

- This is Robert Griffith and this is umm November ninth Wednesday at one o'clock and I'm interviewing Jim Wise, a drake alum. I want to thank you for coming today to interview.
- My Pleasure
- So I think we'll start off, um. Can you tell me a little bit about, uh, where you were born and where you grew up?
- Well, I was born in Whiteside County, Illinois in the town of Sterding and, uh, my parents had lived in this little town of Dowitt, Iowa. But, Sterding had the facilities to receive my mother's birth. (laughs) And, um, but when I was two, we move to Drake, I mean, we moved to Des Moines and we moved to a large Victorian home just two blocks north of the Drake campus at 25th and Clark. And, uh, that's where I grew up. I went to Kirkwood Elementary School and that neighborhood, which has now been torn down, and I went, then, to Washington and Irving Junior High at that time which has been torn down (chuckles) and I went to the old North High School, which has been converted to a k-8 school and then, then, a new North High has been built. So, that's... (clears throat). So I grew up in the Drake neighborhood, became closely associated with Drake as a, as a youth.
- Ok. Um... and so did you, you said you attended North High School and then what made you decide upon Drake for college after high school?
- It was a... I guess it was a no-brainer. It was my school. I guess I had a love affair with Drake University as a kid. Uh, I followed their football teams and their basketball teams in the old field house. I played sandlot ball on the campus, our friends... far back, just north of the, uh, Cowles Library was an open field and, where we, when I was a kid. And we, uh, the kids that lived in, South of the University and the kids that lived in North of the University met at the Drake campus and we played football and other... mundane things (chuckles) that kids do (laughs). So, but that's so, that reason, that's I... I established, then, a... a, during that growing up time, a feeling of... of, uh, being part of the university. And, uh, of course it was part of our neighborhood. And, uh, in fact, as I was walking the campus, I couldn't help but think about the old science hall that has been torn down, and we used to stop and look in the windows and see the big bottles of spec... of specimens and we'd gawk and we'd wonder "What are those strange-looking things" you know? But, uh, so that, uh, then when... that, uh... During the graduation time, and usually, at that time, the major graduation, of course, was in the spring and the graduation ceremonies were held at the church across the street which was know as University Christian Church, at that time. And, uh, I used to come up and, the mornings of graduation, and sit on the campus bench and watch the faculty parade from Old Main, down past the large oak trees and down to University and the police would be there stopping the traffic to let these proff, uh, professors, who were gowned in their regalia and their hats and colors. And I just thought that was a, a delight to watch them do that. So, those kinds of experience[s] and, developed, uh, an affinity for and a support of the university; which lives, still, today.
- Um, going into Drake, did you have any, like, career aspirations? What was your major? What were you looking to do, you know, as your profession?

