

Dr. Herman O. Weishaar (1889-1984)  
and Mrs. Weishaar (nee Gladys Fowler ) (1897-1981)

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## ABSTRACT

Interviewee: Dr. & Mrs. Weishaar

Interviewer: Briggs Maselli

Date of interview: 1976

Mrs. Weishaar's early school days from 5th grade in Wilmette to 1912

New Trier High School class 1915

Evanston Hospital School of Nursing - Met intern Weishaar there in 1918

His early life in Hayworth, Illinois, was graduated from Clinton High School - Hiram College - University of Chicago, B.S. 1916, M.D. 1918.

To Evanston Hospital last quarter - retained there until February 1919

Account of how being laid between Central Street, Evanston to 4th/Linden overnight

Bahá'í Temple - Community feeling against both - Built over long period

Dr. released from U.S. Army - January 1919

Started Wilmette practice February 1919 at 1159

Wilmette Avenue - Practiced there 55 years

Dr. Weishaar/ Gladys Fowler married October 1, 1920

Lived at 1410 Sheridan - Mr. Gage's (Henry) summer cottage

Association with the younger Dr. Stolp, Dr. Byron

Stolp opened office 1874

Rotary Club - 1943

Early medical equipment of Dr. Byron Stolp

Collen Kilner - Birch tree called Mother's Tree+-Houses individual (not developments)

The pages that follow constitute the transcript of an interview conducted as part of the Wilmette Public Library District's Oral History program, started in 1975 by a committee of the Friends of the Wilmette Public Library which has been chaired since its inception by Rhea Adler, a resident of the Village of Wilmette since 1932.

A copy of the tape on which this transcript is based is available for circulation, and may be obtained by checking with a Reference Librarian concerning circulation procedures.

This program would not have been possible without the cooperation of the many long-time residents of the Village interested in helping to preserve particulars of a fascinating past, and the patience, energy and effort of a small but dedicated group of interviewers, transcribers and typists who share the belief that the past is too important to be forgotten.

Richard E. Thompson

Director

Dr. and Mrs. Weishaar

BM: My name is Briggs Maselli and I am going to be interviewing Mrs. Weishaar at 24 Calvin Circle. Do you think you might start, Mrs. Weishaar?

Mrs. W: Yes. Well, I came to Wilmette when I was in the 5th grade. I came here from - - my family moved from Edgewater. We then moved and lived at 7th and Linden, and I went to the -- it was called the Central School, and it is now called the Stolp School. I think that has changed.

BM: Yes, I think it has.

Mrs. W.: I graduated from that Wilmette school in 1912. Then I went to New Trier and graduated from there in 1915.

BM: How large was your graduating class in 1915? Was it large?

Mrs. W.: Oh, the whole school enrollment at New Trier at that time was 600 students.

BM: Now they graduate that much in each session.

Mrs. W.: Think of it! Then I entered the Evanston Hospital School of Nursing and it was there I met my husband.

BN: And you were interning?

Mrs. W.: He was an intern. -

BM: At Evanston Hospital?

Mrs. W.: Yes.

BM: What year was that?

Dr. W.: 1918.

BM: That was 1918. Unhunh. And what was your speciality?

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Dr. W.: Well, when I finally graduated, I specialized in - in those days what they called surgery, gynecology and obstetrics.. That was all one specialty.

BM: I see.

Dr. W.: Interestingly enough, in those days your general surgeon even took in fractures. So that gave us quite a wide area of experience.

BM: Were you a Wilmette resident also?

Dr. W.: No, I was born in Hayworth, Illinois, on a farm, and graduated from Hayworth High School, which was then an accredited three year high school, and went to Clinton for my 4th year. Then I went to a little college in Hiram, Ohio, called Hiram College. We had a little - I was a Presbyterian, but in our little town we had a minister that was in the Christian Church, and Curley, as we called him, practically picked me up and sat me down in Hiram College, Ohio. That was his college and I went to Hiram College for two years and then transferred to the University of Chicago, and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1916 and got my Medical Degree in 1918. At that time I was in the Medical Reserve Corps, and had my appointment to Camp Ogelthorp, and I felt that I would like a little hospital experience before I went to camp, so I ditched my last quarter of college and came out to Evanston Hospital and interned there.

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After I got out there, I was the only intern and they held me as indispensable, so I didn't get out of the hospital until February of 1919. It was during this internship that I met Gladys Fowler in my church choir.

BM: Unhum. I see. All right. Mrs. Weishaar, would you tell me how things were at 7th and Linden when you were growing up there?

