about the old beach house, you know, and how it had the one bathroom with the three doors. But I wanted to ask you about when you all moved in with your grandfather on Dexter Street, did you and Bob, was that your bedroom in the attic right away?

DICK WIESS: (0:35 - 1:25)

No, when we first moved in, of course we had three bedrooms, my mother and father were in the front bedroom, my grandfather slept in the back, one of the back bedrooms and my, when we moved in, of course we had my sister and the two boys. Right. So, I slept with my grandfather and they had bunk beds for my sister and my brother.

See, like my brother was in second grade and I was in first grade. So, after, I don't know, didn't seem like too long a year, maybe a year or so, I think they decided that my sister needed her own room. So, then the construction of the attic.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (1:29 - 1:31)

What was it like sleeping with your grandfather?

DICK WIESS: (1:32 - 1:38)

Well, I liked it. Of course, he was a real nice fella and always good to us.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (1:38 - 1:40)

Was he snoring or?

DICK WIESS: (1:41 - 2:35)

No, well, I never noticed it. Of course, he, I didn't even know until I got grown. Of course, he had a, what they call in the South, a slop jar, you know, for going to the bathroom under the bed.

And I never heard him go in the bathroom, but, see, he didn't have to go walk out. We only had one bathroom for six people. And, but he did have that pot, which I had seen, but I didn't know anything about that kind of stuff.

I didn't think about what it was for or anything. So, I realized that's what he, I'm sure that's a carryover from, well, when my grandfather first bought the house, they did not have a bathroom inside. So, my father actually put the bathroom in the house.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (2:36 - 2:38)

Probably put the plumbing in and?

DICK WIESS: (2:38 - 2:46)



Yeah, he did plumbing and electrical, and he put the kitchen, they built the kitchen back out off the back of the house.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (2:47 - 2:48)

Well, yeah, I guess it was. I never thought about it.

DICK WIESS: (2:48 - 2:50)

Yeah, so he built that also.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (2:53 - 2:57)

So. I didn't realize he was that handy doing electrical.

DICK WIESS: (2:57 - 3:08)

Yeah, he could do all that, electrical, plumbing. He could do it all, really.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (3:08 - 3:12)

What all did they have to do to fix the attic up for you and Bob?

DICK WIESS: (3:14 - 3:47)

Well, of course, the house had the two bedrooms in the back and the one bedroom in the front where the steps came up in between from the first floor to the second floor. Well, there also was an opening to go to the third floor. So, they had to, I think what they did was they had closets in the bedrooms, like at the end of the hall, a closet, and then the bedroom, a closet.

Well, then they just took the closets out and there was an opening to go up to the attic.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (3:48 - 3:49)

To make a staircase.

DICK WIESS: (3:49 - 4:11)

Staircase. And he often, I don't exactly remember when they bought the steps, like I don't know how many steps it was, 10, 12, 13 steps, whatever. How they ever got that around or into, of course, they may have, you know, to put the steps up.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (4:11 - 4:13)

Yeah, even gotten them through the house.

DICK WIESS: (4:13 - 4:32)

Because when we opened it up, when we opened that up, I can still remember what it looked like. It was, of course, you had the floor, but then the ceiling over where the steps came up from the first floor to the second floor was all those wooden pieces that had, back then, they put wooden struts across and then plastered.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (4:32 - 4:33)

Yeah, like lathing.

DICK WIESS: (4:33 - 4:39)



Like whatever it is. Yeah, yeah. And that was what was there.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (4:40 - 4:41)

You could just see the lathing.

DICK WIESS: (4:41 - 4:59)

It didn't have any plaster on it. You know, they had, you know, the inside of the walls of the hallway and the bedrooms. So, and I, of course, I was happy because they let me stay home from school a couple of days to help.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (5:00 - 5:02)

You must have only been seven or eight.

DICK WIESS: (5:02 - 5:31)

Well, I was only, yes, seven or eight. But then we got the steps, and he got a friend of his, Bob Geary, that was a cab driver. And this Bob Geary, his father was a dentist.

But he was a cab driver, and he helped, I guess, get those pieces up for the steps. And then when we got the steps up, of course, you had all the joists up in the attic.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (5:32 - 5:32)

Yes.