- Well, I was seventeen when I enrolled at Drake; I was too young. I floundered through my first year at Drake. Then, Uncle Sam came calling for the Army and, um, I didn't want to be drafted, so I enlisted in the army, then, for eighteen months. I spent eight months in the States and ten months in Japan. Uh, my period of service was right after the war and in the occupation of, of ger, of Japan. So, uh, but then I came back, was on the GI Bill, and I picked up going to school and, uh, when I first started, my wee, so I was seventeen, the first veterans of World War two were returning. And these are guys, twenty-three, twenty-five, twenty-seven years of age; they'd seen the world and had the Sam Hill knocked out of them. And here I was, a seventeen-year-old kid (laughs) taking accounting and taking business law and taking all those things (laughs) that they relish and I labored through. And, uh, so, um... But all this happened and, uh, to, uh, help me in mc... mature and become more prepared for collegiate life. Uh... one thing that was, ju, just before I, when I was, uh, before I just entered the University... uh, I well remember the, um, the trailer court down on twentyseventh and court, across the west end of the Drake Stadium. And during that, that time, they had, uh, Drake had, uh, cadets during the year, during the war, and they lived their and they went through their drills and all that, and I was in high school and I'd go down and watch 'em, and, um, but, then that whole period was a developmental period for me, and my neighborhood, and my friends, and my association, then, with Drake just, those things just expanded my, my eh, my appreciation of the university. But that fer, So when I first started at Drake, as a freshman, I declared, I had, uh, great dreams of being this com, uh, corporate lawyer. That was my (laughs) I don't think high school kids, today, dream like that. I think that you're more disciplined. You have to be, you have to be pretty focused to be, to meet your college goals today much more than I did. And, um, but, a year and a half in the army and, uh, provided a maturity, at time for, uh, a need to mature and grow and, and appreciate the opportunities that laid there ahead of me. So, I cashed in, then, on the GI Bill, and, and, um, I, When I came back, I entered the school of education. There was a, our family had a history of teachers and, uh, my, uh, so I thought I would, because of the experience I had (laughs) in the business college when I was a seventeen-year-old, and then a, I thought that as a twenty-one year old I could, uh, get... try something different and I, I did that and continued and went through four years of the university and, uh, in a different manner, entirely, from what it was my first year. And, went on and got a mas, a bachelor's as well as a master's degree and I have a BSE, a bachelor's in science and education, and an MSE, master of science and education, from, uh, from Drake. So, um...
- Uh... You mentioned about the trailers: in 1950 I saw there was, there was, like, a fire at the, at one of the trailers with a couple. Do you remember anything about that?
- Now, I can't give you any details on it at all, but I know that they, they were close, they were small,
- Mhmm
- But in 1950, that, those were, the, uh, I was on, eh, I was on the concluding end of my university experience at Drake, uh, I, uh, I remember, uh, I remember there

was a fire. And, at that time, you know, they, they, those, Drake took over the trailer court and they rented the trailers to married students

- Yeah, that's right.
- And, so, even though I was on, I didn't, I did marry, uh, in 1949, which was the same year that, um, I graduated from, um, with my, no no. It was a year before I graduated. I graduated in '50 with my, with my bachelor's. And, uh, but, uh, but at that time, with the wedding plans coming up, I was not very social minded. I was really focused on class, focused on work, focused on getting money, so (chuckles) 'cause we were gonna get married in the next year and we were broke. And, uh, so I, uh, I carried a heavy class load and I, uh, then, uh, continued, uh, I, I worked two jobs, uh, ev, uh, afternoons and evenings at a truck store and Saturdays where I worked for my dad hauling coal and shoving grain. So, I did that for five years.
- Uh, and were you, you were, uh, a brother of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity, is that correct? Can you tell a little about that experience, um?
- Yeah. Um, again when I, I joined Alpha Tau Omega, in, uh, when I got back and, uh, when I, I guess it was in, in the spring of 1947, and, uh, no four... I meant, it was probably the spring of, of, uh, the January, the spring semester of '48, not '47. And, uh, I joined it, uh, at that, because of, I think the draw was, uh, my brother-in-law was already a member there, I had a lot of friends there, also had a lot of friends in Seb Alph, SAE, and, uh, so it was kind of, and I had a bid from both and I chose Alpha Tau Omega probably 'cause of my brother-in-law. Um, the first semester, I was there in '48, I was, at that time, freshmen had to wear beanies, uh, at that time, hazing was, was part of the p, of the thing. Paddles were used; grabbed your ankles and (slam, smack) you got it, you know, if you didn't measure up; discipline. But coming out of the army into that kind of a thing and most of the people who were in there were GI's they weren't gonna be intimidated by a bunch of kid stuff. And, so, I didn't have to go through the, the rigorous that the kids prior to the war had to go through, and that was the beginning of the weaning of, of hazing and so forth. We still had paddles and we'd knead 'em, but we'd give them as gifts to our, uh, our sons, or, as mementos. We usually hung them on the wall for a while, and then they were filed appropriately. And, uh, but, uh, it was a good ex, good experience. Uh, I learned a lot of etiquette, there was a mun, there was a, there was a, um, chapter meeting every Monday; come hell or high water, you were gonna be there. Uh, there's a dinner, you're gonna dress, you'll be, you'll have a white starched shirt, a tie, you'll have a coat, and pressed slacks, shined shoes. Uh, we would go and we'd sit all, all at a large table together and we would, uh, practice the etiquette and, that we were supposed to we sh, we would apply the etiquette we were supposed to do. And, uh, we would, uh, you know you receive with your right, pass with your left. You'd sit straight, keep your butt back to the back of the chair and it was (laughs) if it wasn't, you were chastised. You were corrected. There's a proper way. Uh, we had a house mother; Mother Kitchum, Ketchum. Uh, house mothers in those days were the boss in the house. There was no screwing around, I mean, the fraternity days were, uh, would have house parties. Uh, every once in a while, someone would try to slip something through