Mrs. W.: In that neighborhood, it was fairly well built up. Not like it is now, of course, but it was fairly well built up. Of course, there were no apartments, and the elevated wasn't there, of course. That came while we lived there against much - - there was much consternation about it. And petitions were even circulated to see if they couldn't keep that from being done because all the neighbors were against it. Finally one night it started, and in the morning the trains were going. After it started, every body used it, in spite of all the ill feeling.

BM: Well, I think, yes, that certainly is a drawing point now to be able to walk over to the ~~North~~.

Mrs. W.: And the same thing can be said of the Baha'i Temple.

BM: Oh; really. -

Mrs. W...: There was a great deal of feeling about that. And, of course, now it is quite a credit to the community, but there was a great deal of feeling about that.

Dr. W.: I think the building - I think it was delayed about two

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:years while they were trying to get the permit to build it and after they did get -- oh, there was just the first floor, and that lasted for quite some little while before they finally got the permit to go ahead and build the temple as it is today.

BM: Oh, I see. Who did the land belong to before they bought it? Do you know?

Dr. W.: I do not know.

BM: Oh

Mrs. W.: Remember the artist that lived across the street?

Dr. W.: Yes. Well, that was a Frenchman named Bougois. He was the man who was the architect who designed it, and he lived across the street, but I don't remember who owned the property.

BM: But it did take a while to build?

Dr. W.: Oh, no question. It did take a long time. They would not build except as they had the finances to pay for it so it was all paid as it was built. So anything that was built had been paid for.

BM: I see. Were you living in Wilmette at the time, too?

Dr. W.: Yes. After I finished that internship, as I said, I was released from the army in January 1919 and I came out to Wilmette to start the practice of medicine the first of February, 1919.

BM: Where was your office?

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Dr. W.: In Wilmette - - 1159 Wilmette Avenue. I had had that office for 55 years. In the same office.

BM: Oh, I see. Things have changed a little bit in that area, too. Mrs. Wieshaar, can you tell me the names of some of the neighbors that lived in your area when you were growing up?

Mrs. W.: Well, the Van Schaach family lived next door. There was quite a distance between our house and them, but they were the closest neighbor. And across the street there was a family by the name of Barber. And across 7th Street a family by the name of Miller.

BM: Oh, was that THE Mrs. Miller of Sunshine Corner?

Mrs. W.: No, no it wasn't Lenore. Then another family that lived there was the Judson Stone family.

BM: And when you went to school, did you walk?

Mrs. W.: Yes, of course. Everybody walked in those days.

BM: How were the streets? Were they fairly well paved?

Mrs. W.: Yes, as I remember, they were. In those days you always walked. Everybody walked and I would walk from my house over to Central Avenue and 9th Street and pick up Margaret Wheelock. And - - she was a very dear friend and we went to New Trier. Then we walked to Kenilworth and we picked up Clarise Neidecker. Then we would walk on to New Trier, but we were friends all the way through New Trier. I believe Margaret is still in Wilmette.



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BM: Yes, she is. I think Rhea Adler has contacted her about doing an interview.

Mrs. W.: Yes.

BM: What did you do after school?

Mrs. W.: Well, I remember getting together and translating our Latin and studying.

BM: Well, I suppose we can check the distance somehow to see what the distance is.

Mrs. W.: I never remembered it being any hardship.

BM: Well, if you are meeting your friends --

Mrs. W.: And we carried our lunch, of course. There was a lunch room, but then most everybody carried their lunch. You could get something hot to drink.

BM: And then where did you . . . you were married after you finished training, and you opened your practice?

Mrs. W: Oh, yes.

Dr. W.: I started the practice of medicine the first of February, 1919. Then we were married the first of October, 1920. So I practiced for a year and a half before we were married, and in the meantime Mrs. Weischaar had graduated from nursing school and her mother had moved out to an apartment in the south side, and it was out there that we were married.

BM: Oh, I see. And then you moved up here to Wilmette?

Dr. W.: Yes.

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BM: Was your office at home or did you have an office?

DR. W: No, the office was . . . well, when I first came it was in what we called the Cox Building which was a corner drug- store. Schneider and ( *Indistinct* ) had a drugstore.

Mrs. W.: The building is still there.

Dr. W.: We were there for two years and then we went to the Brown Building, which is 1159 Wilmette Avenue. And I have been there ever since. I have just now sent out notices that I will not renew my lease, so I have been practicing up until now.

BM: Up until now. That's really interesting.

