

## **Autobiography of Dora Hughes Wheeler**

Dora Lyndon Hughes was born on December 14, 1905 in East Cleveland, Ohio. Because hospitals were somewhat primitive in those days, the birth was at home in her parents' apartment at Beresford Road, a small apartment house of four units.

Dora's mother, Bertha Powell Hughes, was almost thirty-three years old, a former sixth-grade teacher in the Cleveland public schools. Her father, Samuel Thomas Hughes, was an editor with the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Enterprise Association (NEA). He was close to forty years old.

Sam Hughes started to work for the Cleveland papers when he was in high school, collecting local suburban news. The family subsequently moved to a house on Broadway, a street located in the city of Cleveland. the families of both parents lived in the general area.

When Dora was five years old, her father was transferred (along with all the N.E.A. staff) to Chicago. They lived first in North Maywood, Illinois, on 17<sup>th</sup> Street, moving soon to 519 West 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and then to 320 Wesley Avenue, in Oak Park, a larger suburb somewhat closer to town. Dora started first grade in Maywood, but attended grades two and three in Oak Park, Illinois.

The summer of 1914, when war was declared in Europe, the N.E.A. was moved back to Cleveland, to be closer to the East Coast. They lived for a short time at 84 Grasmere Street, but soon purchased a house at 39 (later 1839) Sheldon Avenue, in East Cleveland, Ohio, where the family lived until moving to Washington, D.C. in 1923.

This move occurred when Dora was about 17 years old and a senior in high school. the family had lived for one year in New Rochelle, New York at 88 Liberty Avenue. In fact, after starting high school, Dora was a freshman at Shaw High (East Cleveland), a sophomore at New Rochelle High (New Rochelle, New York), a Junior at Shaw High School, and a senior and graduate of Central High School, Washington, D.C. At the close of this year (1924) she took the College Board Exams at the old Franklin School in D.C. and that September left for Wells College in Aurora, New York.

During her Sophomore year at Well, Dora became ill with bronchial pneumonia and left college at Christmas time. She remained home that year and, under the advice of her doctor to attend school in a warmer climate, started college again at Hood College, Frederick, Maryland, the fall of 1926. She received an A.B. degree at Hood College on June 1929. Her experience at Hood was far superior to the one at Wells, which was located in the bold, bleak country of northern New York state near Ithaca. At Hood, Dora met Evelyn Covey, her roommate and lifelong friend, who came from the Eastern Shore of Maryland (Federalburg). Evelyn died September 30, 1998. She was a very dear friend. For twenty years I did not see her, as her husband, Donald, was a doctor in upstate New York State, Genoa. Her Wells roommate, then Mildred Dawson, now Mildred Dawson Ball of St. Louis, Missouri, has also been a devoted friend and regular correspondent. This past year (1996), Mildred noted that they had exchanged

Christmas gifts for 71 years. These two women, Evelyn C. Stuart and Mildred Dawson Ball have been more than lifetime friends and correspondents, they have added an enrichment and depth to Dora's life. Their families always welcomed her as a guest, while she enjoyed their friendliness and hospitality.

After graduating from Hood College, 1929-30, Dora taught English and music at a high school in Cape May Court House, New Jersey, a small town in Southern New Jersey. One year in this tiny town was enough for a city girl, and she returned home determined to stop teaching and find a different job. In the fall, she enrolled at a secretarial school in Washington and began to learn typing and shorthand. Before she was able to become skilled in this work she was offered a job with the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance company of Newark, New Jersey. This really was not a very good idea, but Dora followed the advice of the school and went to work for this company. She was mostly a receptionist and telephone operator. She quit in June to go to Blue Ridge Summit for summer vacation. She returned to Mutual Benefit briefly in the fall, but received a call to return to Hood as secretary to the President, Dr. Joseph A. Apple.

This job was a real plus. Dora knew the college and Dr. Apple well. this was her main contribution to the post. Dr. Apple was growing old and needed the support of someone who knew the college. At the end of the year, he resigned and was replaced by a member of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Henry I. Stater. Dr. Stater was an experienced clergyman and business person. Dora's skills were not as good as he had been used to, but her knowledge of the college and faculty outweighed her secretarial skills. As time went on, she was able to do the job capably and to please the president. She was able to drive home weekends to see her parents and her recent new boyfriend, Richard S. Wheeler, a graduate of the University of Michigan who came to D.C. to work at Mr. Roosevelt's National Emergency Council.

Richard Wheeler, a native of Nashville, Michigan, and an A.B. from the University of Michigan, graduated in 1930 during the worst of the depression. He went to New York City seeking a job and was employed briefly by the R. H. Macy Co. He came to D.C. looking for work, and found a position in the government which later led to his career in the State Department.

This friendship flourished as time went on, and on June 3, 1937, Dora and Dick were married at 5044 Reno Road, Washington, DC. in the presence of about 80 guest, among whom were two college presidents, two college deans, and many close friends.

The couple took a brief honeymoon to Slater's House at Scituate , Massachusetts, returning to set up housekeeping in an apartment at 2310 Ashmead Place, Washington, D.C. At the end of the year, May 12, 1938 a son was born to them at Homeopathic Hospital, in D.C. This child did not live, and this was a great sorrow for Dora and Dick.

