

---

---

# Campbell Law Review

---

---

Volume 30

Fall 2007

Number 1

---

---

**Dedication:**  
**A Tribute to Dr. Norman Adrian Wiggins**  
**Law School Founder, Friend, Mentor and Leader**

PATRICK K. HETRICK

*It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause, who at best knows achievement and who at the worst if he fails at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.*

Theodore Roosevelt

On the evening of September 5, 1996, a sinister, unwelcome visitor invaded the Cape Fear Region with sustained winds at landfall of over 120 mph. After laying waste to the barrier islands, she stubbornly refused to dissipate until she had rampaged up the I-40 corridor causing two dozen deaths and billions of dollars of devastation. Located directly in Fran's inland path, the Campbell University campus and Keith Hills Country Club and residential community where we lived received a special dose of the hurricane's fury. By the time we timidly emerged from our homes on the morning of September 6, the Cape Fear River had flooded our development and hundreds of mature pine trees rested on homes, fences, vehicles, driveways and roads. The usual hurricane debris of shingles, lawn furniture, pieces of insulation, and anything else that failed to resist the driving winds was scattered everywhere. The power was out and unlikely to be restored for days.

As dazed residents on our street wandered around their yards assessing the damage and making meager initial attempts to clear walkways and driveways of fallen trees and debris, a tall figure could be seen marching up the middle of the road. Dressed in combat boots

and fatigues, he proceeded forward through our neighborhood at a steady gait, treading over fallen trees as if they were minor annoyances while calmly but firmly receiving reports and issuing order after order over a large black walkie-talkie pressed to one ear. Dr. Norman Adrian Wiggins, composed and unflappable, commander-in-chief of the Campbell campus and our community, had arrived in Patton-like fashion, and his confident presence communicated to all of us that the storm recovery operation was already well underway—that things were going to be all right.

I first met Dr. Norman Adrian Wiggins at the National Association of College and University Attorneys (NACUA) annual meeting in Boston in 1972. As was the case in almost every state and national professional organization that Dr. Wiggins joined, he worked overtime for the group, excelled in service to each group, and eventually became president. I met NACUA President Wiggins at the opening reception as he studied a fake name tag that I had placed on my suit coat. It read: “Marvin Marfnarfle - Spandangle Institute of Mortuary, Veterinary and Taxidermy.” As he squinted with some interest at the name tag, he graciously introduced himself and said, “Well, Marvin, how are things at . . . Spandangle?” Ray Aiken, my boss, colleague and mentor from Marquette University quickly intervened, pointed at me, and mumbled something in Dr. Wiggins’ ear. Dr. Wiggins then grinned, winked and maneuvered on through the crowd to greet others.

It was also at this meeting of thirty-five years ago I met Mildred Harmon Wiggins, the love of his life, partner for four decades in the challenging role of “first lady” of Campbell University, and a wonderful and kind person who preferred to be called “Millie.” With the following words, Dr. Wiggins fondly recalled falling in love with Millie upon his return from the Marines to Campbell to resume his undergraduate studies:

When I did return after four years, the first class I attended was French. As the class gathered, a beautiful young lady walked in. I said, “Who is that?” My friend said, “This is Millie Harmon, she is the best student in this class. She is helping returning servicemen regain their knowledge of French.”

I asked my friend to see if Miss Harmon would admit me to the class. She consented. Soon I was needing additional help. I decided I needed much more help. We decided my only hope was for us to get married. We did, and moved on to Wake Forest to complete our educa-

2007]

DEDICATION:

3

tion and for me to attend law school while Millie worked in the college library.<sup>1</sup>

My next communication with Dr. Wiggins came five years after the NACUA convention. In the wake of several particularly severe Milwaukee winters, Bernadette and I decided to relocate to a warmer climate. I sent a handwritten note to Dr. Wiggins informing him that we were looking at North Carolina, that Campbell's new law school seemed an ideal choice for us, and that I would not apply at any other law school until I had heard from him. Founding law school Dean F. Leary Davis promptly phoned to follow up on the letter, we visited and loved the community and university, and I began teaching law in Buies Creek in the fall of 1978.

During my professional career, I have had the privilege of meeting many important, well-known, and even "famous" people. But as I reflect on the notion of "greatness" and seek to identify the number of truly "great" persons I have encountered, Dr. Norman Adrian Wiggins rises to the top of my list.

First and foremost, here was a man who declared openly and assuredly his unwavering faith in Jesus Christ. His five college and university diplomas, including two advanced law degrees, neither diluted his faith nor precluded him from firmly and consistently asserting it without reserve before all audiences and in all venues. Here was a university president who proclaimed year after year, "This is the day the Lord hath made and we are to rejoice and be glad in it" to all present at annual law school convocation and hooding ceremonies. Here was a university president in a waiting room in preparation for a meeting with an accreditation agency executive dropping to his knees and praying for guidance. What would others think? He did not care. His faith, not the latest *New York Times* best-selling book on management, was his polar star. Based upon his faith, he presented the practice of law to students as a mission, a path to servanthood, an opportunity for civic leadership, and a privilege to be cherished. Again and again, he reminded students and faculty alike that lawyers are entrusted with a sacred calling.

