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Interview with John Schue, Class of 1953 and Professor of Mathematics

John Schue

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Macalester College Archives, DeWitt Wallace Library

Oral History Project

Interview with: **John Schue**
Professor of Mathematics, 1962-1999; Class of 1953

Date: **Tuesday, June 12th, 2007, 12:30p.m.**

Place: Macalester College DeWitt Wallace Library, Harmon Room
Interviewer: Laura Zeccardi, Class of 2007

Edited interview 1:30:19 minutes
run time:

Accession: 2007-12-21-18

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Interview with John Schue

Laura Zeccardi, Interviewer

**June 12, 2007
Macalester College
DeWitt Wallace Library
Harmon Room**

LZ: My name is Laura Zeccardi and I am a new graduate of Macalester College, conducting interviews for the Macalester Oral History Project. Today is Tuesday, June 12th, and I am interviewing John Schue, Professor of Mathematics and a Macalester alum, Class of 1953, in the Harmon Room in the DeWitt Wallace Library.

[00:18]

LZ: To begin, if you just want to state your name, and where you were born, and the first year that you came to Macalester.

JS: Well my name is John Schue, and that's spelled S-c-h-u-e [laughter]. And I was born in Gaylord, Minnesota, which is about seventy miles from here. I grew up in a small town and I came to Macalester as a freshman in 1949.

[00:40]

LZ: So how did the decision to come to Macalester come about?

JS: Well, my senior year I was planning on going to college, probably into a pre-med course—because I was encouraged by my parents and my uncle, who was a doctor. He had attended Macalester as a pre-med, and that gave a bit of an advantage to Macalester. But I'd also looked seriously and been contacted by Carleton and Grinnell. And when I got to thinking, well, I've lived in a small town all my life. Do I really want to live in another small town to go to college? And I decided no. So I came to Macalester. Primarily because it was an urban location, I think. I've never regretted the choice. It worked out fine for me.

[01:25]

LZ: Had you had any other knowledge or experience, other than that your uncle had gone here?

JS: Well, my parents and I did visit sometime in the Spring of my senior year. And at that time, Macalester was celebrating I believe it was its seventy-fifth anniversary. And so we got to see a big production down at the St. Paul Auditorium. And it seemed like a good place. I was nervous about it because, well, I'd never been to college before [laughter]. But we were treated well and it was no problem coming back in the Fall.

[02:03]

LZ: What was your first impression of the campus when you got here?

JS: Oh my. I guess I was really wondering whether I measured up against a place like this. These were all kids—many of them city kids. And to a kid from Gaylord, that gave them a huge advantage I think. But there was a great emphasis on being friendly. And I remember we had a

freshman camp out on the St. Croix. And I got to meet some people that way, and it went pretty easily.

[02:39]

LZ: How does—how did the physical layout then compare to what it is now?

JS: Actually, it—well I think that for one thing we had the gym. I lived in Kirk Hall, which was here then. On this block—let's see where are we. This was the—the second half of Old Main was located here. And then the rest of this area to the north of us was vacant. There was no chapel. Carnegie was there. That [Weyerhaeuser] was the library at the time. And across the street there were Bigelow Hall and Wallace Hall. And those were the women's dormitories. And Kirk was the sole male dormitory.

[03:26]

LZ: Now might be a nice time to talk about what dorm life was like.

JS: Well I enjoyed it. I really did. I spent four years in Kirk Hall. I had a selection of roommates. But there was a lot of intermingling within sections, so that I really... I tended to be a shy kid anyway, but this gave me an introduction to meeting people, and it was a fairly comfortable situation. Some of the people that I—well my first year roommates are still active in campus affairs. One of them was Chuck Dietz, who was a Trustee for, I don't know, thirty years or something like that. He was a legal counsel for 3M, and he still has some role in campus activities. Another one was Lee Marquardt, who has been a big donor to the college I

know. The two middle years were—both of my roommates were pre-seminary, which meant that I really didn't feel I identified with them very well. So I would spend more time out of the room than in the room. And then my final year was a...[I roomed with] two friends that I'd come to know at my time at Mac. One of them wound up being in the early astronaut program. And the other wound up—well he was a physics major, and he was looking for a job after graduation. He didn't want to go to graduate school, and he got a job with Honeywell in this field that they called semiconductors. And which has since has gone into transistors, and that was the start of it right there, middle-'50s.

[05:13]

LZ: Did most people live on campus at that time?

JS: No. There was a real split. I'd say... You had the three dormitories, and that would house—I don't know how many. Maybe six hundred, maybe more that. But then there were the off-campus students. And there were a lot of commuting students. And it was really like two separate communities. The commuting students would come and attend classes and then go home. And we didn't really see that much of them. So that most of the campus life revolved around the people who lived in or near the campus. There were a lot of people—friends of mine—who couldn't get in the dormitories, and they would rent a room in a house nearby in the area. And that was pretty common at that time. And I guess it still is [laughter]. But now they tend to be more apartments. At that time it was just single room rentals.

[06:10]

LZ: What was student life like at that time? Were there certain social activities, or the state of athletics at that point?

