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### Dr. William D. Sawyer interview (3) conducted on October 22, 1984 about the Boonshoft School of Medicine at Wright State University

William D. Sawyer

James St. Peter

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**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**School of Medicine Oral History Project**

Interview date:       October 22, 1984

Interviewer:         James St. Peter

Interviewee:         William D. Sawyer, M.D.  
                          Second Dean, WSU School of Medicine  
                          Interview 3

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| JSP | My name is James St. Peter and this is the third in a series of interviews with Dr. William D. Sawyer, Dean of the Wright State University School of Medicine. The date is October 22, 1984. The time is 11:00 AM and we are in the Dean's office room 113 C, in the medical sciences building at Wright State University.  |
| JSP | Dean Sawyer in our last interview we ended with your taking up a position at visiting professor at Oxford. When did you come back from Oxford?  |
| WS  | The end of June, early part of July of 1980.  |
| JSP | And you came back to Indianapolis?  |
| WS  | Indiana, right.   |
| JSP | When did you receive any follow up information from Wright State considering your application for the deanship?   |
| WS  | John Beljan sent me some information I think shortly before I left for Oxford after the meeting I discussed at the Association of American Medical Colleges. And the next time I heard any more was either a call or letter, and I've forgotten which, while I was in Oxford asking if I would come back and visit the school and that was sometime during the spring of 1980 and I really don't remember the month. Probably March, April. |
| JSP | When did you visit Wright State?  |
| WS  | Shortly thereafter, and again I don't remember the month. Either late-March, early-April.   |
| JSP | What was your visit like? What was your first impression of the—  |
| WS  | Fairly typical search committee visit. Saw an awful lot of people in an awfully short time. Spent relatively little time with John Beljan and a great deal with a large number of people. And I think like any of those visits, they tend to blur as one thinks   |

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|     | <p>back on them. I recall meeting Helen James, who was then on the Board of Trustees. And she was apparently on the search committee. I was tremendously impressed with her. She was one of the most positive, forward-looking people that I recall meeting. And by leaving others out, I don't mean to downgrade them, but I particularly remember the opportunity to meet with Helen.</p>  |
| JSP | Was the visit very similar to other visits you've made to other universities?  |
| WS  | Yes, not remarkably different.   |
| JSP | Did you meet with community leaders as well as university people?  |
| WS  | I met with—as I recall it—on that visit I met with a fair number of people from the hospital community. It is not my recollection at that time with meeting a lot of community leaders, but rather hospital and medical society leadership.  |
| JSP | What were your thoughts about finding out the community-based nature of the medical school here?   |
| WS  | I'd known about that from my earliest conversations. So I don't think I was particularly startled by it, overwhelmed by it, one way or the other.  |
| JSP | Had you seen any of the medical schools that were set up on a similar basis?   |
| WS  | Yes. I looked at a position at Michigan State a number of years earlier, and it's a school that is set up utilizing community facilities largely. I'd also visited in one capacity or another a number of community-based schools, and so didn't find that aspect all that startling.  |
| JSP | What'd you think of the Miami Valley when you first came here?   |
| WS  | Miami Valley Hospital?   |
| JSP | No, the area.  |
| WS  | Oh, the area! Well I must say that my only previous contact in Dayton was to have been here when my son got married. He married a girl from Dayton a number of years earlier. So that's all I really knew about Miami Va—about this region of Ohio. And on that visit, I don't recall spending too much time driving around in what I'd call the most scenic areas. And it was very cold when I got here; it must have been February maybe, as I think about it. It was very, very cold as I arrived at the airport. I think like 0°. So it was a late cold spell, and I thought, "It looks like the Midwest." I spent much of my life in the Midwest, so nothing striking one way or the other. |
| JSP | Do you remember who from the medical school staff was on your interviewing committee?  |