Dr. W.: However, I do go to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for six months in the winter and then here for six months so when I'm here I have been seeing patients.

BM: Did you help Dr. Weishaar when you were --

Mrs. W.: No.

BM: You retired?

Mrs. W.: I retired.

BM: I see. And where were you living?

Mrs. W.: Oh, we lived in -- when we were first married we lived up at 1410 Sheridan Road. There is a big condominium there now.

BM: And that was a house?

Mrs. W.: That was Mr. Gage's summer cottage.

BM: Oh, was that the Gage house?

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Mrs. W.: Yes, that was where they spent their summers. Of course, at that time there were no apartment buildings in Wilmette.

BM: What was the area like then when you moved up there?

Mrs. W.: Oh, it was really bare. There was a house across the street an old house that was . . .

Dr. W.: And that was the -- she may have confused that -- that was called the Gage house. That was not the house we lived in. We lived in a little cottage that was right on the water's edge.

BM: And that was the summer house?

Dr. W.: Yes. And the Gage House, later called the Tornado Inn, was across the street.

BM: Was that across Sheridan Road?

Mrs. W.: Yes.

BM: And you were on the lake side?

Mrs. W.: That is where those little town houses are now. Across from -- isn't it 1410 Sheridan Road now? That apartment building, I believe, is 1410 . . . right across the street.

BM: And there was just the summer cottage that you were living in on the shore side there, when you were there?

Mrs. W.: Yes.

BM: That must have been very pleasant.

Mrs. W.: Oh, only we were there for the winter! See, it was their summer home, so they said we could have it for the winter.

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He was making a call there one day, and he asked Mr. Gage what he did with this house, in the winter, because, of course, there were no apartments, and we had to have a place to live. After we were married, and he said, %Oh, we just lock it up.+Papa said, %Well, would you rent it?+and he said, %Oh, well,+ . . . and I guess he thought about it, didn't he dear? And he guessed he could.

BM: And then did you stay there?

Mrs. W.: Until June.

Dr. W.: Just for the winter We had a rather interesting experience while we lived there. It was heated by a tremendous fireplace. Oh, I don't know how long -- three or four feet long and an old fashioned, what we called a pot-bellied stove, outside of the kitchen stove, so we used that fireplace, of course, quite extensively. One night I awakened or Mrs. Weishaar . . . I don't know, maybe both of us . . . and thought we smelled smoke, so I went out into the living room, and there was smoke so I opened the windows to let the smoke blow out, and in the meantime it brought in the air, and the fireplace started burning. And the logs had heated through the brick, and set the fireplace on fire. Of course, we called the Fire Department, and there was not a great deal of damage done. Next morning I called Mr. Gage,

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and I expect Mrs. Gage, if she were living, would not like this comment very much. When I told Mr. Gage what had happened, he said, %Well, that couldn't!+ but I said, %But it did! The fire people were in.+%Well, no, it couldn't. That fireplace was built up solid. Those were solid brick.+And I said, %Well, I'm sorry, but the firemen found wooden planks underneath the fire brick, and they were what had caught on fire. And he was quite sure because his wife had watched them . . .

Mrs. W.: Had sat there and watched them build it. And that's the reason why she probably wouldn't like this comment. But he was so very sure that it couldn't happen, but it did happen to the fireplace,

BM: Where did you move then, after you moved out of the cottage?

Mrs. W.: Well, then we rented a bungalow over on Oakwood Avenue and lived there for five years. Then we bought our only home we ever owned at 1331 Chestnut and lived there for 43 years. Then we came here (Calvin Circle) in 1969.

BM: So, you like Wilmette?

Mrs. W.: Yes.

Dr. W.: It is hard for me to write Evanston.

Mrs. W.: That's our home.

BM: Well, this is close enough.

Mrs. When I speak of home, I always speak of Wilmette.

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BM: Mrs. Weishaar mentioned that you were associated with Dr. Stolp when you started practice.

Dr. W: Yes. That is quite a long string, too. Dr. Byron Stolp started a practice in Wilmette in 1874, and then he was killed in an automobile accident in 1917, but in the meantime his son had graduated from medical school and was associated with his father. So, actually, his father was killed and that was just about the time I was getting out of the Evanston Hospital. Dr. Stolp invited me to come up and share the office with him. So he did the medical phase side of it, and I did the so called surgical specialty which involved the various areas I spoke about. I continued then until just now, so that office has had a stretch of over 100 years.

BM: Yes, I can imagine. Is there someone still there?

Dr. W.: No, I am closing it.