JS: Well, the athletics certainly was a much bigger factor then, than now I think. We for examples had [more] teams—swimming team, wrestling team, hockey team. They played hockey outside here, on Shaw Field. And football [laughter] you would recognize that. We didn't do much better then than now [laughter]. Basketball was pretty decent. I enjoyed the basketball. I'd go to most of the games. And there was usually some socializing after the games in downtown. I enjoyed that too. But then...well one of the things that I noticed in here [the yearbooks] was that there was so many clubs. There were clubs of all kinds. If you want to see, I could show it to you. But there were all of the religious organizations, five or six of those. And there were these social clubs, and language clubs, and science clubs. That was a good share of the campus activity, I think, was those. And then there were the—well, every couple of weeks there'd be some sort of dance. I didn't usually go to those, but they were pretty popular amongst people who felt more comfortable in that situation. And then, well, one of the biggest differences I think was they had—in all four years I was at Macalester, they'd have specified weeks set aside in the Spring term. You've probably heard of these by now. One was Religious Emphasis Week and the other was Political Emphasis Week. Or Religion in Life Week, I'm sorry. And Political Emphasis Week. Those were major events. And they would really curtail the class schedule during that time and encourage kids to participate. In the Political Emphasis Week they would have a theme for a year. It might be the UN Assembly, or might be congressional House, or a nominating convention, a presidential nominating convention, things of that kind. And those were pretty good for developing a campus life I think. I don't know that

you could say that it involved a huge percentage of the students. I don't think probably that they did. But those who did get involved got quite a bit of a good experience out of it.

[08:46]

LZ: Were you specifically a member of any of those groups or had an active part?

JS: I was not—I remember my roommate taking me to...encouraging me to go to [a] United World Federalists, a meeting with him. I went and I don't think I went back again. But I didn't really participate the way I should have in the Political Emphasis Week. Religion in Life Week I would go to the talks that seemed to be of real interest to me at the time. But many of them I didn't go to. So I was not a good participant myself [laughter].

[09:30]

LZ: Could you talk a little bit about what academics were like? What your major or minor was, the size of classes, the types of courses...

JS: Ok. Well, I started as a pre-med, and I was taking science classes—chemistry, biology. And I did pretty well at them, but I didn't really enjoy the biology. So after a year I decided that—I had trouble with the labs, too. Things didn't look the way the diagram said they would [laughter]. So I decided I'd give up—I'd been a major in chemistry. My sophomore year I was majoring in chemistry but by the middle of the year I decided, well, what I really liked was mathematics. And from that point on I was a Math major and stuck with it. I never regretted that either. I had a hard time convincing my parents that this is something I can earn a living

with. But I enjoyed it. And there was one— The department was essentially one person with some adjunct people helping out. But he was good. And he encouraged me, and I really learned some good, solid mathematics. Class sizes tended to be pretty small. Even though the student body—my freshman year, the student body was the largest it ever was up to that time. It was over nineteen hundred students. I don't think Macalester of late has ever been close to that really. It was very crowded, and there were some big classes the first year.

[11:07]

Part of this was due to the veterans. People who had been in the service and were just starting to try to decide what to do with their lives would come back on the G.I. Bill. So you had this mixture of traditional kids of eighteen, and then these veterans of maybe twenty-four, twenty-five. So that led to an interesting kind of mixture I think. After the first year or so, class sizes tended to be pretty small. We did have things like Saturday classes then [laughter]. Really. There was a Monday, Wednesday, Friday sequence, and a Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday sequence. But they died out. I think maybe by the time I was a senior I don't think there were any more of those. There were two mass events that involved the entire student body.

[12:01]

One was convocations, which were required and they actually took attendance. And everybody was supposed to meet in the gym over here, on Thursdays I guess it was. And then there were chapel services which were required. They had the— We used the church across the street. And there they couldn't seat everybody at once but they had two different hours for chapel. That was required too. And if you took too many cuts, well then you could actually lose a credit on your transcript. Excessive cuts. But I enjoyed the convocations primarily. They had speakers coming from outside, much as they do now. Not as many of them as there are now. We didn't

have a budget for that. But they had some interesting people. I remember especially when Billy Graham came and I just had to see this person. See what he was like. This is the same Billy Graham that you know about [laughter]. And there's some others whose names don't mean a great deal now but I enjoyed them a lot. It was a good experience for me. I felt that Macalester served me well in a liberal arts kind of education. Even though at that time they didn't consider themselves as a liberal arts college. There were things like the Miss Woods program. Do you know about that?

[13:23]

LZ: No I don't.

JS: This was a program for training elementary education teachers. And they had their own building across Summit Avenue. It's been used for several other different purposes—right next to the President's house. That was Miss Wood, Wood Hall I think. They were largely two year students, and they didn't mix a lot with the regular student body. But they're in the yearbook and they were there. Then there were nursing students. That was a program they had with several local hospitals. Kids would come here and then spend a semester I guess picking up science courses. Then there were business courses—strictly business training, vocational training, rather than economics.

[14:14]

LZ: During that time I know Macalester started to—I don't know if this might have been after your time—but they started to phase out these vocational courses.

JS: Oh yes.

LZ: And did you, were you here when that transition began?

JS: No, fortunately. I became aware—this was about 1960, '61 I guess. The college decided then—this was a major decision—to phase out all of the vocational courses including nursing, and the Miss Woods School, and the business courses and typing courses—things of that nature—and become a liberal arts college. Then the entire year of '61-'62 was spent in planning for this. It meant curriculum reform, it meant calendar reform. And some really major decisions had to be made. And the way I heard about it—I came the next year. I heard about what energy and time had gone into this planning. And I was very grateful that it was done by the time I got here. So I got in on the benefits, but without some of the agony that was involved. But it was really a major upheaval and I think it was handled very well. And the results turned out to be pretty good. Oh Interim term, for example was created out of that.

[15:33]

LZ: Oh, okay. When you were a student would you have had to take a typing course or a business course? Was there...