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| WS  | <p>Gee, no I don't. I'm not sure I ever knew who exactly was on the search committee and who actually I was meeting in the capacity and who I was meeting in other capacities. I remember that there was a fairly large reception in the student center and I met a lot of people. It's...as I said, I'd have to go back to the records because I honestly don't know who was on the search committee. I don't remember.</p>   |
| JSP | <p>What was the search process like for somebody who is coming into a relatively new area? What are your feelings about that?</p>  |
| WS  | <p>I think there's a lot of ritual to it. And I tend to want the process to go a bit differently than it usually goes. And I think that very often, the searches are not warm; they are cold. They involve the lack of a lot of little touches which make the candidate feel like he or she is wanted as a person, is being considered. There is a tendency to convey the image of your being treated like—if you'll pardon the expression—a piece of meat. Being shuffled around in small segments, being asked exactly the same questions over and over and over again, which is perfectly understandable because everyone wants to get similar kinds of information. And then very often, they're sort of hazy from the candidate's viewpoint; they don't have any form. It's sort of, "Well who can we shuffle him or her to this hour when we've got to get him around to see everybody." And the inevitable lunch in which you're invited to have lunch and everybody grabs their food and wolfs it down while they're taking turns eating [<i>sic</i>] questions and you never get to eat yours. And it's really, sometimes, almost a ghastly kind of performance in my view.</p> |
| JSP | <p>How would you have felt that the process could have been improved upon in your case? Were there certain people that you wanted to talk more to?</p>   |
| WS  | <p>A first visit is very difficult to arrange that because of the wide spectrum of people that one has to see. I think, if I were—and I hope we now do conduct our searches for chairmen at the level that I'd become involved—a little more of a informal kind of interaction with the leadership, rather than in always so formal a setting, and some people to do some very pertinent kinds of briefings on fiscal and other matters, administrative matters, that understand that they know so much more about the details than the candidate does. And don't load you up with details that are incomprehensible but rather give you a meaningful kind of overview, and one that's completely honest and not being interpreted and doesn't have a whole set of nuances in it, that you'd have to go over the books for months to decipher. I think that ought to be laid out as a philosophy, as a matter of institutional and organizational style and approach. Those are some of my thoughts.</p>   |
| JSP | <p>Did you get a sense of what the institutional style here at Wright state was from, you know, the interview process?</p>   |
| WS  | <p>Some.</p>   |

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| JSP | Did you get the same sense of where the questions were coming from, what type of questions that came at you from the different groups you were at? Was there any difference between the types of questions asked by the different communities?   |
| WS  | Oh yes, very much.   |
| JSP | Well let's take the hospital community first. What kind of questions were they looking for? Were they looking for reassurances?  |
| WS  | I think it varied greatly by the personalities. In an initial interview like that, you're often dealing with, "Who is this? Where are they coming from?" And, to be sure, for example, I met with Rush Jordan from Miami Valley Hospital, as I recall on that first visit. Terribly nice man offering to be very helpful, sharing information and so forth And I appreciated everything I heard from Rush and his very great warmth, etc. But it was hard when you're new to the setting, and from the outside, to grasp the any nuances of that discussion to gain any clear signals from it. It's an interaction which is difficult to communicate.... Is that?      |
| JSP | That's—  |
| WS  | That's really what I—  |
| JSP | What about the university community? Was there a difference in the types of questions asked?   |
| WS  | Yeah. I think there was. My judgement was a bit of a preoccupation with how someone coming in from the outside was gonna be able to interact with John Beljan, was one. Secondly, there seemed to be a lot of obfuscation whenever any questions about finances or money were involved, and that seemed peculiar—and I may be merging my first and second visits here—at the time to me, but I've come to recognize later it was just the way individuals explained things, the particular individuals who were involved. And I never thought it was malicious; it just seemed to be terribly bogged down with details and wasn't a very clear, communicative summary. |
| JSP | Besides the hospital community and the university community, did you have a separate process, a separate community, inside the school of medicine itself?  |
| WS  | Yes, I met mostly with school of medicine people, relatively few people in the university generally, apart from Brian Hutchings as I recall. Ron Fox and you were still in the midst of the nursing brouhaha, so as I recall, there wasn't a dean of nursing. I don't remember meeting anybody other than the lady who came up here—and her name escapes me—very nice lady, from the University of Kentucky, as I recall it, who was a consultant to the nursing school and sort of was here three days a week during that period where the Torres-Beljan-Kegerreis business was all up in the air and Torres had resigned. Her name escapes me completely.            |