something, you know, and, uh, my wife, like, my girlfriend at that time, my current wife, uh, or my only wife (laughs) I say current wife, that means... but, uh, she wouldn't, she wouldn't drink. She had, she had the taste of glass of beer, or swallow beer. She sips a glass of wine, on occasion. But they'd bring her gin and tonics, and then bring her other unknown drinks and she'd say "Oh, thank you." And she'd hold it for a little while, and the guys... and then she'd just take it over and (clunk) set it on this window sill or some place, you know. We'd go on over someplace else and, never yet to this day, has she touched (laughs) the, touched hard liquor or beer (laughs). But anyway, those, those experiences, at that time, were, were really beneficial and I think I came at the right time because the president of the fraternity, or the, and the, the, uh, worthy master and the ex checker and, they were all veterans, and they were in for business. They weren't here to mess around. And, consequently, I was a veteran too, but I was a, I was a young veteran, they were old, more mature veterans and I just rode their wave. And, uh, but we had chapter meetings every Monday night, then. After that, uh, was kind of a social time. And there was, sometimes sauls, yeah, then we would all go down, have a glass of beer together, or something at Tony's Grand Tavern down in Cottage Grove which we'd... Cottage Grove down in MLK and Cottage Grove used to be two streets: one going north and south, one going east and west. Today it's a big intersection, you know. But, it was, uh, we had all had the DGs, the Kappas, the, and the Delta Zetas, and they were all there and, uh, we'd, that'd last maybe an hour, hour and a half at the most or so. I left fraternity, I went inactive, uh, when my, uh, after one year of active, I was a pledge, and then active for a year, then I went inactive because I was doing, I had to work. And I took, my class load went up and my, I was, and then I got married and it just, there just wasn't time for that at all, so. But all in all, the experience with the, as a fraternity member, was, uh, was very good.

- Um. I guess back to academics. Did you remember any professors that you liked? Just, like, anything in particular there?
- Oh, I sure do.
- (laughs)
- My first year, that was a tough year, there was a, a young veteran professor by the name of Lapp (spells it), taught economics, and I was taking his class and I just fell in love with this guy 'cause he would, he knew how to kick me in gear to get the information that he wanted to share and I understood it, and... So it was really, uh, and I don't remember his first name. I knew, I know that he left here within a... maybe a couple of years and went on to some other institution I believe, but, um, uh, yeah. Dr. Deli was here, Eli Zubay, they were all part of the actuary department that's no longer here. That actuary department was bought away by, or, at least, I call it bought away by, uh, White Forest, what school is that, White Forest
- There's a school, white forest
- White Forest... in North Carolina.
- Ok. Ok.
- Yeah. And they went down there and formed their uh, uh, actuary department. But, I remember that so well Dr. Deli was a, was a, a, an accounting professor and