JS: No. No, you didn't have to take them unless you wanted to major in business or something like that. I have to look those up in the yearbook I think. But they did have graduation requirements. I'm glad you mentioned that. Things like...well, convocation and chapel I've

already mentioned. But you had to have I think it was two English courses. And you had to have a course in the sciences. Well that all sounds familiar. But you had to have a religion course—I think several religion courses—which tended to be two credit courses, or even one credit course. There was a course in personal hygiene that was required and I had to take that. One that I really didn't look forward to but I'm glad it was required was Physical Education. And the first year we just played games mostly. But the second year I had to take swimming. I could not swim, and I had to take it and I got through and I really am grateful for that. I met a very interesting person along the way—there was a fellow named David Primrose who taught these courses. And one of my favorite stories of Macalester came from David Primrose. He was a—maybe I don't want to interrupt the taping, but I have a picture of him here [in the yearbook] and you can see what kind of person he was. But he had this rough—he was a top sergeant kind of person. And he was watching me. I was taking the second term of swimming, I think which surprised him because he knew I wasn't very good at it. And he was watching me one day. We were supposed to be doing the breaststroke and I was getting close to the end of the pool. And he says, "Schue, you're an idiot from the neck down!" [laughter] But the way he said it, I thought...[laughter]. He's just a wonderful person.

[17:31]

LZ: Are there other professors, or even students, that stand out in your mind now?

JS: Yeah, there are so many. And most of them would just be names [now] though. I think probably the most vivid personalities for me were my colleagues—my peers—and several in particular. One was a kid from North Dakota and we were very dissimilar people in so many

ways, but we seemed to get along somehow. He was the one, he wound up... He really aggravated President Turck at trying to railroad something through the Political Emphasis Week program. And Turck had been watching from the running track overlooking the floor of the gym where this was held in. And he actually came down, running up to the platform where my friend Jim was standing there and he said, "Liebler, you can't get away with these tricks here." This was a really direct personal intervention by the President of the college [laughter]. But Jim went on, later on he went to law school and he was on the Warren Commission as an attorney. The name Arlen Specter probably is familiar to you. Well, he and Specter were lawyers on the Warren [Commission] report and you can see his name in there. And he actually was killed in a plane crash a couple of years ago. He was training to do multi-engine flying with his daughter and they were going to fly around the world. He was an avid flyer. And in the training something went wrong and they crashed and [he] was killed about two years ago. But there were others. As I said, all I can do is name names. I don't know how interested you are in what made them interesting to me. But they really were lasting friendships. Then there were faculty too.

[19:25]

It was interesting for me because I came back later as faculty myself—to wind up working with people who previously I had either idolized or had not idolized [laughter]. But I think the faculty were very uneven in the quality. And so were the courses for that matter. There were some people who I would rate among as good as anybody around. The Philosophy Department for example, had Tom Hill and Hugo Thompson and David White. And these were three really remarkable people. I'm sure you'll hear their names if you haven't heard them already. And they were still teaching when I came back. Well, Ted Mitau is usually mentioned by most alums as a person who was influential in their lives, and he was pretty good. I took a course from Ted

Mitau. But I wasn't especially interested in Political Science. I came to know him later on as a colleague and then I saw sides of him I hadn't seen before. But he was telling me once about what it was like to be at Macalester during the war. See I came there after the war. And he wound up—at one point they were so short of staff that he was teaching trigonometry [laughter]. And to imagine Ted Mitau as teaching trigonometry is just mind-boggling.

[20:51]

LZ: Was there a particular major that students tended to grasp toward at that time, or was it...

JS: Well I think probably one of the most popular ones was Political Science, because of Ted Mitau. English was popular and often for—well many people went into high school teaching. Mathematics was not popular at all. I think there were two Math majors my senior year. And that was typical. Enrollment was very small there. Chemistry was pretty good. Actually Macalester had a good pre-med program and that was part of the inducement to coming in the first place. This meant that there had to be some strong people in the sciences of chemistry and biology. And most preeminent was O.T. Walter, who's got a portrait down in Olin Hall down here. He was known by many of the pre-med students as "Prince Otto". Otto was his first name. But the reason was he just held their fates in his hands, because he had to write their recommendations if you wanted to get into med school. And if he liked you that was fine and you would get in. And if he didn't, well you wouldn't. I really—I took a course from him and he was a good teacher. I shouldn't say anything negative about him. But I just was not attracted to him or to the pre-med program. But it was a strong program and there were some very able people came out of that program and went into medicine and did very well. Let's see...anything

else? Oh one thing I wanted to be sure to mention was a program that—well it came out in the English Department. Choral Readers. Have you heard about that? It was a group who did choral readings, much like a choir. And you tried out for it, and auditioned. It was all run by Mary Gwen Owen, who was a flamboyant person, and very inspirational. She'd just get those kids to work. But they would put on programs of just choral reading. They would do skits of funny things, of dramatic things, read poetry all in unison. You don't see that anymore [laughter].

[23:20]

LZ: Going back just a little, you had mentioned President Turck would have been president when you were here. And can you talk a little bit about what he was like as a person and as a president?

JS: Well...he was an interesting guy. He is usually cited as the person who started flying the U.N. flag. And he felt very strongly about that. This was a genuine concern of his, that Macalester should be an international school and we should have an international emphasis, and the U.N flag was one way of demonstrating this. I don't think he was the best administrator in the world, but he was really...he was a very friendly kind of person. You'd walk over across the campus and you'd run into him and you'd say hello and sometimes he'd know your name [laughter]. He would have all of the freshman over during freshman orientation, and we'd go to his house and get to meet him and his wife, who was also something of a character. I think probably for the Macalester of that time, he was as good a president as they could have had. Then I went away. He was still president when I left in '53. And by the time I came back as a

faculty, he was no longer here and was succeeded by Harvey Rice. And that was a different school, and a different time by that time. But Turck's main influence I think was in this international emphasis, and it showed up in the student body. We have a lot of international students now but it seemed like there were a lot of them then. There were people like Yahya Armajani, [who] was in the Religion Department. He was native...Persian then, Iranian now. He would bring Iranian students over here. And we had a number of them on campus, some living in the same section with me. There were....it was just a variety of international students, so the college was less provincial than it might have been without that. And that was I think Turck's biggest influence...

