

INTERVIEW WITH L. WALLACE BRUCE  
MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN  
JUNE 22, 2009

SUBJECT: MHS PROJECT

MAGNAGHI, RUSSEL M. (RMM): Interview with Wallace (Wally) Bruce, Marquette, MI. June 22, 2009. Okay Mr. Bruce. His full name is Leo Wallace Bruce. Signs L. Wallace Bruce and goes by Wally. Okay Wally the first question I have of everybody. What is your birth date?

L. WALLACE, BRUCE (LWB): March 27, 1929.

RMM: Okay. Could you give me a little background of where your hometown was, is? And how you go, well, growing up and getting into the field you ended up getting into? Then ultimately how you got onto the board and then so on.

LWB: Well, the basic thing that happened, I was born in Marquette on March 27, 1929. That was where I started my career and I spent most of my life in Marquette. The thing that happened that got me out of Marquette was I got drafted in the army. I was in there for approximately three years. I was stationed overseas during that time.

RMM: This was during which war?

LWB: This was at the end of the Korean War. I was stationed in Germany, so I didn't have anything to do with the Korean War. The Korean War ended, literally, the day I got drafted. The thing that happened then was that put me away for a couple years from where I was here. The next thing that happened, that got me away, I went to Northern (NMU) for 2.5 years. This was mid 1940's, well 1947, at the end of '47. I went to northern for 2.5 years. I had applied at Notre Dame to see if I could get in down there. They suggested I go to Northern, they said, "That when you spend your time there and get a good basis, give us call and then we will see if things are open." Because at this time there were a lot of soldiers, people who were in the service coming out and they were filling the school, so then the next thing I did. I went to Notre Dame and got my degree there. I got, well, a strange thing. I got a bachelor of philosophy degree and I majored in finance. Then I had a chance to go to Michigan then, because I wasn't going to be drafted for three or four months. So, the thing that I did, I went to Michigan and I went there a semester and when my draft time came up they let me stay in school. So, I stayed in Michigan until I got my masters in Finance from Michigan. Then the thing that I did, I went down to the area that I wanted to get in to. It was the credit analyst at a bank. I got a job at one of the major banks in Detroit. It was the largest state bank in Michigan.

RMM: The name of the Bank?

LWB: The name of the bank was the Detroit Bank and Trust Company. Now I was there. I worked then for three years there. They let my drafting go and I went to the bank, got my job there and then I got drafted, and then I went overseas. Then I came back and I worked in the bank then for 3 years. I was there for 3 years. I had a chance to get in the brokerage business. I was satisfied. I liked the credit analyst job I had at the bank, but the thing that happened; I went up. They called me up. My dad managed the office in Marquette here for Paine/Weber. Now Paine/Weber is one of the largest brokerage firms in our area and in the United States, at that time. The thing that happened, the second office or either the first or the second office that Paine/Weber opened up was in Marquette. So, the thing that we had was this long period of people being served by Marquette, the Paine/Weber office in

Marquette. So, the thing that happened then, my dad was getting older and older and older and we were working out of the Chicago office now and the people from the Chicago office called me up and they said, "Have you talked to your father lately?" I said, "Well I saw him six, seven months ago." They said, "The thing that we'd like to do, is see if you would be interested in managing the office there." I said, "G-wiz I don't know if I would want to do that." I was interested more in this other thing. As a matter a fact, personally I liked the brokerage business. I didn't think it was a way to earn a living. I thought, "Do you really have to be worried about things all the time and everything?" I said, "That looks like it's kind of fun." So they said, "Why don't you kind of?" Well the manager at the Chicago office said, "Why don't you come up and we'll have you talk with your dad and everything?" So, I went up and talked with my dad. He had made significant changes. He just wasn't paying that much attention to things. We decided to, I talked to him and after a while he said that it'd be fine if I came up there. That he would let me, that I would run the office, or that I would just be with him for a while and kind of get the feeling for what was happening. Eventually, it wasn't too long after that, that my dad retired. Then I managed the office and hired a couple of people. We had the office going there for a while.

RMM: Now, what year would that have been that you came back and got involved?

LWB: I guess the thing that I've been trying to do is give you some idea of, it was ten years, I was three years at the bank down there. Well let's see, two years then and five years. It must have been around 1950, it was probably around '54, '55 - that area. I think I'd have to really go back, because I'm trying to get two things here and the thing that I did. I was manager of the office, that was after I had a, that was part of the whole thing there, so I want to. Let's see how many years - that was 2.5 years here, 2 years Notre Dame, 4.5, then 3, 5, 6, 6 years since I retired or since I.....was it '47, '53, '54, '55 in the army. I guess I can't really get that together.