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| JSP | Did you feel that that entered into the search process at all?   |
| WS  | A lot of people talked a lot about it, and my son's father-in-law had sent me a bunch of the clippings in the newspaper when he heard from his daughter that I was coming to visit. But no I didn't think that was a very serious issue, as far as I was concerned...at that point.  |
| JSP | Did you meet with people from the VA?  |
| WS  | Was that the VA...? Yes, as I recall I met with VA people. No great impression. I also met with some of the members of the search committee who were officers or leaders in the county medical society.  |
| JSP | That was your first visit. Was there—you made basically two visits to Wright state.  |
| WS  | Three.   |
| JSP | Three visits. What was your position as a candidate here in the second visit? Had you made one of the first pruning down of candidates?  |
| WS  | I've never really asked anybody or gone back and looked at all those records. It was never a concern to me. My assumption was that there's always a pruning between a first and a second, but it's never been of any real concern enough to look into.   |
| JSP | How was your second visit different from your first? Was it basically the same thing all over again?   |
| WS  | Rather similar, yeah. It was a little later in the year and it was a little warmer. The weather, as I recall, was nice. I think that I saw a lot more people on the second occasion at [14:28?] more of the rank and file, if you will, of the internal operations of the medical school. And with that...probably got a little better feel for some of the people, particularly some of the people in John's staff, the associate deans and such, than I'd gotten the first time. |
| JSP | Do you remember any of the associate deans that were in the interview process? Were they all there?  |
| WS  | As I recall I met with all of them: Bob Jewett, John Lindower, Bob Suriano. I think I also met with Kezdi [sp?]in his role as Director of the Cox Heart Institute down at Cox. And I met with Fran Paris and Doug Dirko, principally with Fran at that point, and with Ed Spanier. And Sam Kolmen. So I think they were all involved at one degree or another.   |
| JSP | How long did your second visit last?   |

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| WS  | As I recall I flew in on a Sunday and left on Tuesday afternoon or late Tuesday to catch a plane back to Oxford.  |
| JSP | In your visits, what were your feelings about your discussions with Dr. Kegerreis?  |
| WS  | I don't remember, during those visits, having any particular discussions with him. I met with John Murray, and I met with George Kirk and Elenore Koch at one time or another during those two visits. And if I met with the President and with other board people, it was not something that was anything more than social-perfunctory in my reaction. I don't remember whether I met Helen James again the second time or not. I think I met her either the second or the third visit again and remained very impressed with her attitude and approach and her enthusiasm for the university. |
| JSP | What was significant about her particular attitude and approach that sticks out in your mind?   |
| WS  | Just a sense of enthusiasm, a sense of commitment, dedication to "this ought to be a good place and it ought to grow and be first rate."  |
| JSP | In your dealings with the Board of Trustees, has that impression continued in your mind?  |
| WS  | I've never found Helen anything—and we haven't dealt with each other for a long time or on any regular basis—but after I came I always thought the she was a stalwart supporter, and I think her approach at the Board of Regents has been a solid, concerned performance.  |
| JSP | After your first visit, did you come away with the sense that you wanted to come to this place...   |
| WS  | No.   |
| JSP | ...for your career?   |
| WS  | No.   |
| JSP | Why not?  |
| WS  | Went back to Oxford and said, "That's nothing for me."  |
| JSP | Why?  |
| WS  | I guess it was a bit of a sense of institutional coldness—not the weather—but just, institutional coldness. I didn't have a sense that the visit had been organized; it seemed almost chaotic, and I guess I heard a lot more during that visit that suggested that things were in chaos rather than in order. While there was clearly a fundamental  |