[25:26]

LZ: Did you find that students within the United States were mainly Midwest kids or did they come from other places?

JS: No, it was almost entirely the five state area, and largely Minnesota. I think there were more Lutherans than Presbyterians in my class. So you had this curious mix of maybe, I don't know, two hundred or a hundred international students and then the rest were mostly Midwestern kids. There were very few minorities. I doubt that there were more than five black students on campus. I'd like to think that the ones who were here felt comfortable with it. One of them was a tremendous football player—Earl Bowman. He played about the best games I've ever seen. He practically beat Gustavus by himself one night. He wound up later on being a dean here, in the '60s I think. But it was provincial, and largely Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa. And then there were Dakotas and Montana, too.

[26:32]

LZ: What was the ratio of men to women in the student body?

JS: At that time it was I think fairly close to fifty-fifty. I'm not sure, I'd have to look that up.

They used to print these things in the catalogue and I don't remember. But I think there was no pronounced differential there. And it made for a good social climate I think [laughter].

[26:57]

LZ: So you graduated in 1953.

JS: '53.

LZ: And what was that whole process like and how did you decide what you were going to do after you graduated?

JS: Well, my senior year I had heard that there were good opportunities in actuarial work, which has to do with insurance and mathematics and is largely based on mathematics. So I thought I might be interested in that. I actually went down to interview with Continental Casualty in Chicago over Christmas vacation that year. They offered me a job and I accepted to start in June, after I graduated. But in the meantime Professor Camp, who was the good guy in the Math Department, encouraged me to apply to graduate school, and I did. I got this acceptance from MIT, and I thought, "Gee, well he said you should go." And I had never been East of Chicago.

And the thought of going out there, well that was pretty interesting. So I wrote this insurance company and said, “No, I really had decided to go to graduate school.” And I did. And I’ve never regretted that either [laughter].

[28:11]

LZ: What was typical for a Mac grad to do after graduation?

JS: Well I think a lot of them would go into business. Business and probably...business could be a lot of things. But it was business, and I think most of my friends wound up doing that. Or teaching, secondary teaching. Graduate school was not nearly as likely a possibility as it is now. But there were people who went on, and a number of my classmates went on to do good work in graduate school, and academic positions or industry. There was—a fair number of kids went into the ministry or religious professions, teaching. Well my two roommates—both my sophomore and junior year—both went into seminary and wound up as ordained ministers. That was fairly common for Macalester. There was much more of an affiliation then with the Presbyterian Church, and a stronger feeling of religion—was a vital part of the community at that time—than there is now.

[29:30]

LZ: While at MIT were you able to keep up some sort of ties with Macalester either through alumni or...?

JS: I didn't really try to, but it was...let's see. In 1956, I didn't have any summer support at MIT. I had been coming home to Minnesota for the summers anyway, and I worked in Gaylord on a carpenter crew. But I figured it was time that I did something different. I wrote to Dr. Camp and asked if there was any chance he needed somebody to teach in the summer session. And he said yes. Well he really wanted to work on his book and he would like that time off so would I teach these two summer session courses, in the summer of 1956. And I thought, "Well I can do that, sure." So I came back. I had six or eight students in each of the classes, and there was one woman in both. And we found out we were quite interested in each other. And it wound up we got married. Not then, but a year later we did. Now that kind of relationship is definitely—well it just isn't allowed. But I had, I didn't feel any guilt about it because I had no permanency at Macalester. And I gave her a 'B' and a 'C' and she accepted those. We actually talked to a couple of faculty people, "Did they see any problem with it?" No, no as long as you're not Macalester faculty. I was just filling in for a summer. So that worked out alright too, and we got married a year later [and still are after 51 years].

[31:18]

LZ: Had there been summer session classes when you were a student at Macalester?

JS: Yeah there were. I'd never gotten interested in them. And they did actually have a Master's program at that time in Education. I think that was the biggest draw of the summer session. Then there were things like—well I should have mentioned this too. These were mostly school-year programs. But I think there were some summer too. But they had a Spanish—Mexican Caravan. It was a program down to Mexico. And I'm not sure when they did that, I can't tell

you. Then there was also the CAC, which is the Canadian American Conference. My wife actually participated in that as a— She came to Macalester after I had left. She came as a student and she made several trips up to Winnipeg with the CAC.

[32:12]

LZ: Were there other—I know people went to Mexico and Canada—were there other abroad programs where people actually left?

JS: Not really very well organized ones. Later on in the '60s there were some really good ones when I was on the faculty, supported by Wallace money and other things. There wasn't so much—well there was SPAN, that's right. Student Project for Amity among Nations. That was a...well it's mentioned also in here [the yearbook]. That was I think during the academic year. Kids would go spend a year...in Yugoslavia. A good friend of ours did that, worked some other places. It wasn't anywhere the magnitude of what we do now in terms of international courses, but it was a live program, persisted for quite a long time.

[33:05]

LZ: So you taught this summer session at Macalester, and then how did you end up as a professor then?