DICK WIESS: (5:32 - 6:06)

They were just, you had to walk on the joists when you first got up. Because there was no flooring. No flooring.

So he, my father bought that tongue and groove flooring, just pine. And he was sawing the pieces, and my brother and I would nail them down. And, you know, you put them down, you take one of the other boards and beat it back, and then put a nail down through the tongue.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (6:06 - 6:09)

You were, were you hammering, you were putting in nails by hand?

DICK WIESS: (6:09 - 6:10)

We were putting the floor down, yes.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (6:10 - 6:19)

You were putting in nails by hand. They're like now, if they were putting in flooring, they'd have like a hammer that you strike with your, you know, you sort of kick it and strike it.

DICK WIESS: (6:20 - 6:20)

Yes.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (6:20 - 6:22)

Did you all have that special flooring?



DICK WIESS: (6:22 - 6:38)

We didn't have that. No, we just had to just straight beat the nail in. So you were just hammering a nail in.

We would take a, they were headless nails, and you had that little thingy, little tool that you can put on the top of a headless nail and hit it.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (6:38 - 6:40)

And sink it in below the level of the board.

DICK WIESS: (6:40 - 6:51)

So we, that's what we did. And he, my father sawed the pieces and we nailed them. And then we put windows down.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (6:52 - 6:53)

Because there were no windows in there before?

DICK WIESS: (6:53 - 7:02)

No windows up there, it was just the, there was no insulation or anything, just the roof with the, they call truss things.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (7:02 - 7:03)

Yeah, yeah.

DICK WIESS: (7:05 - 7:27)

And then in between, on the front, we just put a window between two of the trusses. And on the back, put a window through between, there were three, you know. In other words, the back window had two, you could open and close the windows, and on the front you just had one window.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (7:30 - 7:34)

So you put in flooring. Flooring. And windows.

DICK WIESS: (7:34 - 7:45)

We put in the windows, and then we had to do the roofing on that. You know, the new window that we built out.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (7:45 - 7:46)

You had to put a roof over.

DICK WIESS: (7:46 - 7:58)

We had to put that roof over that. Of course it was just an asphalt. And you put that goopy stuff in the joints and all that kind of stuff.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (7:58 - 7:59)

Tar and.

DICK WIESS: (7:59 - 7:59)



Yeah, it was just really.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (8:01 - 8:03)

And you put a shingle, like a shingle on it, did you?

DICK WIESS: (8:03 - 8:07)

It wasn't shingles, it was, you know, like some of the rolls.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (8:08 - 8:09)

Yeah, like a paper, like a roll.

DICK WIESS: (8:09 - 8:15)

Yeah, shingle-like stuff, but it was in rolls.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (8:15 - 8:16)

Yeah, okay.

DICK WIESS: (8:21 - 8:29)

Then put, handrail was just, you know, piping, one inch.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (8:30 - 8:30)

Metal.

DICK WIESS: (8:31 - 8:36)

Yeah, metal. The railing upstairs went around, which is.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (8:38 - 8:41)

Otherwise you'd have fallen into the stairwell. You could have fallen into the stairwell.

DICK WIESS: (8:41 - 8:44)

Yeah, well, it was just a one-inch pipe that stood about.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (8:56 - 9:05)

So, putting in the stairs, putting in the flooring, putting in the windows. I don't, when, we used to go up there in the summer when I was little. I don't recall that it had any insulation in it.

DICK WIESS: (9:05 - 9:39)

There was no insulation on the roof. That's why I was, in the winter, I would, we never changed clothes up there. Like, I would, back then I wore pajamas, which I don't do anymore.

We would, I would put on my pajamas down on the second floor, and run up and jump in the bed. Of course, it was cold as it could be, and you breathed down under the blanket, you know. Once it gets warm, I'll be in the small room.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (9:40 - 9:48)



Well, I mean, but, you know, winter in Philadelphia, it probably, in the attic, uninsulated attic in the winter.

DICK WIESS: (9:48 - 9:49)

It was cold up there.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (9:49 - 9:50)

How cold do you think it got?