RMM: So, it was probably the late 50's early 60's.

LWB: Then the thing that I did, I stayed there and managed the office and eventually Paine/Weber took the office. They had a larger thing they wanted to do after a while. They wanted larger offices and they had a criteria for how much money the office was making as far as overall commissions were, or gross commissions. How much we were making. The thing is that eventually they were in a position where they closed the office. Then the thing that happened. The next thing that I did is I just went across the street and worked with another brokerage firm. I just didn't lose any time. I worked for one on Friday, then on Monday I started with another firm. That was Smith/Barney at that time. So, we kept the same business. I was not manager in the new place I was with. I had a good manager, Pete Schumer, and he was very good as far as getting arranged. So, I had that and I just stayed with that company over the years and the thing that was good, as an example, when my father retired and I had his accounts and then I had a bunch of accounts of my own, then technically we were always one of the top, had some of the top brokers in the United States. You know, from the way that I was working in the office. It was not an office they were keeping open just for the heck of it. It was because they were making good money out of us. So I was kind of glad.

RMM: How did you get involved with the Hospital, being on the board?

LWB: That's a good question. The thing that happened, I was working here, the head of my Paine/Weber office. I had a friend of mine, Ellwood Mattson. Ellwood was the president of the bank down there, the First National Bank and the thing that happened, when we, we were friends at Northern here. He asked me, "I'd like to have you run for secretary or treasurer of our class". So, he said, "The thing that you'll do is, I'd like to have you get a

little campaign going here and I'd like to see if you can get in as treasurer." I ran on a campaign here that, at school, that any money that was left over in the treasury at the end of the year we were going to have a beer party. Haha. I won. So we did have a beer party. I think we had something like 32 dollars left over and I don't know how many people from the class came down but we had a few. Haha, but anyway Ellwood encouraged me to get a job like that. Then the thing that happened, I went down to Notre Dame and I ran for class treasurer. I didn't make it down there. Then I went to Michigan and then I got into the banking business. Then Ellwood, he asked me, he said, "I feel we'd like to have you on the board of the Hospital. You have good training. You're from Marquette. You've got good training." I had good financial background. You know, you look for people on a board to fill in different things. So, he asked if I would get on there and use my financial background to help the hospital to do whatever they were going to be doing.

RMM: Now, do you think possibly they wanted you on the board because you are a Catholic and they wanted kind of a balance?

LWB: Yeah I was the first Catholic on the board.

RMM: That was at about the time when the two hospitals consolidated?

LWB: Yes. That was a thing. I would think that I was given that kind of a hint. One of the men that was a close friend of my dad, they both were in the army together and everything. He left the hospital board when I got on. It had nothing to do with me personally. It was just part of my background, always a friend before and after. He was an accountant. It was like I was helping his position because when he left I had the background of finance from a bank and my business at the time was finance. It was just an excellent move. It put us in position to say merge the two institutions.

RMM: So you were on the board the before the merger?

LWB: Yeah.

RMM: Just before?

LWB: Yeah.

RMM: Now you said your father had been on the St. Mary's board?

LWB: Yeah, he was on the St. Mary board but he was off the board when the merger came together I am sure.

RMM: That's interesting, because then you were on the St. Luke's that is now St. Mary's.

LWB: Yeah, Marquette General.

RMM: Okay, do you remember back when you were serving on the board or even some memories of your father when he served on the board, some of the issues that came up? Problems that came up that the board had to come up with.

LWB: From my father's standpoint, he was always very close as far as information he had. He would never talk about anybody who was a client of his. He'd never talk about, if he was on a board, he was on several boards, and he would never say anything about it. He just kept his mouth shut. Which was a good example, because I did the same thing. I very rarely said anything about what happened at board meetings. You know who said what and. But that was

kind of the thing and he was older at the time and he wasn't, he was just calm and cool and couldn't say a lot about what was going on. I didn't pick up much at all at home.

RMM: Now, how was your tenure at the board? How long did you serve?

LWB: I served 35 years on the board.

RMM: That was from what year would you say? What year did you start?

LWB: Yeah, that's the thing I'm trying to think of.

RMM: You said it was before the hospitals were merged. Just before?

LWB: Yeah, it was maybe a year or within a year.

RMM: I think the merger was in '72, so you would have been on the board in '71.