JS: Oh! I had no intentions of coming back. We got married the following year and I was finishing up graduate school and looking for jobs. The basic decision then was: do you want to go to a large university and submit to all of the pressures of publication? I liked mathematics, I

loved it in fact, but I didn't really want to have to do it under that kind of pressure. So we agonized about that and I finally decided—I got an offer from Oberlin College, which at that time was rated the top co-ed college in the country by the predecessor for the *U.S. News and World Report*—it was the Chicago Tribune actually that took a survey of deans and so forth and rated. Oberlin was rated very well. And it appealed to me because Oberlin had just celebrated their 125th anniversary, and they pointed out that they were the first co-ed college in the country. The first to admit black students—apart from being all black—in the country and they had this history of being a stop on the Underground Railroad. It was just a very intriguing kind of place to me. So we finally wound up going to Oberlin, and spent three very good years there. But we didn't really enjoy living in Northern Ohio. It was a small town, and apart from the college, there wasn't really a lot of appeal living at Oberlin for us. And we both had connections in the Twin Cities. So I wrote to Macalester and asked—well I hadn't especially wanted to limit it to Macalester—but I asked if there was a chance that they would be hiring. It turned out that they were. This was in 1961, when Macalester had already made the big decision to make this transition to a liberal arts college. But it was pretty chancy and I really agonized over that one, too. Did I want to leave an established place with a guaranteed reputation like Oberlin and maybe take a chance on Macalester? My wife and I went several rounds on that one. Lu Garvin, who had just been hired by Macalester to be the new—I guess they called him Dean then and he became Provost later on—and he was to build the faculty for this new college that we were going to create out of Wallace money. He had also had a previous connection at Oberlin. He had taught there in the Philosophy Department for a long time. He was coming through Oberlin and he called me and asked if we could get together, just have a talk. He knew that I had had an interest in Macalester, but no commitment to it. So I agreed to meet him for lunch that day in

Oberlin. As I left the house that morning I said to my wife, “We’re going.” [laughter] And she agreed. So the decision was made before I talked to him. We talked then and he said, “Yep.” He was very encouraging. I was the first person he hired actually, because this was a year in advance of...I didn’t go until...a year later that I actually went there. And he had just come on the job himself. So that was interesting.

[36:46]

LZ: When you came back to Macalester, were there things that you noticed immediately that had been very different from when you were a student?

JS: Oh yes. Well there was this attitude that we were really going to try to become a place that people would know about—a top rate liberal arts college. That there was money to do these things, this was important. Macalester didn’t have much of an endowment then, but Wallace money was starting to come through and there was money to hire faculty. Garvin was a very enthusiastic salesman—you know Garvin, there was also Gavin later on. And it was just a pretty exciting time to be here. A new calendar, first Interim term was going to take place. I guess it wasn’t—maybe that first Interim term didn’t come until the following year. But definitely everything had been rethought. Courses were different. Credit schedule was different. It all seemed new, pretty exciting. The student body though, seemed like the same old Macalester [laughter]. And it was only a couple years later that it really started to have an impact—well things like Wallace money would...they’d contact any National Merit finalist or semi-finalist and offer a good financial package at Macalester, to come to Macalester. For a couple of years

there we led the nation in National Merit scholars. And it was largely due because we bought them [laughter].

[38:28]

LZ: Could you notice changes that had taken place within the Math Department?

JS: It took awhile. There were two people essentially when I came back to join them, and I had some misgivings about that. It was not really a very lively department. One of whom was this Dr. Camp still. And then Murray Braden had come on the scene by then. And largely our students were...the biggest share of them I think were preparing for secondary ed. I don't think that first year we sent anybody to graduate school. There'd be one or two maybe in successive years after that. But by the time of maybe the '66, '67, we were really getting some quality students, and the department started to grow. We hired several people. Oh gee, '68 I know we hired at least three new people I think. And it just continued to grow from that point on, and it wasn't too long—I became Chair of the Department in the '80s and for awhile there we were the biggest department in the college. And previously, we had had maybe two Math majors when I was a student there or when I first came back. And by that time [the '80s] we were getting thirty, thirty-five Math majors, and twenty Computer Science majors at the same time. It was a major, major change.

[40:00]

LZ: What types of courses did you specifically teach?

JS: Well we gradually upgraded the curriculum. We essentially got rid of the things like college algebra, which is really—college algebra, its high school algebra redone. And trigonometry and mechanical drawing. Those things simply were wiped out and replaced with a good, respectable calculus sequence, and linear algebra and probability and statistics. It's still in the state of evolution and its much larger and much more... Well, much better sampling of mathematics now. I think right now the Math Department at Macalester is as good as any small college, four year college in the country. I'll have more to say on that later, but it's just a very impressive place.

[41:02]

LZ: What was it like for you being kind of on the first wave of this hiring, all these new faculty members? And then just to have a ton of basically new faces on campus, what kind of atmosphere did that create?

JS: Well that was, it was interesting. For me it was an adjustment to working with people who I still remembered as professors [laughter]. I mentioned this Philosophy Department, they were all still there and still teaching. And we became good friends and in a different way. And oh, let's see. Then there were so many new faculty coming in. Not just Mathematics, it was the whole college. It was really a regeneration, a pretty exciting time to be around.

[41:50]

LZ: How did the climate of campus start to shift as the late '60s came, and into the '70s? I know there's a whole slew of issues there, kind of to get your take on what was going on.

JS: Well, there was this... The '60s, you know enough about the generation to know that the whole country was in turmoil, and Macalester was hardly exempt from that. And there was a real change. Well first thing, do away with all the graduation requirements. Compulsory chapel's gone, convocation was gone, the language requirement was gone. There was much more designing individual majors, core programs. All of this was new and exciting stuff. Interim term was pretty new and exciting. And then the student body began to change. Well, we were recruiting nationally and internationally, instead of just that five state area [laughter]. And that really had an impact. I remember one of my kids [students]—a senior. 1967, I think it was. I worked with these three seniors on their honors project their last year, and one of them said to me—we had them over to our house for dinner. He said, “You know, we're the last of the docile generation. From now on it's going to be a different place.” And it was. By '68, well let's see. Kent State came along in '69, '70. And by that time, the place was—well Macalester was regarded as a hotbed of liberalism and the drug culture in the Twin Cities. And really got a reputation that was well, largely earned I think, for being a pretty far out place. I remember especially that Kent State [unclear]. The whole place was in turmoil. There were faculty meetings, teach-ins, sit-ins. And then the decision was made—it was near the end of the term—well, students could decide whether they wanted to finish their courses, or just take the grade that they would get right now [then]. And most of the kids did that. I think in the math and sciences, kids were more conservative and they finished their courses and we gave final exams and final grades. But a lot of other students just didn't finish. It was just... Oh, then there were—I remember when Arthur Flemming came as President. I'm trying to think of this program that was going to involve a big influx of minorities, largely black kids from the U.S., and funding for