DICK WIESS: (9:50 - 10:43)

Well, it got real cold. I imagine, of course, if you leave, they would leave the doors open downstairs, and of course the heat. We just had the one heater, you know, that, right at the base of the downstairs steps, that heated the whole house.

You know, the heater was down in the basement, and that grate that you walked on, that heated the whole house. Well, that's not true, because in the kitchen, they had a separate heater that had a radiator in the kitchen. There was a radiator in the kitchen, but the smaller heater, cold heater, would make hot water for the, uh.

And, like I say, if you left the doors open downstairs from the second floor, of course, some heat would come up to the attic, but it was cold up there.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (10:43 - 10:46)

And you had, like, twin beds or something up there?

DICK WIESS: (10:46 - 10:51)

Well, what they had was the twin beds my brother and sister were.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (10:51 - 10:51)

The bunk beds.

DICK WIESS: (10:51 - 10:55)

Bunk beds were separated, and he had one I had.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (11:00 - 11:03)

So, you had just like a pile of blankets, or.

DICK WIESS: (11:03 - 11:04)

Blankets, yeah, yeah.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (11:08 - 11:10)

How long did you sleep up in the attic?

DICK WIESS: (11:13 - 11:44)

Well, until, uh, my sister. My grandfather died when I was in the eighth grade, and, uh, I guess then that my sister had gotten married. So, we had the two bedrooms downstairs, see.



Then, I had the one bedroom right at the top of the steps on the right, and he had the other one.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (11:48 - 11:51)

Still, must have been pretty young when she got married then.

DICK WIESS: (11:51 - 11:56)

Yeah, well, she, uh, just graduated from high school.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (11:56 - 11:59)

So, were you in the eighth grade when she graduated from high school?

DICK WIESS: (11:59 - 12:27)

I'm trying to remember. It seemed like, I can't remember exactly when Peter was born. She, uh, I don't think Peter was born before my grandfather died.

He died when I was in the eighth grade, but it was not very long after that.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (12:43 - 12:53)

Well, while we're on the recorder, though, I want you to tell one of the stories I always like to hear you tell. It's the time when you were out at the bar and the police came.

DICK WIESS: (12:54 - 12:54)

Well.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (12:54 - 12:58)

And how old were, I'm still not clear whether you were still in high school when that happened.

DICK WIESS: (12:58 - 12:59)

No, um.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (12:59 - 13:01)

Or how you happened to be in the bar.

DICK WIESS: (13:01 - 15:24)

Well, in Philadelphia, well Pennsylvania, they had the blue law where you couldn't serve any drinks on Sunday. So, Saturday night, everybody's out hooping it up, and at twelve o'clock, bingo, they're shut down. So, you know, people are creative, so they just formed clubs.

And there was, we had this club called the Polish Falcons Club, where they could serve drinks on Sunday, it was a club. So, uh, and they were all over, like the veterans, the foreign wars had a place to go, and the Irish pubs and things like, you know, they were clubs. So, you used to sort of be a member, and then you just moved your party from the bar to the club.

So, that's what happened every Saturday night, which is sort of stupid if you think about it. Anyhow, the Polish Falcons was a place where the group I hung around with went. And I



was in school at the university, I was, I don't know whether I was a freshman, I guess I was a freshman at the UNC, and I was home.

I don't know whether it was Thanksgiving or Christmas or something. But, the, uh, we were out, a bunch of us, and, you know, we'd always end up at twelve o'clock, we'd go down to the Polish Falcons Club. So, we all went down there, and, uh, oh, they played about every, every tune was a polka, except once out of every five they'd have another one, you know.

But it was always that rum-ba-bum. And everybody had a good time. And, of course, there were a lot of young people there.

And in Philadelphia, I think the drinking age then, I don't think it was, it was twenty-one, I guess it was twenty-one. Of course, I was still seventeen when I went to college, so I don't know. But, uh...

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (15:24 - 15:28)

Well, if it was Thanksgiving or Christmas, you were still seventeen. Seventeen, right.

DICK WIESS: (15:28 - 18:53)

So, uh, there must have been, half the crowd was underage. And we, everybody was having a good time, and all of a sudden the door blasts open, and it's the Vice Squad. And, of course, all these kids, half of them running out, jumped through windows and everything.