LWB: Let's see, when did I get off of the board? Right now I'm doing it the other way, going backwards. When in the hell did I, I didn't mean to say that. When did I leave the board? The thing that I did, I was president for the last two years on the board. I wanted to, well they wanted me to stay on 3 or 4 years, well I said, "No, I'm getting right off." Then they said, "Well how about two years?" That's when it was. Was it 2002? I'm not sure about that.

RMM: It's okay, we can catch up with that.

LWB: Because then, see, I was the president at that time and the thing that I wanted to do was you know get off of the board because I was getting near the end, when I was going to be retiring from my business. I wanted to make sure I was able to get my clients straightened around, make sure everything was taken care of for them.

RMM: Now, what were some of the controversies? Were there any controversies, problems when you were serving on the board, getting the hospital, because that was sort of a very exciting time for someone in your position? New things happening the two hospitals coming together?

LWB: One of the things that I caught onto, when you first get on the hospital, was the consumer of the hospital is the doctor. The thing that you have to have is, you don't go to the hospital and say I think I have this and we take care of you. You go to the doctor says Wally's sick take care of him for this and I'll be out to see him tomorrow. That's the thing that we did. One of the most important things we did then was getting a good group of doctors to serve the people in your community. That was one of the things we were able to get. We were able to pick the doctors. We were able to work with them. They were people that wanted to help the people and serve in this area and they did. Then we tried to work with them and say, "Doctor, what equipment do we need?" It sounds like it's goofy, but we had to make sure we had the proper things for them and it was a proper price that wasn't too much and you want to take a look and see, if we have this piece of equipment how many patients will we be servicing with this. It was something that was kind of difficult from that stand point. To make sure that the person that you have, the doctor, that we are servicing them so that they are going to be able to service their people. One of the things that you have that, this is almost on the side over here, just say that if you are setting up a hospital, you are thinking about getting some kind of equipment, so the thing that we say is "we can use (service) this many people. We need 600 people a year to pay for this or some damn thing like that. The thing that happens is if you were in a city like Minneapolis or St. Paul you've got your 600 people from a circle around you. When you're in Marquette and you're

on the shore of Lake Superior, you know from here to here, you don't go there, because all you get is fish then. This is where you really have to use your head and make sure that when you are doing things for the good of the people that you are able to get the proper people working here, the proper equipment, so that you are able to go out and say, "Okay, here are these people that are in a half circle around the hospital they are going to be taken care of, we can help them." That was one of the things that we were building upon. The thing that you want to do, the important thing that goes back to the doctor being the person that gives the people the ability to be served. The doctor is the one that does it. You were very careful to make sure that you were getting help from the doctor and the doctor would know that this stuff is good. Have the confidence in the board that we're going to get the right stuff. The equipment, you know. You had to get a good cooperation with the medical community. The thing is that we tried to do that and we tried to make sure that they were getting what they wanted and sometimes there would be little arguments but it worked fine.

RMM: When you served on the board was there any controversy, because the St. Mary's board and the St. Luke's board all kind of merged and they were all together? Was there any controversy after the merger took place?

LWB: I never felt that there was any real controversy. Thank goodness that there were arguments about things but as far as I can see there was no....

RMM: Animosity or anger about that?

LWB: None, not that I can remember at all. One of the things that you might run into in this thing and I don't know - The idea of abortion. Would you have abortion? You know you're going from a Catholic hospital to a natural type of hospital and one of the things that we did when we first merged and wanted to make sure that it was done in the bylaws, is that we put that there would be no abortions in the hospital. We wanted to make sure we were doing something that would help the people that were saying we had this one thing that is a national problem and they worked together and came out good.

RMM: And so they don't perform abortions at the hospital?

LWB: No.

RMM: I mean since...so this was a legal document that went into force?

LWB: Yeah, oh that's part of the...

RMM: Agreement of bringing the hospitals together?

LWB: No, no. It wasn't that. It was just when they came together.

RMM: Oh, afterwards?

LWB: Yeah, I think that that's it, how the dates worked out, because that was the important thing. Doesn't sound too important but it was.

RMM: Were there any other disagreements or developments that the board was overseeing, you know that were kind of outstanding? There were a lot of things that they were doing.

LWB: I think that one of the things when they were dealing with the hospital like, say St. Mary's, I don't know. I'm trying to get this picture right. I don't know if they had or were we working for. No it was, we worked together and maybe there was some small things that,

maybe where they had some physicians that were working at St. Mary's and we didn't have the proper things at St. Luke's for them at that time and they just got together and said, "Hey, look, this is what it's going to be and we can work it out." I can't remember any real contentious things happening in the hospital, you know, with the two hospitals. I think it was because almost the people were friends with each other.