that and so on. There was one item of discussion—I can't even remember what the issues was now—but in a faculty meeting I remember it was a pretty tense question that was eventually to come out to a vote. There was quite a bit of debate on it. And then when it was near the vote, there were a couple of the...more outspoken of the minorities, the black kids, and they stood by the exit doors. This was down in Olin Hall in the auditorium—with the threat there that if you tried to leave they were not going to let you leave until this vote was taken. It really wasn't as threatening as it seemed at the time, but this was unheard of on Macalester campus to have that kind of attitude appearing in a faculty meeting of all places [laughter].

[45:37]

LZ: What was that like for you, as someone who had gone to Mac and graduated and had seen it one way, to now see requirements drop off and this radicalism arise?

JS: It was hard, but at the same time I had the feeling there was a continuity. I have something to show you in a little bit on that. But this was still part of the Macalester that I knew. I remember one big issue when I was a student was that there was a really impending threat of starvation in India. And this friend of mine—Jim, I mentioned him, the one who was killed in the plane crash. He got the idea—it was partly a political move on his part—he organized a campaign “Wheat for India”. And he was going to organize a caravan of cars to drive from St. Paul to Washington, carrying bags of wheat as a symbolic gesture that we should be shipping our surplus wheat to India without strings attached. It made the papers, and he met with Hubert Humphrey somewhere in the process. So what happened then with, in the late '60s, was not that different in character. The issues were different. Vietnam was—well we had nothing like

Vietnam when I was a student here. We had Korea, but that didn't arouse the extreme feelings that Vietnam did. That was a pretty tough time. The whole country was going through this. They'd have riots in Watts, well riots in Newark, things like that. Kent State just fit in well with the rest of the picture.

[47:29]

LZ: How did the faculty and the administration react to these student demonstrations?

JS: Well, some faculty were out there leading them. And others were I think pretty apprehensive about it. I don't think anyone really felt threatened physically for themselves, but there was a feeling of concern for the future of the college. Would Macalester ever regain the kind of status that we wanted to have in this small Midwestern college. And here we were this outpost of wild-eyed revolutionaries [laughter]. You had quite a clash of cultures right on campus.

[48:14]

LZ: So did Mac basically have a bad reputation at that time?

JS: Yes. And this led to some real financial problems. DeWitt Wallace for one thing, decided he didn't want to continue his support. He didn't like the way the college was going, and he started to draw back on his funding. And it was in the 1970s that there was some real, a real financial crunch. It got to the point where—I remember I was on the, it was called the Faculty Personnel Committee I guess at the time. We were worried about whether we'd be able to meet

the budget. I made the suggestion—I learned [later] that this never happened—that we might consider taking salary cuts. That met with no enthusiasm whatever, but we did cut faculty. There was a committee called the—we had some horrible name for it—but they had to decide which positions were going to be cut. There were positions—some faculty positions, some administrative positions, they just cut. They said, “We will not support these anymore.” And this was an outgrowth largely of the drying up of givings from—well the alumni giving was really pretty small by this time because the alumni simply couldn’t understand how the Macalester they knew could get this kind of reputation. It took a long time—actually a good almost six, seven years. It didn’t really begin to improve again until John Davis became president. And then he was able to cultivate relations with people like the Daytons and such, which hadn’t existed before. We had no Minneapolis connections until John Davis brought them with him—his coming from Minneapolis. And then things grew much better. We actually got some more Wallace money again. But there was a lapse in there of, oh, well over ten years, where relations were pretty cool.

[50:24]

LZ: Were there things, programs, within the Mathematics Department that were cut as a result of just not enough money?

JS: No, because we didn’t tend to have really expensive programs. Well one of the real sufferers was this—the program started by Flemming for minority students. And I can’t think of the name of it right now.

LZ: Was it the EEO program?

JS: Yeah, that was it. That was a tremendous strain. And this was part of the reason for the financial crunch, too. Flemming didn't last here very long, because faculty realized what had happened. Then we had to cut back on EEO. And well, gee, the college had made this commitment. We were going to be a real pillar for the minority communities and offer really substantial financial aid and programs and staff. And then we had to cut back on that. That hurt. It hurt our standing with the minority communities, and with the kids who were in the programs. They were resentful and I can understand that.

[51:35]

LZ: Was that program eventually done away with and phased out?

JS: Yeah.

LZ: Did that then affect the number of minority students that were coming to Mac?

JS: It did, yes it did.

[51:48]

LZ: You had mentioned that the Interim program was started your first year, and I'm curious what types of courses did you engage in for that month of January.

JS: Oh [laughter], well that was a problem. In mathematics you like to build up a body of related ideas. This takes time and it takes time for assimilation. But Interim, everything had to be done in four weeks. So we would devise special courses that we never would have thought of doing. But with some mixed results. I sort of enjoyed it. Did some experimenting, did some topics that weren't part of the regular curriculum, but try to do them in a limited time. And then a variation on that was there were kids who really were coming to Macalester and were pretty bright, but they hadn't had trigonometry. They wanted to take some math and sciences courses. Well, you could do a course like trigonometry in Interim term. That would make sense. It was really a remedial course, but it was a good use of the time I think. And it helped some kids to get started when they might have been held back without that. But there were other things. My son, my youngest son, actually wound up at Macalester later on. And I remember his Interim projects. One was he built an electric guitar. And one was he built a telescope. Sherman Schultz was in the Physics Department then, and his Interim course every year was building telescopes. Kids would actually grind lenses and build a telescope, have it done by the end of term. Well Interim for that was ideal. But for mathematics it didn't work that well.

