

Interviewee: Cecil L. Wittson, M.D., Former Dean of the College of Medicine (1964-1968) and Former Chancellor of the University of Nebraska Medical Center (1968-1972)

Interviewer: Bernice M. Hetzner, Former Director of the McGoogan Library Medicine (1948-1973)

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Wittson: One of the things that isn't known is how I happened to be president, from dean to president.

Hetzner: Well, let's hear your story on that. I have an impression but I don't know whether –

Wittson: What's your impression?

Hetzner: Well, this happened about the time that UNO, the University of Omaha, became UNO. The University agreed that they would keep a president at UNO, so-

Wittson: The meeting occurred at my house and Cliff Hardin and Joe Soshnik (end of tape)

Univeristy of Omaha Board of Regents at that time. They called and asked if they could come over to see him along with some of the other regents of the University and they were in deep and increasing financial trouble. Joe Soshnik and I cooled our heels for almost two hours; we didn't know what was up. We speculated what this might be because we knew that Omaha University was in trouble. These people left and during that meeting Cliff agreed that he would use his influence to, he had more influence than subsequent chancellors have had, and so he discussed it briefly with Joe and me and said well, yes, they'll become a campus so they'll have to be a separate campus, Omaha will have to have a separate campus. I said wait a minute now; you don't mean the medical center will be a part of the West Dodge High, and I used the words West Dodge High. No matter what we were able to do here, your mother institution has a lot to do with your accreditation, for example.

Hetzner: Sure.

Wittson: I said no way could this be part of it. Joe agreed; Cliff thought a few minutes; all right, but they're going to have a president. Whoever

heads this campus has got to be president too, the same title as the president there. Otherwise they will be unequal; they've got to be on an equal basis to the other two campuses, a separate campus on an equal basis. Right then and there it was settled because he was able to carry the Regents and that's how it occurred. So then I became president and dean, and the reason why I stayed dean for two years was that any money I got I wanted to put into new faculty or new programs of some sort, and Mrs. Classen was a very, very capable person, and Pete Boughn permitted me to stay in contact with people anyway; the more assistants you have the further away you get from the people doing the work. That's how it come about.