During that fall (1938) they moved to 1420 Tucherman Street, Washington, D.C. They took a lengthy trip to Michigan to visit Dick's mother in Nashville Michigan, celebrating Thanksgiving with Aunt Ada Smith in Jackson, Michigan. Meanwhile, Dick was making progress in his work, and before long was appointed to a job in the State Department as a

statistician. this was mostly through the influence of Clark Willard, who headed the Division of International Conferences. Gladys Willard was a classmate of Dora's at Hood and the two couples often played bridge together.

On March 30, 1940 Douglas Hughes Wheeler arrived to delight his parents. Dora had found a fine obstetrician to deliver the baby at Columbia Hospital for Women, and this child was born without incident - 8 lbs. and 3 ounces. Having a baby changed life for Dora and Dick in many ways, and before long they were looking for a small house. They found one in Virginia (Arlington) at 234 N. Abingdon Street where they lived for seventeen years, leaving only when Dick was appointed to a post in Vienna, Austria in 1958.

When the war began, Richard was working in the Pentagon for the Air Force when he was commissioned a 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant in the Air Force. He flew all over the U.S. to Air Force Depots, gradually attaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in Statistical Control.

A second son, Richard Merrill Wheeler, was born November 10, 1942 in Washington D.C. David Lyndon Wheeler was born June 30, 1945 in Washington D.C.

When the war ended, Richard was offered a post in the Air Force, but refused it in favor of one with the State Department proposed by Clark Willard, a close friend. In February 1946, he became a member of the Division of International Conferences of the State Department in Washington, D.C.

Richard flew to Vienna in March 1958, leaving the family to follow him in August by ship, where they were reunited in Genoa. They left immediately by train for Vienna where Richard had rented a large and comfortable house at #1 Dr. Heinrich Meyer Strasse, not far from a street car line. their son, Douglas, was suffering from a blocked artery in his right leg, a fact which became a problem for his parents, the medical care in Vienna being mediocre, to put it mildly.

Douglas was placed in the Allgemeines Krankenhaus, an ancient hospital, where the care was minimal and extremely disturbing for his parents. Shortly after, at a party, Richard had a chance to speak with an assistant secretary of State, stopping in Vienna during the course of an official trip, and was advised to seek medical help back in the U.S. In early November, the family left by plane for Washington where they stopped briefly at a hotel, placing Douglas at the Naval Hospital in Bethesda.

At this point, the family was desperate for a home base to place the two other sons in school. A friend located a rental house on Greenbrier Street in Arlington and David entered Kenmore Junior High School and Dick, Wakefield High School. during this chaotic period Dick, upon the advice of Dr. Trenis, took Douglas to Ann Arbor to the University of Michigan Medical Center, where a year later he had a complicated operation to remove a block in the artery leading to his leg.

Meanwhile, the family bought a house at 5614 North 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and moved into a house that

they would own until 1988, following Dick's death and until Dora's move to a retirement home. during this time period, Douglas attended American University and graduated in 1963. Shortly after this event, he married Catherine Trapnell, a girl he had met in Austria, where her father was special assistant to the head of NATO. This event took place at Shrine Mont, the Episcopal Conference Center of Northern, Virginia, a beautiful outdoor wedding. Douglas' health was much improved and his family were all filled with approval and affection for his bride. Douglas lives in Arlington and has been a strong support to me.

Meanwhile Dick had entered Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and was working toward the A.B., and Ph.D. degrees in Physics. Douglas had caught the eye of Patrick Hayes, an important figure in the Washington world of music, and became second in charge of the Washington Performing Arts Society.

Douglas was advised to go to New York for on-the-job training in the field of performing arts, and he worked for Judson, O'Neil, Beall, and Steinway. The first son of Douglas and Catherine, Edward Merrill, was born August 11, 1967 in New York City. From New York, Douglas moved to Cleveland, to do work with the Cleveland Orchestra. The couple was pleased with Cleveland and bought a home in Cleveland Heights. But before long, they moved back to D.C. where Douglas became assistant of Patrick Hayes. Upon the retirement of Mr. Hayes, Douglas became the Director of the Society.

Meanwhile Dick Wheeler was married to Amy Upthegrove at the Church of St. Michael and St George on November 18, 1967 in St. Louis, Missouri. He received the Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University and was offered a post-doctoral position at Purdue in West Lafayette Indiana. From there he went to Rice University, Houston, Texas. A son, Richard Upthegrove Wheeler was born to Dick and Amy on February 21, 1973 at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, Houston, Texas. In 1973 Dick, Amy, and Richard went to Cortland, New York where he teaches physics at Cortland State College. Richard now lives in New York.

David L. Wheeler took ROTC in college and served in the armed forces. He was in the Viet Nam war and received medals for courage. David and Catharine Vail Lewis were married on February 13, 1971 at the Central United Methodist Church in Ft. Worth, Texas at 2 p.m. David was posted to Kearney, Nebraska, and Thomas Lewis Wheeler was born in the Kearney Hospital (Good Samaritan), Kearney, Nebraska on November 23, 1972.

**Some birthdays and weddings:**

Douglas Wheeler, March 30, 1940  
Richard Wheeler, November 10, 1942  
David Wheeler, June 30, 1945  
Will Wheeler, November 14, 1970  
Jim Wheeler, May 13, 1976  
Elizabeth Wheeler, October 5, 1974  
Tom Wheeler, November 23, 1972  
Richard Wheeler, February 21, 1973  
Ned Wheeler, August 11, 1967  
Kelly Baxter, May 27, 1966  
Bob Canary, February 1, 1939

Douglas and Cathy, August 18, 1963  
Cathey and David, February 13, 1971  
Dick and Amy, November 18, 1967  
Ned and Kelly, August 18, 1990

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