[53:40]

LZ: Did you find that most of your students were math majors, in the Interim courses?

JS: I guess probably they were. Although we did some things that would draw—well, like this trigonometry course, they would not be math majors. They would be people who were largely freshman who needed this in order to be able to go on maybe in Chemistry, or to take a biology course, they had to have calculus eventually or statistics.

[54:12]

LZ: What was that like getting students that you maybe normally wouldn't see?

JS: Oh I enjoyed that. I really had some interesting contacts with kids. We did always have at least one course that was thought of as "Math for Poets". And it was a course that they could meet a science requirement with, and you didn't try to do it as a theoretical mathematics course. It was just an exposure to math ideas. And those are fun to do. I'm not sure of the lasting value of them. And these would be largely—the students would be kids who were not especially even science oriented.

[54:58]

LZ: What was the requirement at that time concerning how many courses students had to take in the science area, the math area?

JS: Well now, let's see. I guess we're talking about the '60s. It's been basically the same pretty much since then, that you had to have at least one lab science. And then another course that could be mathematics. But there was no strict mathematics requirement at that time, and I guess there still isn't. I think the department in the last couple years has done some interesting things in trying to appeal to people who wouldn't normally take a math course at all. To do things like...interpreting—well how do you deal with statistics? You read reports in the newspapers and they say this and this. Well, so what's the margin of error, and what does this mean to a person who wants to be a well-informed citizen. Say...well you really have to know some

mathematics in order to be able to do that. This course that I'm thinking of is I think an attempt in that direction. We tried some things, sort of primitive versions of that, with mixed results I think. One thing that has gone on is the statistics course. That grew very big in the '60s, and has stayed that way ever since because so many people in the social sciences, and the sciences too, need a stats course, or several.

[56:33]

LZ: So when did you receive tenure, and what was that process like?

JS: I knew you were going to ask this [laughter]. My son can't believe this. Neither can the current faculty. But when I spoke to Lou Garvin in Oberlin, and told him that I'd like to come, and he asked about salary. And I said, "Well I think what I'm getting now is adequate." I wasn't in it for the money. But I said, "It'd be nice to have tenure." I'd been teaching three years at Oberlin, and I would come up for tenure there in another two years probably. And he says, "Ok" [laughter]. Well, I looked at my contract in later years. I saw that the first year contract at Macalester said, "Probationary." But then the second year, after I'd been there one year, it said, "With tenure." And that was all of the formal process that there was. Lou Garvin had said, "He's going to get tenure," and I got tenure. My son—our youngest son—teaches at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. He had to go through this awful process, even at Ashland—Northland. And it's much worse at Macalester now than what he had to go through. He got these huge files of materials and so on. I didn't do any of that [laughter].

[57:54]

LZ: Was it typical that most professors that came in the '60s had tenure after a couple years?

JS: They gradually tightened up. By '65 or so I think it was beginning to be tightened, and there was more of a formal process. There had to be a committee that would decide this. It wasn't just a departmental decision any longer. It had to be a decision by your peers, and then eventually administrative approval, and then eventually Trustee approval. It's just kept on growing and now it's really an elaborate process.

[58:36]

LZ: What types of personal—have you done personal research or other types of publications that you've engaged in, outside of classroom work?

JS: Yeah. I've said I loved mathematics, and I still do. And I tried to maintain a program of mathematics research, which was pretty unusual for a liberal arts college even to try this. But I did. And I managed to do some publications, in a field called Lie algebras. And I was able to keep up with it, the literature enough to be able to continue to do research. Even after I went on MSFEO I still got a paper out on Lie algebras. I remember in the 1980s there was a conference on Lie algebras, one in the Fall and one in the Spring, both to be held at Madison [Wisconsin]. And I got an invitation to that, and I went down there. There were about forty participants, and I was the only one there from a small college. The others all had university connections. But I had done enough research to be able to talk to these people. But my most interesting claim to fame on that—I brought, I just have to show it to you. I wrote a little paper back in the '80s. And—you don't have to read it. It's called the "Wedderburn theorem of finite division rings."

But there's a reference to it. And this reference—I'd never even noticed this—this was in 1988. Until about 1995, when I was in the office one day, and Stan Wagon of the current Math Department came in and said, "You know that you have listed this guy as a reference on your paper." I said, "No, what was that?" Well, he had noticed that name there, number five? Do you recognize it?

LZ: No.

JS: Well, the name is T.J. Kaczynski. And well you people are probably too young to recognize—he is the Unabomber [laughter].

LZ: Oh! I was just going to say it's the Unabomber!

JS: He was a big mathematician. Harvard—he actually wrote this paper referred to when he was still a Harvard undergraduate. And then he went to the University of Michigan. And he published several papers in mathematics. And I hadn't realized I'd listed him as a reference. But after he was convicted of being the Unabomber, I got a call from a reporter at the *San Diego Union Tribune*, and what he had done is contacted all of the—he looked up all of the names of people who had referred to Kaczynski's papers. And I was one of eight in the world who had done that. And so he interviewed me over the phone and he wrote up an article for it and I still have a copy of it, but I didn't bring that. That was in the San Diego paper [laughter]—my connection with T.J. Kaczynski.

[1:01:43]

LZ: Did you ever include students in your research?