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|     | <p>struggle that John had put in place which was good and solid, there seemed to be a lot of superficial chaos and a jockeying for position rather than a “let’s get on with what we’re here to get on about,” and I wasn’t sure that I was all that content with the academic substance, the institution at that point.</p>   |
| JSP | <p>Was the jockeying for position that you mentioned inside the medical school or outside in the university community itself?</p>  |
| WS  | <p>I would say probably everywhere.</p>  |
| JSP | <p>Why do you think that was?</p>  |
| WS  | <p>Well, there was a very large brouhaha going on in the university. There were signs, to me, of looking for a PR person rather than somebody with intense academic interests. There are the inevitable hospital-hospital fights—or rivalries or competitions, whatever word you want to use; fights is probably the wrong word—in Dayton. A certain amount of uncertainty that a lot of the practice community really understood what having a medical school meant. I think those are just some of the things...Some real power issue struggles on campus I think were fairly evident. John Beljan was not a man who didn’t incite a certain amount of hard opinion in one way or another. St—</p> |
| JSP | <p>Did they seem to be coming from any foci in the university?</p>   |
| WS  | <p>No, I don’t think so.</p>   |
| JSP | <p>I you came away with almost, well you would describe that as a negative feeling from your first visit, why did you go back for the second visit?</p>  |
| WS  | <p>John called me and asked me would I come back, and it probably relates to Steve Beering, whom I discussed in a previous session with you in Indiana, asking me if I’d come take a look at this place. Together with the attitude that I expressed earlier of being willing to look and listen. You always learn in those kinds of visits. And at the time, though I thought I was not inclined to come, I thought, “Well, there’s always a first visit and there’s a second visit, and that I ought to come back and look a second time when John asked me to rather than turning it down at the time.</p>  |
| JSP | <p>Did he give you the sense that you were one of the final candidates at that time?</p>   |
| WS  | <p>I don’t think that we ever discussed it in that regard. It was my sense that John had a very positive feeling about my candidacy, but we didn’t talk about that. I had no idea and didn’t seek any about who other people that were being considered were. I subsequently know who a couple were but only a couple.</p>   |
| JSP | <p>On your second visit did you get the same vibrations about the university as you did on the first?</p>  |

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| WS  | Yes.  |
| JSP | Were they the same? Had they intensified? Decreased?  |
| WS  | Hard to—again I’m looking back four years and how did I feel then. I think there hadn’t been dramatic change in my reaction to the situation. People were probably becoming a little more forceful about, “What do you think your interactions—how can you get along with John Beljan,” questions, but other than that, no great change.  |
| JSP | Did the interaction with Dr. Beljan become a major item in the search process do you feel?  |
| WS  | No. In fact we had very little interaction during those two visits, very sparse.  |
| JSP | Did it seem to be a concern of the other people who interviewed you?  |
| WS  | Mm-hmm.   |
| JSP | Why do you think that was?  |
| WS  | It’s inevitable. When you have a strong person whose been Dean who helped build something and is gonna remain in the same institution in a role that’s a supervisor, the VP for Health Affairs dean relationship, that’s a very difficult setting. Very often it leads to a lot of conflict and [great? 23:03] number of difficulties. And because of the difficulty in separating as you move from one job to the other, your direct concerns and instead of working at policy, the person who’s moved up tends to keep their hand in the operations. So I think that’s a natural concern about how is the successor gonna feel in that relationship. And it’s certainly clear as you look at medical schools around the country, when deans move up, very often the dean who comes in next may not last very long because of the seemingly intolerable working relationship with loyalties that have been established and so forth. |
| JSP | If you interaction was sparse, as you put it, with Dr. Beljan, how did you come to the conclusion that this might be an acceptable type of relationship? What other information did you base your feelings on?  |
| WS  | I think that one senses in talking with other people what the working relationship is like. And I certainly didn’t at the second visit decide I was interested in coming to Wright State. In fact, I went back to Oxford and told my wife she didn’t need to worry about moving to Dayton in...   |
| JSP | That was after the second visit?  |
| WS  | Yes.  |