Must have been several hundred people in this place. And, uh, the Vice Squad, they rounded up, and I didn't run. The funny thing was, a guy I went to grammar school with, Bernard Beneshek, I was sitting there talking to him and his wife.

And they were going to get a divorce, separating and going to get a divorce. Of course, he'd been in the Navy and married her up in, uh, Massachusetts. But, so, I was talking to them, and I couldn't believe they were getting a divorce.

And we're just all sitting there like, you know, well, she's going back home tomorrow. But anyhow, uh, the Vice Squad, they put us in the paddy wagon and took us up to the police station. And there must have been, in the police station, they had a room that just had a bench all the way around.

Big room, just had a bench all around the edges. And it was filled up, must have been 50 people there. It was the funniest thing, a bunch of those young kids, about three, four smashed in there.

None of them had a pod or a window, but they're jumping up and down for us. They're entitled to see an attorney, and they couldn't afford to call one up. So, anyhow, it was a lot of fun.

I was saying all kinds of funny stuff, and nobody seemed to terribly worry about it. So, this was like two o'clock in the morning or something. And, of course, the story my brother tells was, he came by when the paddy wagon was there.



And he saw they'd taken us to the... And he claims he saw that, and he saved my life by running home and taking the phone off the hook so they couldn't call my father. So, trust me, he didn't run about two and a half miles.

So, anyhow, that's what he claims. He went home to save my life by taking the phone off the hook so they wouldn't call my father in the middle of the night. So, anyhow, I was sitting there, and Sergeant Cahill came in.

And his daughter, Jeannie Cahill, was a good friend of mine. And we had spent some time together, and he came in. And I was sitting there, and he was an old Irishman.

And he said, Dick, what the hell are you doing here? I said, well, they picked me up down there. He said, get the hell out of here.

So, I said, eh, I was out of there.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (18:54 - 18:57)

Well, what did all the people you were leaving there say?

DICK WIESS: (18:57 - 20:16)

Oh, well, I don't... After checking around... Of course, I had been in school with quite a few of them.

This one guy was always a character, Bishop. His name was Joey Bishop. And he had always been a character.

He was a year behind me in school and always creating trouble. And he was one of them that was there. Of course, he was always jumping up about his rights.

But nobody ever said anything about it. But what they really tried to do was put a lot of pressure on the waitresses. In the end, they had all the servers, you know.

Because they were serving miners. And I think they... Nothing ever came about it.

The whole rumor around town about the vice squad was... The vice squad, they just got a new captain. And he was trying to show he was going to clean things up or something.

I guess some people think, well, they just need a little more bribes. If you understand politics in Philadelphia, there may be some truth to that, I don't know. But anyhow...

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (20:18 - 20:37)

I thought maybe, too, I'd talk to you about... You know, when you were going to high school and you had to get from Dexter Street to Roman. You had to take some combination of buses and all that.

And I want you to talk about what you had to take to get to school and also the best day of your life.

DICK WIESS: (20:38 - 21:24)



Oh, yeah. Well, to go to school, I could go right around the corner. Of course, like you say, in the wintertime, it's real cold up there.

So I'd stand on the corner as a problem, or if you have to walk too far to get a bus or a trolley. But I could walk around a block and a half and get the Z bus. And it would take me to Broad and Erie.

And for ten cents, I could get on the bus, and I would get a transfer, and then get on the subway. The subway ran up and down Broad Street. So Broad and Erie, I would get the subway that went to...

where Roman Catholic was.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (21:24 - 21:27)

So how much would it cost you then to take the bus and the subway?

DICK WIESS: (21:27 - 21:27)

Ten cents.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (21:28 - 21:28)

The whole thing was ten cents?

DICK WIESS: (21:28 - 21:29)

Yes, it made ten cents.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (21:29 - 21:30)

And you get the transfer.

DICK WIESS: (21:30 - 23:08)

You get on the bus, and they give you a transfer, and you... Of course, the complicated thing was... when I was playing football in Roman, I would, after school, I could walk up and get a trolley.

I'd print the number of it, and go to where the football field... Our football field was at 29th and Allegheny, which is about five miles from downtown. And I would walk up and get the trolley up to there for ten cents.