Larry Zubay was a, a friend and a neighbor. Uh, also, in my education classes, um, oh, I had a professor, also, that first year that, uh, was just, I couldn't understand. His name was Green and I don't know him from backwards. But he was teaching a new style of English and it's on, and there wasn't grammar, and there wasn't composition, there wasn't literature, but it was "if the tree falls in the forest, and nobody's there, does it make noise?" And I said "Yeah, it makes some noise." "How do you know it makes noise?" Well, that's the kind of rhetoric he was laying on my as a seventeen year old. I wasn't able to handle that (laughs). But, uh, that, um, but I went on and into the college of education. There was, oh, Stewart Teetum, Hesal Wheatley, S. Han, uh, I remember dean of the liberal arts college, Dr. Stallnaker. And, uh, they had the Stallnaker lecture series in his honor and I just, oh, what a, what a prize gentleman he was, since I relooked up the... It seemed to me that acamaticians really impressed me. I liked, I was impressed with their knowledge base and, uh, and their achievements. And I really think that by being surrounded by those kind of people motivated me to, to go further in my education, to finish a doctorate degree myself, but, uh, but it's, uh. But the staff at Drake, my first year, I was really embarrassed when I started because my father had made arrangements to pay the tuition for a semester in half (inaudible). And so I went up and I gave my check for \$37.50 for the first half of the first semester in 1945. And then I had to carry another \$37.50 check, at the beginning of the second half of the first semester. And, um, my friends didn't have to do that, but I did. And, so I was, I wasn't comfortable with that, but, uh, I was very appreciative that he was able to pay it. But, \$75 a semester, \$150 a year, uh, and you're shaking your head and you should because you don't have, you can't fathom that. But, that's when a nickel bought a lot of stuff (laughs). So, uh, it was, uh, but the, the, uh, so anyway, I think the, the professors just really impacted me probably much more than I ever realized. In retrospect, it's just, uh, they were very very good and very important. I, they guided me through experiences that I needed guiding through, they encouraged me to think, the cautioned me in other ways, they, they molded my thinking, and they (inaudible) a sincere, a sincere in depth appreciation for teaching and learning. So...

- Yeah. Um, do you remember, um, uh, any, I guess, of your close friendships with any other students? Do you carry those on today? Or, uh, what about friends you made throughout your experience at Drake?
- Uh, yes. That, um... They carried on for a while, and then they began to wane. Drake, at at that time, and still does today, gets a lot of kids from Illinois, and a lot of kids from St. Louis area. Uh, lot of my fraternity brothers that I got, became good friends with came from Julliet, Illinois; when Julliet was a town instead of a suburb (laughs). Um, um, and, also, had good friends from Woodster Grove, Missouri; just outside of St. Louis. But, uh, so those, and we had, and then, uh, but the friends that, and then, that I had also, and that we maintained over the years, were people, were our neighbors or high school chums or: I went to North, they went to Roosevelt. But, we both attended University Church. Uh, Bob Ray was SAE at that time. Governor Ray, which was a beloved, uh, leader of our state and president of this university on an interim basis for a period and mayor of

this city for an interim basis. Uh, he was, we were together and, but that all sprouted 'cause he was part of the group that gathered on the Drake Campus at White Sandlot; they'd all play softball. So, but, so that, those friendships like that linger and grew and that are cherished today, and I think they were probably, um, they weren't formed at the university, but they were solidified at the university. And then, uh, and then our family got married, our families had common experiences and common, um, priorities we were poor, everybody was poor; looking for (laughs) looking for resources as it is today (chuckle). So just remember, what goes around comes around (both laugh). So, yeah, but, uh, there are a lot of, uh, people that, uh, I recall that, that, uh, the close friends, uh, most, I noticed, I, in fact, a fraternity brother's wife died and, when I haven't seen Dick Righten for years and years and years. But he was working on a master when I was an eighteen year old, and his wife passed away just recently. And that, so those are the (chuckles) those things that happen in life that trigger memories and appreciation of days gone by, so,

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