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| JSP | So you come away from two consecutive visits to Wright state with the same feeling of ambivalence at best...   |
| WS  | Mm-hmm.  |
| JSP | Why did you go back a third time?  |
| WS  | I think again it was fundamentally courtesy. Is there something there that I haven't seen? I've done experiments in my life far more than two times before I abandon them as fruitless. So I don't think that's, for me, unusual to persist if I'm invited again. It's a part of, sort of, the policy under which I operate. And I hadn't cut it off when we got back from Oxford in early July, and John called and asked if Jane Ann would come over and I would come over and visit. So, it's a two-and-a-half hour drive and so we decided to do it. |
| JSP | What was your feelings before you got here? On your way here?  |
| WS  | Pretty open-minded.  |
| JSP | When you got here for your third visit, did it follow the same routines as the first two?  |
| WS  | No, it was a good bit different. Much more...let me say, a somewhat higher level visit. In one session, which I was trying to get information from, which apparently aroused some sensitivities among some deans and department chairmen because I was asking rather specific questions, and I remember hearing the words, "You came on like an LCME site visitor." And I wasn't meaning to come on like an LCME site visitor; I was just trying to cut through some of the fog and lots of talk and find out what was going on. But—                    |
| JSP | What kinds of questions were you asking?   |
| WS  | How student promotions operated, how the admissions process operated, what was done with students who got in academic difficulty, how the faculty promotion process worked...operational kinds of questions that I would think would be reasonable and fairly key, but maybe my style was a bit too much. I tend if I've got a question to ask it very directly. I think I made a few people nervous.  |
| JSP | Do you feel that your third visit put you in the position of being able to ask the more detailed questions? Given advantage, as it were?   |
| WS  | If I understood anything about the process, it sure should because there comes a time when you look at these things where you're down to the point that there's a sense that there's gonna have to be a decision made on both parties. And very frankly if after two visits left me feeling there was a great blue fog somewhere there, a lot of verbiage and words covering things up that I needed to get at, some details of what   |

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|     | was going on to see whether it was something I had really any further interest in.   |
| JSP | So that was the acid test of whether or not you'd come to Wright State.  |
| WS  | Yeah, I think it was.  |
| JSP | Did you request any specific interviews with anybody?  |
| WS  | No.  |
| JSP | Who did you interview with that was different from the first two?  |
| WS  | Don't remember. I spent some time with the President and a little more time with John, and.... I'm trying to remember whom from the Board of Trustees I talked to. And I honestly don't remember whether it was Mr. Gilliam...I don't remember. I do remember having a dinner at the president's house, very clearly, and having an opportunity during the evening to have extended conversations with Perry Wydman, who was then on the Board, and Mrs. Wydman, and with Sylvan Weinberg and his wife Joan, with Bob and Kay Kegerreis, and more time with John and Bernadette. And Perry Wydman's a terribly infectious salesman for Dayton, or he was at that time; he's now in Cleveland. And I remember some key events, people who were powerfully persuasive when it came time to make a decision. And I've mentioned Helen James before. Certainly Perry Wydman was an enormously persuasive individual— |
| JSP | <i>[Loud Sneeze]</i>   |
| WS  | —both for the community and for the board and the commitment to the medical school and the university. So Weinberg was very positive about the whole social milieu of Dayton and the medical climate, and Bob Kegerreis and his wife were very powerful persuaders that these were kind of nice people and that it might be a place that would be a good place to live and a good place to work. We also took Jim Galvin, a local realtor who had done a great deal to help people come into the medical school, took us around, showed us some of the areas, and it was quite apparent that this is a kind of place we could enjoy living in.   |
| JSP | Did your meetings with Dr. Kegerreis, Dr. Beljan, and the Board, did they help dispel the fog about Wright State in your mind?   |
| WS  | To a degree, yes, and to a degree, no. I don't think you expect under those circumstances people to come up and wash all the dirty laundry while they're displaying the clean. I think you're gonna see the clean laundry, the enthusiastic positive side, etc. I don't think there was ever any great discussion about the pending fiscal difficulties of the state of Ohio, how that might impact, and I suppose that's my naiveté. I didn't probe in great depth what the governor's view on tax was. It was clear that Ohio had, compared to other states, substantial capacity to raise taxes to  |