RMM: Because you did have physicians working in both hospitals before the merger? So there was a lot of -

LWB: Yeah, yeah.

RMM: So, how did you feel your personal time on the board? How would you add that up in terms of....?

LWB: The thing that I liked about it was that I had the financial background, I hate to say it but that is a very important thing in running a hospital. The thing I liked is that I was able to just kind of keep my eye on that and when they're talking something you a personal group, this group that group, now how does that measure up with the financial people? That was a thing that helped us a lot. There was a cooperation that was "let's get down to the dollars and cents". The most important thing in the world is the patient that's coming in and the doctor, obviously, but then the thing is we really need to make sure that this isn't something that we're just looking at as a touchy-freely thing. This is a "business" that has to be run properly so that we'll be able to keep this.

[SIDE 1 ENDS]

[SIDE 2 BEGINS]

RMM: Okay, did, what, how, would you like to comment on the role that Elwood Mattson played on the Hospital?

LWB: I would say that Elwood played just a magnificently fine role on it. He was able to. He knew finance. He was very careful and he didn't try to push things. He had good objectives. He talked to the people who made up the board and also obviously the administration people that were there. We had good administrative people. The chief operating officer, the chief financial officer, they were excellent people all the time. They had a good cooperation with the board, especially the committees, the important committees together. He would be able to get the heads of these committees to make agreements to see where things are going and he was very, very good at that. If he had to use some of his strength he did that too. He was working with a bank and they did well and he knew what was going on in the community. He wouldn't say it at the meetings or anything but he knew what was going on and who needed what. He was very good at that. He was a good, honest person.

RMM: Would there be anybody that was like, in terms of the role they played it would be like second in importance to Elwood?

LWB: I would say that Harlan Larson was just an extremely good person that just knew what was going on. He had the background of business and he could relate that to the running of a hospital and I think that he did a very good job. Bob Neldberg worked in well. Now he was, remember, the chief operator of the hospital. So, the three of those people were, just had a feeling of what was going on.

RMM: They were all on the board working for the board CEO and so on at the same time?

LWB: Yes, at the same time.

RMM: Do you think that that collection of individuals and so on ultimately played a role in terms of the expansion of the hospital, which was going on at that time?

LWB: I think that they were very important as far as knowing what they knew. Knowing what was needed. They could see helping the people in the Upper Peninsula with a very high quality safe financial and number one the institution that had the background of....what do I want to say? As far as running a health institution, they knew how to do it. They understood and there were little mistakes made from time to time but they were able to bury them, get going and keeping the service to people here. You know I always liked that. There were people on the board that were helpful, quite helpful. They would be used in Harlan and Elwood. They did a very good job. I don't want to leave anybody else off but, if I just had a list of in the old days of the officers there I might be able to-

RMM: Let's see here they might be on here. David Engstrom?

LWB: Yeah he was just a good common sense person. He would understand what was going on.

RMM: Okay, let's see if any-

LWB: Do you see Harold Herlich?

RMM: Oh wait a minute, former board member Mark Callahan?

LWB: Mark, yeah he was good too. He was a good as a relationship member. He would be the doctor that was on the board. He was good to get the relationship between the board and the medical staff.

RMM: That seems to be as I go down the list here, there seems to be only....How do you think because you were a Marquette resident you know all these years and so on. When all of this was happening and so on, how do you think the, do you have any sense of how the people of Marquette viewed all of this?

LWB: I don't have much. People never came to me and griped about things. Never heard you'd be out in public someplace and somebody would come over and say, "Hey, what the heck is going on?" I really can't think of any time that I'd have this happen.

RMM: Positive or negative?

LWB: Yeah, positive or negative. You know geez, if they screw it up it's not our fault, the people.

RMM: They didn't worry about the details?

LWB: No, no. I think what happened - remember this was supplying a lot of jobs. I don't know if it was like 2600 jobs eventually. In a community now that's, "I don't care what you guys do, just keep 'er going". We're keeping those jobs going. They were well paying jobs. You take a look at it. If you start taking nurses that are the head of things and they're making, I don't know how much they are making, but they're making something like \$60,000 a year or something like that and personally I just love to see that they were coming up with good money. Here we had a place where people were really making money. Here are two important things, you know the people who are in the community are making money from it

and then the other thing is that it's helping the people by providing medical services. They were able to keep in good health the best we could.

RMM: Now, is there anything I left out or missed or something you'd like to add to the end here?