And then I could practice, and then walk about three blocks and get the R bus, which was up on the ridge, and then walk four blocks home. So it only cost me ten cents again. And my last year, the...

Of course, I didn't go out to the team until my junior year, so I didn't know a lot of the players, what they were doing. But this... That Frank Keel that you met, he bought a car.

So he... As soon as he got a car, he wanted me to ride up to practice with him. So I'm riding up there, and I never had driven a car until one day he says to me, he says, Now, once you drive to there, I didn't have a permit or a license, and drove up through steady traffic.



So...

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (23:08 - 23:12)

I just want to say that I would never let my children do these crazy things.

DICK WIESS: (23:12 - 23:43)

Well, well, of course, most of the families and the... I mean, the parents were so busy just trying to keep the operation going. I mean, my mother, she would do, when I was a kid, six people, all the washing on Monday morning, and then she'd iron for two or three days down in the basement.

Cook three meals a day. We never ate out. So...

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (23:45 - 23:47)

She didn't have a lot of time to worry about you.

DICK WIESS: (23:47 - 24:01)

My father, when I was driving a cab at night, so everybody was held up to their ears and just trying to keep the operation going, not worrying what you were doing every minute. That's true, that's true.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (24:01 - 24:03)

I have a lot more free time on my hands. Yeah.

DICK WIESS: (24:05 - 24:07)

Well, I'm just trying to say that's about the way it was.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (24:07 - 24:13)

Well, I definitely want you to tell what your favorite, your best day of your life was.

DICK WIESS: (24:13 - 24:52)

Oh, yeah. One day, I came up from the subway, and I showed you where we came up from the subway on Roy Street, and looked up there, and there was smoke coming out the top of the school. The school was on fire.

And I mean, that was really a wonderful thing to see. And unfortunately, we only missed one day of school, and it was on the top floor, and they managed to contain it, and school went on.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (24:53 - 24:55)

So you had to go to school that day anyway?

DICK WIESS: (24:55 - 24:57)

No, it didn't go that day, but the next day.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (24:58 - 25:00)

So they didn't let you out very long.



DICK WIESS: (25:06 - 27:10)

Of course, one of the worst days of another... Well, that was the best day. One of the worst days was...

I don't know what I had done, but the prefect of discipline, I had a week of detention, and the prefect of discipline, Father Devlin, they had been keeping everybody a half hour after school, or as a punishment, sort of, I don't know. So he says to me, he says, well, I've changed my policy. He says, I don't want to stay after school.

He said, I have to get here at 7 o'clock every morning, so I'm going to have detention an hour before school. So here I am, and I have to get a bus and a subway and be at school with time 7.30 or something. So that changes my routine at home.

My mother, you know, I get up, and she always fixed a sandwich. We'd take a sandwich for lunch. We didn't have a cafeteria in school.

So we... I went home, and I was trying to tell my mother that I had to go to school early, and trying to figure out some logical reason for that. So I told her we were going to have mass every morning.

She loved that, because, I mean, Irish Catholic, boy, if you go to the mass, that's good. So I got through most of the week about Thursday or Friday, and one of those goofy friends of mine saw my mother somewhere and said, boy, there's something about having detention, isn't it? So that didn't work out too good.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (27:11 - 27:14)

What do you think you had detention for?

DICK WIESS: (27:14 - 27:25)

I don't remember. Just periodically, they would victimize me. I was always trying to do the right thing.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (27:26 - 27:39)

Yeah, right. Poor you. Yeah.

Well, I had forgotten about the worst day of your life.

DICK WIESS: (27:39 - 30:42)

Yeah. The only other trouble I had, serious trouble with the prefect of discipline, was my best friend got in a fight with him. Started in the classroom, and ended up out on the street next to the school where they had a fight after school, and we had a big crowd that came to it.

This black boy was a golden glove boxer, and of course Frank Keel was just a big old tough kid. We had, next to the school was a newspaper company. They published The Ledger, and it was like five stories, and we had such a big crowd came out and sort of made a ring with the people, and the people in The Ledger were all hanging out the windows looking.

