



Atrium
Medical Center

F O U N D A T I O N

LEGENDS

FROM THE HILL TO THE ATRIUM

*A Tribute to the Men and Women
Who Made It Happen*

ISSUE 7

*Dr. Dick and Charlotte Nisbet
Meeting the Challenge*

He was an intern at Detroit Receiving Hospital, and she was a student at Henry Ford Hospital nursing school. A friend set them up on a blind date, and a love story began. In September 1947, Dick Nisbet, 26, and Charlotte “Chuckie” Monroe, 23, married in her hometown of Howell, Michigan. Their union spanned 63 years. Dr. Nisbet fondly recalls that his wife always told him, “Whatever you want to do,” words that opened the door to “an amazing life” overflowing with unconditional love.

A Couple of Small Town Kids

Born in 1921 in Eaton, Ohio, Dick Nisbet had an idyllic small town upbringing. He was a good student and loved sports of all kinds – a passion that continues today. Both his father and grandfather were doctors, and his mother was a nurse. His father also owned a farm where Dick worked the fields every summer. Because his father’s office was in the family’s home, Dick had a good taste early on of what it meant to be a physician. He would go along on house calls, and during the worst of the Great Depression, when his father was county health commissioner, Dick would ride with him to post quarantine signs for diseases like smallpox and polio.



Dick studied pre-med at The Ohio State University, where his well-honed study habits paved the way for his 1943 acceptance into Chicago’s

prestigious Northwestern University School of Medicine. With programs accelerated because of World War II, Dick graduated in 1946 and began a series of residencies (including that internship at Henry Ford Hospital) that culminated in his becoming a board-certified ophthalmologist.

Like her husband, Chuckie Nisbet grew up comfortably in small-town America. Her father was an insurance agent and her mother a housewife. After graduating from nursing school and marrying Dick, Chuckie worked in pediatrics at Detroit Receiving Hospital. The Nisbets' first daughter, Lee, was born at Chuckie's alma mater, Henry Ford Hospital.

Life in Middletown

In 1950, Dick Nisbet, MD, started his medical practice in an office at First and Main. Dick says he chose Middletown because of its proximity to his hometown of Eaton; because the city had an excellent hospital; and because its largest employer, Armco, paid for employee eye exams, ensuring a steady stream of business. During the Korean War, Dick was called to serve for two years at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi. In 1954, Captain Nisbet returned to Middletown to resume his practice.





The Nisbets had four more children – Nancy, Paul, Steve and Terry – all delivered at Middletown Hospital by Bill Storer, MD. In fact, Dr. Storer was having dinner at the Nisbet home the night Chuckie went into labor with their fifth child, son Terry, who grew up to become an optometrist. Terry took over his father’s practice in 1984. After 17 years in Middletown, he now practices in Cincinnati. Terry recalls his father’s dedication to patients, the comprehensiveness of his exams and his penchant for being punctual (a habit that continues today).



Daughter Nancy Fraunfelter, a long-time member, past president and now patron of the Atrium Auxiliary Middletown, recalls her parents limiting the children’s telephone conversations to 10 minutes because no matter the hour, the phone had to be

free in case a patient called. To this day, both Nancy and Terry remember one of their father’s favorite maxims: “Meet the challenge.” Clearly, Dick followed his own advice.

As Dick’s practice grew, the family moved several times. In 1964, they settled in a house on Dorset Drive not far from the hospital where Dick still lives today. Although Chuckie was busy raising their five children, she found time to serve the community through the Shovel and Hoe

Garden Club, P.E.O. (Philanthropic Educational Organization), the Doty House (now Abilities First) and First Presbyterian Church, where she was a tireless volunteer and, along with her husband, a deacon and elder.

From 1965 to 1995, Dick traveled to OSU weekly on his day off to teach ophthalmology students and to keep up to date on the latest advances in his field. When he was not seeing patients, teaching, attending grand rounds, serving on the hospital's executive board, participating in the Lions Club, or serving on the YMCA board, he pursued his childhood passion: sports. Dick attended games all over the area – high school, college, professional, his children's games and his grandchildren's games – and received numerous honors and awards for being such a tireless booster. With 17 grandchildren (including three sets of identical twins) and, at last count, 14 great grandchildren, Dick's sports schedule is always full.

In 1952, Dick became an OSU athletic committeeman, a key position on coach Woody Hayes' recruiting team. The process has changed since then, but Dick still keeps an eye on OSU players such as former Middletown High School stars Rashad Frazier and Jalin Marshall. Dick has always been a basketball enthusiast, too, and undoubtedly, Middie Jerry Lucas' biggest fan. The Nisbets travelled to Rome for the 1960 Olympics, where Lucas was on the U.S. team and was named most valuable player. Daughter Nancy says that after 17 days away from her children, Chuckie kissed the ground upon her return.



Building the Big Picture

For a long time, Dick Nisbet was the only eye doctor in town. As his practice grew, it became obvious to him that Middletown needed a better physician infrastructure to handle eye emergencies, especially surgeries, which were not in his scope of practice. Dick recruited Drs. Paul Woodward, William Crawford and Tom Straus, all of whom opened private practices in Middletown. Along the way, Dick also recruited and mentored family practice physician Mark Frazer, MD, and Gregory Siewny, MD, a founder of Hilltop Obstetrics & Gynecology.

As chief of staff in 1961, Dick was not satisfied with the hospital's pathology department and knew it could be improved. He recruited Robert Carson, MD, to bring the department up to speed. Ultimately, Dr. Carson hired Russell "Rusty" Malcolm, MD, as well as Carol Turner, now Atrium Medical Center president and CEO.



A Turning Point

Chuckie had always been active and physically fit, but in 1997, she was diagnosed with dementia. In 1999, she moved to McKnight Terrace (now The Woodlands) where she lived for 11 years. Dick had breakfast with Chuckie every morning and visited her again each afternoon. The family took her to church at First Presbyterian, and she rarely missed a family function or an opportunity to dine out. When his Chuckie passed away in 2010 at age 84, Dick lost the love of his life.

Today at age 93, Dick is the oldest living retired physician in Middletown and can be credited with shaping the practice of ophthalmology in southwest Ohio. Dick says he always loved his job and never once woke up on a day he didn't want to go to work. The Nisbets have been consistent and generous donors to Atrium Medical Center Foundation campaigns and are members of the Heritage Society, for donors who have included the Foundation in their wills or estate plans. Dick believes a strong administration and top-notch doctors are what inspire the community to support Atrium Medical Center and ensure it remains a leader in the region.

Dr. Dick Nisbet is his profession's No. 1 cheerleader. He sets the bar high and knows his fellow physicians can meet the challenge. Regarding his specialty, Dick ticks off achievements such as intraocular lenses for the treatment of cataracts, sophisticated contact lenses, and advancements in the treatment of retinal conditions such as detachment and macular degeneration. The next frontier? Restoring sight to the blind.

This article is the seventh in a series of profiles celebrating the 2017 centennial anniversary of Atrium Medical Center (formerly Middletown Hospital and Middletown Regional Hospital). The series honors men and women whose civic-mindedness and genuine caring for others helped Greater Middletown grow and contributed to the first-class medical center the region boasts today.

Past Legends focused on:

Paul Galeese, *Issue 1*; E.O. Bauer, MD, and John L. Bauer, MD, *Issue 2*; Educating Our Caregivers, *Issue 3*; Russell L. "Rusty" Malcolm, MD, and Albert S. Malcolm, MD, *Issue 4*; Ann and Arthur Bidwell, *Issue 5*; Atrium Auxiliary Middletown, *Issue 6*.

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