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|     | <p>generate revenues in the face of an economic downturn. They had a low state tax structure and that if there was a will to do it for higher education, it could be. I think that it was more—and this is my style—more a feeling of these kinds of people whom I thought it would be a pleasure and productive to work with, and this goes back to my view about positions and so-called negotiations and discussions.</p> <p>I've never taken one in which there was no elaborate discussion about what I call "how many paperclips you can have." I've taken the view, and I do that in offering others positions, that if I come and do the job that is expected of me and do it well, I will have made available to me all of the resources that can be made available to me to do a good job. And if I don't do a good job, all the promises on earth won't amount to a damn because they won't be kept and shouldn't be. So I didn't approach things in a terribly difficult negotiation, I didn't bring in a lawyer to represent me, I didn't bring in an accountant to go over the school of medicine's books. It seems to me that that's not a productive way to start, and if you don't have an interpersonal reaction, in what fundamentally is an intentionally interpersonal business that we're in or enterprise that we're in, then one probably ought to stay away from it. If you get to that point where you got to have your own accountant come audit the institutional books, I think there's some sort of basic distrust there that doesn't [order? 33:54] for a good relationship. So we didn't really do any of those kinds of things, [right? 34:01] that way.</p> |
| JSP | Did you meet with all of the deans when you came for your third visit?  |
| WS  | "All" is a difficult word again for me to remember. In those several visits I probably had met with all of them. Joe Castellano had just been appointed just about the same time I was, so I'm not sure there was a dean of business. I met with Gene Cantelupe, I met with Brian, with Ron Fox. Nursing was completely open. Roger Iddings I'm sure I met with. So...there were...   |
| JSP | That's pretty much everyone.  |
| WS  | Yeah, I guess that was everyone about that time.  |
| JSP | Did you have further interviews with the staff in the school of medicine?   |
| WS  | Not a lot more than what I discussed, the one with the associate dean and committee chairman.   |
| JSP | Was there a student subcommittee set up that you met with on any of your visits?  |
| WS  | I met with students. There were two meetings that—in one or another time—and I don't remember which time in particular. I remember one that was held down in 035, and there was a table set up for forty people, and lunch was to be served, etc., and the food was all there, and there was one other person and me showed up. And I think that was on either the first or the second visit. And that maybe was supposed to  |

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|     | <p>be a student lunch. There was not a sense of a lot of... special student interaction, but again, that maybe merged with other visits to other places.</p>   |
| JSP | <p>What did you come away with from your third visit? What were your thoughts? Did they change very much from the second one?</p>  |
| WS  | <p>Yeah...they did. My feelings had gotten around to the point, with some very pointed questioning and so forth, that this was a setting in which...it crystalized to the point of a good foundation was in place, it was possible for some things to be done, that there was a need for a major thrust on the academic side, and the that time was right for that thrust to begin, and that people like John and Bob Kegerreis and others perceived that and appreciated it. And that in fact my background and strengths, if there were any, were such that it would be possible for me to succeed John and that two plus two equals eight or two plus two equals six, a synergistic and complimentary way. They could build upon John's organization, which he had put together and done it very well, in the style and the development of the institution. And then add to that what I'd like to believe is a very substantial academic understanding and insight and background and that the two would be a synergistic sequence. So when John asked me formally to take the position, and we left to back to Indianapolis, as I recall on a Friday, driving back Jane Ann and I talked about it, and I guess reached a point of saying, "Let's go do it." And so we got back to Indianapolis and had dinner—got something together for dinner, whatever we had in the house—and called John and said I'd come.</p> |
| JSP | <p>So you did—</p>   |
| WS  | <p>And that was a fairly dramatic turnaround, I think, than over the way I'd probably come to Dayton for that visit. And I think that I mentioned that some of the people who were very key in that decision continue to be people like Helen James, Perry Wydman, Sylvan Weinberg, Bob Kegerreis. And then the idea, this notion of a sequential synergism. And I mentioned earlier in our discussions about views on institutional development and why I decided to come to a developing school rather than a traditional school. So put all those together and I think maybe it was one of the spur of the moments; I've learned over the years that the conventional way one looks at these kinds of decisions is to take a piece of yellow paper and you write "Yes" and "No" and draw a line underneath and list all the reasons why you should and all the reasons why you shouldn't. It's amazing, you always come out the same number of reasons. So then you go back and you do a weighting. "I'll give it four, three, two, one," and it's <i>amazing</i>; you generally come out with the same number of points and eventually end up tearing the paper up and making a gut decision: "This is what I want to do." So we avoided the paper this time.</p>  |
| JSP | <p>What were some of the disadvantages that you felt would be coming to Wright State?</p>  |
| WS  | <p>An interesting but principled one is that when you come to a new enterprise of this</p>   |