Started fighting, and Keel was bigger, a lot bigger than Oliver Sims' name was, and they started fighting, and Keel was beating up on him, and this other black boy, we didn't have but about 15 blacks in the school, he hit Keel in the back, and of course I got into a fight with him, and I don't remember how they stopped it, but anyhow, I think we were doing pretty good, so the next day, as soon as we got in there, right over the speaker system, where it was Weiss and Keel report to the prefect of discipline, so we went down there, two of us sitting there, Father Devlin, he says, well, he says, I guess you boys think you're pretty tough, Keel said, well, yeah, and he went through a rigmarole, and he said, well, how would you like to fight in the ring, and he said, well, with Oliver Sims, so the prefect of discipline, Father Devlin, he set up on the third floor of the school a ring, and he was going to be the, and the two of them had gloves, and we had a big crowd up there, and again, Keel just beat Oliver up, but the prefect of discipline told us if we had any more trouble with the black boys, he said we were out of school, so we didn't have any more trouble, so.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (30:43 - 30:45)

What do you think started that trouble to begin with?

DICK WIESS: (30:45 - 30:53)

Well, actually, it was in typing. I took a commercial course.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (30:55 - 30:57)

What do you mean you took commercial?

DICK WIESS: (30:57 - 31:09)

Well, when you started, you had two choices. You could either take academic or commercial, and somebody told me commercial was easier, so you didn't have to take any science or anything.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (31:09 - 31:12)

So did you go through high school not taking any science?

DICK WIESS: (31:12 - 31:12)

Right.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (31:13 - 31:14)

No science?

DICK WIESS: (31:14 - 31:23)

I took none. I took typing, business courses, business law, bookkeeping.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (31:24 - 31:27)

What did you think you were going to do with that?

DICK WIESS: (31:27 - 31:42)

Well, I didn't think I was going to. Why should I knock myself out? I wasn't going anywhere.

You know, get out of school, get a job. I don't know, worried about taking physics or chemistry or something. But anyhow, why?



DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (31:44 - 31:50)

So you were taking typing, and I'm assuming Frank Heel was on the same commercial plan.

DICK WIESS: (31:50 - 32:21)

So Frank and myself were the only two football players in the commercial. Father Murphy, who taught typing, he was really excited, because I don't think you ever had any football players in commercial before. He wrote a thing.

He put my picture in the monthly paper, the Cadillac that the school put out. He was real carried away with having two football players. He was a real man.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (32:21 - 32:23)

Because you were an excellent typist?

DICK WIESS: (32:23 - 33:25)

No, no. He was just excited that he finally had a couple of athletes in the commercial. So anyhow, how it started was we came into typing, and there was a small boy, I can't think of what his name was, Finnegan or something like that.

He was just a little kid. And Oliver Simms came in and told him to move over, that he was going to sit at that place. And the boy sort of made a fuss, and he sort of bullied him.

And Frank Heel went over and said, you know, turn that off type of thing. And Simms smarted off at him, and of course they, unfortunately, didn't start fighting in the classroom. I was his manager all day long for the fight after that.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (33:28 - 33:44)

Now, despite your not planning to need your school for anything, of course, you ended up with your scholarship to UNC to play football. So how in the world were you qualified to start college without any science courses?

DICK WIESS: (33:44 - 34:58)

I think God was getting back at me because I ended up going to school. I hated school. I ended up going 20 years, I think it was.

But when playing football, then I had offers for scholarships, and I decided I was either going to go to Tennessee or Carolina. I came down and visited Carolina twice, and they flew me out to Tennessee once. And to go to Tennessee, they would accept my grades.

But to come to Carolina, they said I'd have to take a science course. So that meant that summer, I'd have to take a science course. And in Philadelphia, they had the public school.

The Catholic school didn't have any summer school, but the public school had quite a few schools that had summer school. And summer school then was not to make up failures. Most of it was for kids who were trying to get extra things and advance their education.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (34:58 - 35:00)



Smart and ambitious kids?

DICK WIESS: (35:00 - 35:44)

Yeah, that's what they were. So I don't remember who helped me, but they knew about that. So at Bach Institution, it was a high school, they had biology one and two, six weeks.