BM: When you left you closed it?

Dr. W.: In 1972, I decided that I would essentially retire and sent out notices that I was giving up the active practice of medicine, and gave up most of my office at that time. Since then I have had a very limited practice of favorite patients that I have taken care of for many, many years. So this is sort of an anti-retirement because I haven't done very much since 1972 anyway.

BM: And Mrs.. Weishaar mentioned the Rotary. What was that?

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Dr. W.: Oh, yes. And at that time the Rotary Club, to which I had belonged since 1943, gave me quite a nice party at the Rotary Club and also had written and constructed an article which they had given to the Wilmette Life and had the article framed. I felt very much honored, because it was the first article in that issue of the *Wilmette Life*.

Mrs. W.: We'd show it to you.

BM: That's interesting. Yes, I would like to see it.

Dr. W.: In connection with my real retirement in 1972, I gave many of the articles from my office that had been handed down through the years of practice from Dr. Byron to Dr. Rufus Stolp to the Wilmette Historical Society. Mr. James Williams was then in charge, and Jim and I had thought of setting up an exhibit from the memorabilia that I had retained over these many years, but due to the lack of space at the time, it was abandoned and there has never been anything done concerning it.

BM: Do you still have all the things?

Dr. W.: Many of them I had sent over to the Historical Society Building on Lake and Ridge. I also have quite a collection in the office now, and have suggested to the Historical Society that I would like to have them have it, and keep it with the other exhibits, but I have not gotten any reply from them as yet.

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BM: Oh, you haven't. I think we should do something about that.

Mrs. W.: I think it would be a shame to have those things lost.

Dr. W.: I have made two efforts now and have gotten no reply from either of them, but it would be quite apropos to have the whole exhibit in one place so that it would be reconstructed if they ever wished to do so. It was really interesting because in those years we had our own little water still. We had to make our own distilled water. Couldn't be bought. It wasn't available, and Dr. Rufus Stoip had to learn his own blood counts, had his blood chambers and so forth, so really some things that are quite old that should be retained.

BM: Yes, they certainly should. It would be a shame to have them lost. Mrs.

Stolp, would you like to tell me about the picture? Oh, Mrs. Weishaar, I'm sorry

Mrs. W.: Well, this is a picture of our home at 1331 Chestnut where we lived for 43 years. This picture was taken by Cohen Kilner and (*indistinct*)

BM: Oh, she took the pictures, too?

Mrs. W.: Yes, and it was given to us. And she has written a very nice little piece.

Dr. W.: The occasion of it was the birth of our first daughter.

Mrs. W.: Our first grandchild, remember?

Dr. W. Yes, yes. First grandchild and we have a birch on the



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front lawn, and the birch is known as a Mother's Tree. And she had written this article associating the birth of the grandchild with the Mother's Tree on our lawn.

BM: Did you plant the tree on the day your granddaughter was born? Was that the connection?

Mrs. W.: No, the tree was there when we bought the house. It was three years old at the time and the tree was there.

BM: But you decided that the tree was going to be connected with your granddaughter's birth?

Mrs. W: I think that was Collen's idea.

Dr. W: Yes, Cohen Kilner's idea. She was interested in trees and was also interested in my having delivered children, and my grandchild, in fact, so it was her idea of taking it - a picture -- of the home and writing the article about the tree.

BM: I see. That is really very interesting.

Mrs. W.: She was such a wonderful person and had a very unusual way of writing.

BM: I enjoyed reading her book. Did you know her personally?

Mrs. W.: Yes, yes. She was a very dear friend and a lovely person.

BM: Did you know -- I'm trying to think -- did you know any of the other families that she wrote about? Well, you must have known about some of the Mother's Trees, living in the area.

Mrs. W.: Well, I don't happen to know of any other.

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Dr. W.: There are very few birch in Wilmette. Truth of the matter is I am not so sure but that was the only one. When I first came to Wilmette, I was very much impressed with the fact that it had so many vacant lots that were not well kept. It seemed almost like a prairie rather than a town. I am not really sure about the population I think I had better not comment.

BM: All right. Were the houses sort of grouped? I imagine there were houses . . .

Dr. W.: No, they were pretty much scattered. There was not any evidence of groups. They were all individual. In those days, each house was built by somebody that had the idea of building that individual house. There was no such thing as a division, and things that we have today. Each was an individual home that each person had planned for himself.

BM: They had picked out their own lot and decided where the house was going to be and what kind of house they wanted to build. Not the way things are built today. Things are a little different.

*(End of tape)*