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|     | <p>sort, or reasonably new enterprise, a developing enterprise. You take a terrible beating in the sense of stature. I was at a point in microbiology in microbiological organizations and in medical school microbiology circles, sitting on the councils of their organizations, standing in the line, serving in the Council of Academic Societies—the AAMC had just been invited to sit on their administrative board and those things—and one gives a lot of that up. And when you come to the little developing school that most people haven't heard of or if they have confuse it with Wayne State in Detroit, you're at a very different position in the national hierarchy of medical schools from really a prominent institution to a little-known one. I think that's one disadvantage or advantage; it's the old "cup is half full or half empty." I think that one envisions an awful lot of work. I think that anytime, I at least, take on a new Lowell, I think there's a lot of uncertainty as to how it's gonna go and anxiety. If it isn't there you won't do a good job. It is moving from a very secure, established position with a... I didn't have any problems with Indiana; things were there, they were good. And then of course there was giving up Big Ten football and basketball and coming over to the little leagues, which is a personal one, and I still miss it. So... and then you've got to persuade your wife that she wants to pick up and leave someplace where she's happy and come to a new place and—</p> |
| JSP | How did she adjust to that?  |
| WS  | Oh, she—just beautifully.  |
| JSP | What were some of the perceived advantages that you saw involved in coming to Wright State?  |
| WS  | <p>I think the one I've talked about repeatedly is, or the couple, that it is an enterprise of development that was attractive to me, a chance to make an impact that perhaps wouldn't have been the same at a well-established traditional institution. Secondly, I think that there was a very good, solid foundation that John Beljan put together. I had no difficulties in believing that John and I had similar objectives for the school, that undoubtedly our styles would be different, because any two people have a different style, and that we both understood clearly that I was gonna tend to some different things and so forth. So I just thought, ultimately, it was a chance to go and get on with it and do something that might be rewarding to do and I hoped would be fun to do.</p>  |
| JSP | How were your styles different? What would you describe as the differences between your styles and Dr. Beljan's?   |
| WS  | <p>John is a builder, a developer. He takes a bull by the horns and goes right at things, and he is, in my judgment, at his best in a growing, developing, building scenario. He has a very good innate and cultivated sense of how to put organizations together, of how to gain support, to find a necessary consensus, gain support for it and move on. He is a very dynamic, driving person. I think he tends to want to have his hand in operations very actively. I believe he was more of a top-down manager than I am</p>  |

and was a very private person, in reality, despite his great public interaction was still a very private person and did not share ideas or goals easily with a large number of people. People got only a piece of what John had in mind to work with, and he kept the pattern together.

I suppose, since I'm trying to answer a question differently, that I would imply I think that I probably do a lot of those things differently. I am very much more of a rapid idea generator—don't mean that John isn't an idea generator—but I scatter them out and want people to react to them and comment on them and critique them and so it's more of a give and take. I like that and I think it's just part of my academic upbringing, where you exchange ideas openly and fully, and out of that exchange comes the best possible product. I'm very much committed to middle management. I believe that an institution, a great dean in an institution that doesn't have full management participation of its department chairman and participation by the faculty is gonna be a lousy institution no matter how good the dean. And so I emphasize middle management and departmental structure probably more than John. I think that probably I am much less inclined to control day to day operations. I don't want to see every piece of paper that's floating around the school. I expect our departments to conduct business, to make budget decisions. I expect the staff to handle problems within some broad guidelines, and I'm not really all that concerned about knowing everything that's goes on.