LWB: Yeah, I don't see that there would be anything more. I'm sure the minute I step outside I'll think of everything and if you want to question me on any of this stuff just do it because some of this stuff like I was saying earlier, that I forget about what it is. You know this might not add up with that, but the thing that I was around town here for, I was gone for ten years you know by going down to Notre Dame and Michigan. I was gone for about 4 or 5 years there and I was working down in Detroit Bank and Trust Company for about 3 years down there for about 6-7 or you know 6 or 7 years of that stuff, then in the army for a couple of years. That comes close to ten years where I was gone from the community here but I got back here. My wife and I say that this is just one of the best places, that God was on our side to get us to come to Marquette, or back home. She's from Newberry, as we said, I'm from Marquette. I think Barb was talking to you sometime at some party or something that we were at and she said say hello to you.

RMM: Oh yeah, it was over at the old....

LWB: Yeah, that old little church. It used to be a little church in there.

RMM: It was a fundraiser for the historical society, I think.

LWB: That was it, yeah, so she said she had a nice chat with you there, so she said make sure you say hello.

RMM: Okay, alright, well that ends the interview. I thank you and I appreciate your time.

LWB: Yeah and I don't know if I gave you enough information here at all.

RMM: No it's good that your, you know, your service on the board. That way it's just that end of it.

LWB: Yeah and the thing is that it was a cooperative board all the time. They tried to do the best they could. People you know, if there was something that didn't make sense, okay go ahead and we'll do or we won't do it. If something didn't make sense then everybody didn't agree they'd say, "Yep all in favor, aye. All against, nay." The thing is people in the Upper Peninsula had to be served and the person that puts you in a hospital is the doctor, so you have to make sure that you have the people and a good doctor and a good institution to...

RMM: Okay, Alright

LWB: So, my background is Scotch from my dad's side. He got, his father had 11 brothers, I think. They were north of the, oh where is it? Eagle Harbor, then they came south to get into the Upper Peninsula here. I think it was to get into the business of cutting timber. So, my grandfather Bruce ran lumber camps from up to the Keweenaw Peninsula down to the Michigamee area. They used to run, this is family numbers that they used, to run about 450 men that were cutting wood in these different camps all over. These were a lot of the scotch guys that came down. Then my grandmother on my dad's side was Irish and she came over from in upper New York State or something. I don't know where they met. It was someplace around this area. So on my father's side there was the Scotch and the Irish and the on my mother's side, her mother came from a German community I can't think of right now, I should



know this. My mother's mother came from Germany and settled here in the US. The she married my grandfather and his name was Konwinski and he moved to Iron River and at one time he used to. He had a brewery going there and he owned half of the town and everything and things just sort of exploded and came apart. I remember one story, and this was just a story, is that when my grandfather died, a very intelligent person, good worker and everything and he said that I'd like to sell this piece of property. I'll buy it from you and I'll take the risk and sell it to somebody else. My dad was a stock broker at that time and he was working over in Iron River and he says, "Agnes you are....Don't do that that. This is valuable property and you should not sell it." And she said, "No I'm going to sell it." She sold it and the guy sold it for a million dollars within a week of that.

RMM: Was it mining property?

LWB: Yeah it was Iron property. Then so that was, then grandpa came up just as a kid and ended up in Iron River. So then that was the Polish and the German and then my dad's stuff. My dad's family was Scotch and Irish.

RMM: So you're Scotch, Irish, German, and Polish?

LWB: Yeah.

RMM: Oh okay, those were all sort of the, except the Polish, but Scotch, the Irish, and the Germans were all the earliest immigrants into the UP.

LWB: Then the, just talk about that then the Finnish people. A lot of them just suddenly came over. So, that were you know. If you have some, just basically. This was all family talk that I'm talking to you about here because I don't know if this is for sure exactly what happened. It seems that this is what we were told and all that.

RMM: Interesting.

LWB: See now today is the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Okay. Now, do you want me to date this?

RMM: Yeah I'll fill out the address and all that. Okay, very good, thank you.

LWB: Well, listen, I appreciate having you. I don't know if you, where is this going to go then?

RMM: This is going to be transcribed, you know typed up. Then we'll get a copy faxed and see if you want to add something or correct something. Then there will be a copy in the archives here at Northern. Then there will be a copy here in the archives at the hospital. Basically we are gathering these memories of people then at some point in the future you'll get researchers coming in and when they see this collection of interviews and what not, hopefully we'll get somebody who could write the history of the medical profession and the hospital here in the Marquette area. This would be a major contribution to that. You can read the board reports and so on but when you actually have the memory of comments about people and the role they play and so on. That is a big addition to the story.