Dr. Wiggins' professional career represents the quintessential model of the American dream. Born into a family poor in material wealth but blessed richly in spiritual values, his accomplishments were the product of faith, determination, common sense and natural intellect, combined with an ability to work longer and harder than his peers. While a

---

1. Chancellor Norman Adrian Wiggins, Commencement Address at the 2007 Campbell University Commencement Ceremony (May 13, 2007).

graduate law student at Columbia University, the country boy from North Carolina was given a research assignment by a professor famous for being both demanding and difficult to work for. Dr. Wiggins attacked the task immediately, spent the rest of the day and most of the night working on it, and delivered a detailed memorandum of law to the professor the next day. The professor reviewed Dr. Wiggins' work, smiled, and then commented, "You and I are going to get along fine."

Along with sixteen million other American patriots, Dr. Wiggins valiantly and bravely served this country during World War II. As a young Marine, he found himself in the thick of battle in the Marshall Islands. His description of combat includes the following:

As soon as we finished our training, we were sent to Hawaii where we prepared to move against the Japanese in the Pacific. . . . About a month later my outfit was crossing Engebi Island in the Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands. It was midnight. The dead and dying were all around us. The challenge password for the evening was "June" the password was "July."

. . . . Suddenly, the silence of the night was broken with the word "June!" I immediately shouted "July" and said "Don't you shoot me Jack Cannon, this is Wiggins." The moment was serious and could have been deadly. Nevertheless, when two fellows from the "Creek" meet in the Marshalls, they take enough time for a visit - war or no war. I am glad I did. I would not see Jack again.

Dr. Wiggins never forgot the importance of supporting the men and women serving in the armed forces. When anti-war sentiment swept the nation and irrationally evolved into anti-military sentiment resulting in the expulsion of ROTC units from many university campuses, Dr. Wiggins welcomed the ROTC to Campbell with open arms, treated military personnel on campus with honor and respect, and expanded Campbell's satellite campuses to serve military personnel across North Carolina. Dr. Wiggins knew that what he was doing was the "right" thing. His conscience and his sense of right and wrong guided him at a time when too many university presidents held a finger to the wind.

Dr. Wiggins saw his mission at Campbell through to ultimate success and completion. He stayed a long and difficult course and eschewed attractive professional opportunities elsewhere. In an era when university leaders come and go and are constantly moving up the professional ladder to more prestigious institutions, Dr. Wiggins saw his leadership role at Campbell as a Christian calling. He set out to achieve certain goals for Campbell University and saw his worth in a

2007]

DEDICATION:

5

context that made institution-hopping a shallow alternative. And stay the course he did! He was president for thirty-six years and chancellor for the next four. In spite of failing health, he continued to make significant contributions to Campbell's mission up to the day he left the chancellor's office for the last time.

The bedrock of his success as a president was his ability to enthusiastically lead, inspire, and demand nothing less than the very best of others. His lifelong loyalty to the cause of Campbell University generated loyalty to that cause from the team of top notch administrators, staff members and faculty he assembled. The idea of loyalty permeated his board of trustees and presidential board of advisors, groups composed of supporters and advisors who each became his lifelong friend and supporter.

Dr. Wiggins possessed a wonderful sense of humor. Indeed, I think that is why he selected me to be the second dean at the law school he founded and was so proud of. I can picture him thinking "This ought to be interesting," as he congratulated me on my appointment. On one occasion, I left the law school to attend an out-of-state professional meeting and sent him a memo appointing my Boston Terrier, Max, as acting law school dean. He responded later with a note that the law school had never been in better paws. When he could not attend a graduation hooding ceremony and I nonetheless introduced him and then held up a crepe paper doll I made of him in dressed in full academic regalia, he wrote me a note thanking me for having the puppet fill in for him. When I sent a get-well letter to him during his extended illness on his chancellor stationary and signed it as "acting chancellor," he wrote a memo back relieving me of my acting chancellor duties. He was a consummate story teller from the old school who specialized in clean, decent, down-to-earth anecdotes, true stories and jokes.

The entire community at the Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law and over three thousand Campbell lawyers owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the man who, by a combination of strong leadership, enthusiasm, stubbornness and perseverance was able to swim against a tide of open and sometimes subtle opposition to the idea of a new law school in Buies Creek, North Carolina. When my colleague at Marquette University heard the news of Dr. Wiggins' ambitious plan, he commented, "If Dr. Wiggins is starting a law school, it will be a great one." By sheer force of unwavering conviction, combined with long hours, days and even years of visiting, lobbying, fund raising, and public speaking, Dr. Wiggins rose to the challenge, mustered a cadre of loyal supporters, and succeeded. The new law school became reality,

was fully accredited by the American Bar Association in the shortest time frame possible, and the rest, as they say, is history.

This dedication of the law review in Dr. Norman Adrian Wiggins' honor and memory from those of us left behind to carry on his legacy can be added to a litany of awards, recognitions and honors that were appropriately bestowed on him during a career in which he literally spent himself in a worthy cause. While fitting and appropriate, the entire package of accolades pales pitifully in comparison to the greeting I believe Dr. Wiggins received from his Lord and Savior as he graduated to the glory of eternal life, for surely he heard the following: "Well done my good and faithful servant."