

## HARRY CAROTHERS WIESS\*

*by*

*The President of the Rice Institute*

A FEW weeks ago Mrs. Olga Wiess presented to this college a painting of Harry Carothers Wiess, for whom the college is named. The real modesty of Mrs. Wiess made her do this almost anonymously. She wanted no ceremony of unveiling, no oratory. She wanted only that you should know of her continuing great interest in Wiess College, and she wanted nothing in return.

But I have thought that most of you might want to know something about Mr. Wiess. You might want to know why your college bears his name and why other activities of the Rice Institute also bear his name.

Anything that I may say about Mr. Wiess must of necessity be very personal. It was he who first introduced me to the Rice Institute, and rather than enumerating his honors and accomplishments I hope I may be pardoned for relating my own experience, as I first became acquainted with Mr. Wiess and began to appreciate his quality.

It was in 1945, as the Second World War was drawing to a close. To those of you entering Wiess College as freshmen that may seem a long time ago. To most of us on the faculty it is only yesterday.

Although my permanent location was at the California Institute of Technology, I was finishing some four years of hectic work on the development of means of undersea warfare. My office for that purpose was in New York, but as with everyone in research, development, and production in

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those days, an office was a place from which to commute to Washington.

Mr. Wiess was President of the Humble Oil & Refining Company, working feverishly and effectively to provide the gasoline, the oil, and other petroleum products to supply the Army and the Navy spread so widely around the world. Also he was leading the Humble Company as one of the major producers of the newly developed synthetic rubber, which was so large a factor in the minds of those who had to make tires with doubtful supplies of the natural product.

But during this period of great activity Mr. Wiess accepted membership on the Rice Institute Board of Trustees and immediately began to turn his mind to the development of the Institute after the war. And so he and I met for lunch in a Washington hotel, and he unfolded to me his vision of what the Rice Institute could become.

Outside the bands were playing, and the crowds were shouting, for there was a parade welcoming home from Europe one of our more decorated generals, but inside the excitement of the moment was forgotten in the excitement of looking into the future.

Mr. Wiess was a planner as well as a man with a vision. He was a graduate of Princeton University in engineering. He was a member of the Trustees of Princeton and understood the traditions and operations of that influential and distinguished institution. He knew our close connection with Princeton through our eminent first president. He was also a member of the Corporation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and he knew what tremendous contributions to the nation were being made there. He saw for Rice an unlimited future, but he also believed in doing something immediate and definite about it.

Among the things be believed essential were those that constitute the objectives of this college. More than once he said to me that we must find ways to permit more students to live on the campus and must make their life on the campus a significant part of education. So it was especially fitting that the first new living hall completed in 1950, just after his death, should have been named Wiess Hall and that when extended and reorganized in 1957 it should have become Wiess College.

Through the generosity of Mrs. Wiess his picture hangs in your lounge, and I hope as you see it almost daily you may remember and pass on to your successors something of his breadth of interest, his careful judgment, his steady belief in a good future.

Those of you who plan to be engineers can think of him as a great engineer bringing to his management activities the feel for scientific and technical matters so important in the great industrial enterprises of today. Those of you who plan to go into business can think of him as one of the industrial pioneers of Beaumont and of Houston, one whose skill and effectiveness contributed greatly to the growth and prosperity of those cities. Those of you interested in history can see in him one of the men who helped make the recent history of Texas a bright one. All of you can think of him as one who gave of his resources, but chiefly of his mind and his heart, that you might enjoy the facilities you have today, that you also may look forward to a good future.

W. V. HOUSTON