And I took biology one and two at the same time. I'm sure they did that to help me, you know. I made a B in one and a C in biology two.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (35:44 - 35:47)

Not too bad for taking them both at the same time.

DICK WIESS: (35:47 - 36:19)

All the kids in there were interesting enough. Most of them were Jewish. They were trying to take subjects in the summer so they didn't have to carry as much and make good grades so they'd go to college.

But anyhow, those teachers I'm sure helped me out. They let me take both courses at the same time. If they hadn't done that, they might have had to go to Tennessee.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (36:21 - 36:22)

Right, right.

DICK WIESS: (36:24 - 36:26)

So that's the name of that time.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (36:28 - 36:29)

Well, it's fascinating.

DICK WIESS: (36:29 - 36:30)

Yeah.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (36:32 - 36:41)

You know, and amazing that you didn't really have those big plans when you entered high school and then that football scholarship really opened up an opportunity for you.

DICK WIESS: (36:41 - 37:18)

Well, I had no interest and I didn't know anybody who went to college. Nobody within ten miles of my house had been to college. So, as a matter of fact, the people that I grew up with had no understanding of college.

And it didn't seem like they ever encouraged anybody to go to college. Right. Because I think they didn't want to sort of set them up for disappointment, I guess.

But I got that opportunity.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (37:18 - 37:37)



Well, I do. You know, I think it's amazing when I look at, you know, where over the generations of our family how much it's changed. Like, your mom and dad, Mom Wiess and Popweiss, who, I'm not sure Pop Wiess or Mom Wiess graduated from high school.

DICK WIESS: (37:37 - 37:42)

No, my father went to seventh grade and my mother went to ninth grade.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (37:42 - 38:27)

Ninth grade. So, there they are. Not even a high school diploma.

And you, without, you know, a family who really understood it or could plan for it or knew anything about it, just fortunately ended up not only in college but through the Navy and meeting that friend of yours on the ship at dental school. And Mother, who... I mean, Mother, who's, you know, got her master's degree.

She's well-educated. Had a mother, Lovie, who had a good education and a college education, which was unusual at the time. But Granddaddy, whose parents, you know, had no education at all, sharecroppers in Alabama, and he somehow...

I'm not sure he ever went to college. He must have graduated from high school and somehow done that year at Cumberland Law School.

DICK WIESS: (38:27 - 38:34)

He didn't have to be a college graduate. I don't think he'd go to law school. He, at law school, was one year.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (38:34 - 38:56)

One year. So, you know, he just sort of educated himself. I mean, really smart.

But then you have Sandy and Julia and me, and we've all been to graduate school. And, you know, and our children are well-educated, going to be well-educated. That's just quite a, you know, a transition in educational...

DICK WIESS: (38:56 - 39:19)

I think where I grew up... Of course, I never went back there, but I know they were sort of... And to go that far...

And even my mother, when I told her I was going to go to dental school, she said, Why do you want to do that? Do you have enough education?

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (39:21 - 39:26)

You know? Yeah, well... Well, I mean, if it weren't for football, you wouldn't have gone to college anyway.

DICK WIESS: (39:26 - 39:27)

Oh, well, football, right. Yeah, football.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (39:30 - 39:36)



But, I mean, that must have been a miraculous thing for mom. We used to probably have a son who was a college graduate.

DICK WIESS: (39:36 - 39:58)

Well, yeah, and that... They were... Well, it turned out they were very proud, you know.

And I think my going to college encouraged my brother to go. Right. And he had a good life, and his children are all educated.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (39:58 - 39:59)

That's right, that's true.

DICK WIESS: (39:59 - 40:18)

Whereas my sister, none of her children were interested in anything, tried to get out of high school. Right. Of course, that was my mother.

Her ambition for us three kids was to get through high school.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (40:18 - 40:19)

Sure, and I can understand that.

DICK WIESS: (40:19 - 40:59)

Because their generation didn't get through high school. Right, right. But that's what she was shooting for.

Off the school line, they'd be seeing me back sooner or later. But looking back, play two sports in a major university, playing top-notch school, and graduate on time.

DUGAN WIESS MADDUX: (41:01 - 41:02)

Quite a remarkable thing.

DICK WIESS: (41:08 - 41:09)

With one sport, they're sort of...