I think it's a little.... We both are disappointed when people don't see things the way we do. I think that it's a little more sense of participation and you've got a job to do and when you're given that job I expect you to do it. And I really believe you will, and I'm disappointed if you don't. But I don't feel it's my job to tell you how to do your job. So I think that there are some very substantial style differences. I tend to be much more open in my ideas and thoughts, and there's no...there really isn't any terribly great connived, hidden agenda. I tend to put it out on the table, and I'm not hung up if a lot of people don't think that's something that's a very good idea because I think if they get enough of them, they'll find some of them are good, and I want them to do the same. I think probably also during both of our times at Wright State, I suspect we had different senses of ambition and that that probably colored style and activities.

JSP How would you describe those different senses?

WS I think there's no question that John aspired to a position of broader academic leadership than being dean of the medical school. I think he aspired, and he said so openly on more than one occasion, to become the president of a university or an institution and that he was working in a thought-out way to develop his career and background to accomplish that. I tend not to be, to feel driven by anything other than I want to be the best that I can possibly be in the job I'm doing right now. And I guess I've reached that point in life where I think anything else will take care of itself if you plug along and do that. I don't have a compassion to be A-rated. I don't have a compelling drive to be 'A' this or 'A' that or the other. I would like to be

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|     | <p>respected, I would like to be thought well of, I'd like people to think, "He did a great job," but a don't sense that I'm doing what I do so that I can get the next step. And the next steps have always taken care of themselves. They've never been what I thought they ought to be anyway, so...</p>   |
| JSP | <p>It seems like, when you were describing Dr. Beljan's leadership style that it seemed to me to reflect a lot of your own leadership style when you were in Thailand.</p>  |
| WS  | <p>Probably.</p>  |
| JSP | <p>How do you feel that impacted your position when you came to Wright State?</p>   |
| WS  | <p>I gained a great deal of understanding about a lot of the things John had done, very frankly. And I didn't agree with everything John wanted to do and he didn't agree with everything I did. But the two of us could talk about it and agree to disagree in a rational way that didn't take on personalities, and I think that an understanding of building an institution was very important for me. I could've imagined incredible difficulties had I not had that experience.</p>  |
| JSP | <p>What were some of the things that you disagreed on that you would've done other than what he did in developing this medical school?</p>  |
| WS  | <p>Oh gee. Most of those are in little areas. They're.... I think it's hard to argue with success. I think John had a knack in which he caused a lot of people to expect things to happen such that they believed they had a promise that something would happen and John never gave that promise. He created expectations, sometimes, that were much more solid than the reality of the expectation. I saw that because some of the attempts to collect the debts have occurred with me—and you never can tell if that's somebody trying to take advantage of the change or not. I think that I probably would have early on put more strength into the departmental chairmanship leadership activities. I think John probably held some chairmen back a little more than they should have been. But again, I wasn't there. I wasn't dealing with the people at the time, so it's not fair to be critical about it. I think that I would have probably approached budget development and management differently but there's no saying that it would've come out any differently—</p> |
| JSP | <p>How would you have approached them though?</p>   |
| WS  | <p>I again am a little more inclined towards setting some budget targets and giving people a little more flexibility and freedom to decide how they're gonna manage within that structure. Again though, that may not have been the best way to do it at this time. I think that we probably would disagree on certain aspects of facility development. I probably would not have—and again I'm speaking from hindsight—have taken on the Fellows Institute and the Cox Institute to acquire research "credibility" for the institution in anything like the same way John took them on. He felt very driven by the accrediting process to have research credibility, and those</p>   |

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| JSP | <p>were ways, I think, to gain that in a hurry. That might have been some of the energy, and some of the resources might have been better directed in retrospect into developing that in-house and just toughing out the accrediting body's demands for research. And we might have gotten, ultimately, further faster without those kinds of easy quick buy-ins to "research credibility." Those are some of the kinds of things I think I would not have... [Yawn]. I think again from the advantage of hindsight, I think John cut an awful lot of deals that I probably wish hadn't been cut with one or another individuals, but at the time, those probably—those may well have had to be cut. So I'm very reluctant to say that those weren't good deals or that they should have been done differently. I think they, very often you do what you have to do.</p> <p>Well, our time is up for this interview, and on the next one I would like to discuss your first priorities upon becoming dean, and the errors you felt you had to address right away, and the first two—at least two—years of your deanship. Okay, thank you very much!</p> |
|     | END   |