JS: Yeah. Actually, this paper starts out, “Last year a senior honors student and I were working on properties of finite rings and went through the two proofs...” and it goes on from there. But this was a student—a very bright girl, and one of my favorite students. And she did her honors paper with me her senior year at Macalester. And we had talked about some things that were related to this—not directly to this proof—but it led to the idea that I used later on. She eventually went on and within about four years became a Fellow in the Society of Actuaries. And then her husband a couple years later became a Fellow in the Society of Actuaries. And the last I knew though, that they had gone back to Iowa State, or Iowa, for graduate school—going into teaching. Very, really, good people. And this is the sort of thing I enjoyed about Macalester. You got to know or love the alumni—well the math people anyway—in such a way. You’d have them for several courses. You really got to know them as people, and to find out how their lives developed after they left—it’s been a continuing joy for me. I don’t know if you noticed Sunday in the St. Paul paper, there was an article about a new organ at Nativity Church. And there was a picture, a very close up picture of the organist playing this brand new organ at Nativity. And I looked at him. He was a student of mine. He was a math major. He took seven courses with me, which is more than anybody else had ever done [laughter]. He had gotten into graduate school at the University of Minnesota and he was going to go on to a Ph.D. in mathematics. And the story as I heard it was that he had started on a problem and then somebody else solved it and it just completely wiped out all of his work. And I guess he got

discouraged. He'd always been an organist anyway, and he just has since made his living as a church organist. But if you want to see him, he's in last Sunday's paper in St. Paul.

[1:03:57]

LZ: Did you find that you've been able to keep in touch with certain students that were more memorable?

JS: Yeah. It's no organized attempt. But, well one of the joys of being on MSFEO was I still had an office in Olin Hall. And these people would come around for alumni affairs and so on. That was usually the way. Some would occasionally write. Some would ask for references. I've got one woman—I had her in class back in 1992—and she's still asking me for references [laughter] for a graduate program she wants to be in.

[1:04:38]

LZ: We talked about the '60s and the '70s, and now if we could talk maybe about what campus was like in the '80s and then into the early '90s. What kind of issues you found that students took the cause for, and just changes that you saw, between '60s, '70s...

JS: Well, there were significant changes. We were starting to get money again. And it was in—I became Chair of the Department in 1982. Served for six years at that. And in that time, there was real growth in the department. I wound up in those six years—I counted it up one day—there were 27 people I'd hired. For a combination of things. We still didn't have as much money as we needed, so that we were hiring people to fill in—teach a course here, teach a course

there. But the first, very first person I hired was Michael Schneider. We'd interviewed him previously. And then I took over as Chair because the guy who was serving as Chair had a heart attack. It was near the end of the school year. It was Murray Braden. So I finally gave in and I said, "Well I guess it's my turn, so I'll try it." The fellow preceding him had a heart attack, too. So I stuck my neck on the line. But anyway, I hired Michael Schneider. And that was the beginning of the Computer Science Department. He came, and then six months later, Dick Molnar came—I hired Dick. And then the two of them carried the program, and really built it up to a really substantial program. And now there are several other people hired, too. And it's just become a very solid program. Then Mathematics was continuing to grow. And as I said, it was in that time in the '80s when we were the largest department by far at the college, in terms of registrations. Not in terms of people [faculty]. We were always short of people. But we were up to maybe thirteen, fourteen people at a time, and we really needed that many to teach all these students that we were having. And then there was a bit of a slump in the early '90s. And then it since has leveled off pretty much. But they're both very healthy programs.

[1:07:03]

What really happened though, that was the most impact, was— In 1989, we had a good nucleus of a department, I think. There were six of us who probably were the core, and then we would hire adjuncts as needed, and so on. But it was a good, solid program. But nothing spectacular. But then we were approached by two people—Stan Wagon and Joan Hutchinson, who were married. And they were both teaching at Smith College. And for some reason, they said they were interested in Macalester. They wanted to make the move. And they came out here, and I actually told them, "Are you sure you really want to do this?" But they said, "Yes." And they came. And then they came the next year. We hired some good young people. And a couple of

years later, I happened to be Chair again when we hired Tom Halverson, who has become one of the real stalwarts in the department. Just a wonderful guy. And then David Bressoud came along. And we had no right to get David Bressoud to come to Macalester. We didn't, we never would have thought of asking him. But he was a tenured professor of seventeen years at Penn State, and he wanted to get into a small college. And he liked Macalester for various reasons, and he came. And it's just been a wonderful thing for Macalester. David Bressoud was just elected president of the Math Association of America—of which there is only one in the country. And other people, too, but those were some really remarkable things that happened in that time. Right now—that's why I say that, I have no hesitation in saying this is one of the best college departments anywhere.

[1:08:58]

LZ: When the Computer Science—was that added as a major to the Math major?

JS: We started offering computer courses in...even before Mike Schneider's coming. But Mike was the one who really began to create a couple of computer science courses. It took a couple of years, I think, before we really got formal approval for a major in Computer Science. But it wasn't that long—by '85 I'm pretty sure we had the major instituted. There was a question we had of whether math and computer science should remain in one department. And for a while, while I was Chair, one day I came and said, "I don't think that they're compatible any longer, and we might be mostly better off if we split." But the sentiment was to stay together. And I think it was the right decision. I was wrong. And they have stuck together and it's been a pretty good relationship.

[1:10:03]

LZ: I imagine with the coming of the computer science program, you had to have kind of seen the beginning of the computer and technology at Macalester.

JS: Oh yeah.

LZ: How has that really changed the campus?

JS: Well, it wasn't so much in the '80s, I think as in the '90s, that people like Stan Wagon and David Bressoud and Joan Hutchinson—they were the first ones really to incorporate the computer in the classroom. By this time, there was a lot of computer work being done by students outside of the classroom. But the classroom was still pretty much the lecture idea. There were two things [that] happened. There was the introduction of the computer into the classroom, and then this emphasis which was suddenly becoming very popular in math circles, of group work in mathematics. And you didn't have what they called the sage on the stage—a lecturer standing up there. You divided the class into small groups where they collaborate on a problem and present their results to the class. These things were taking off at the same time. And it was about then that I realized that if I wanted to continue teaching I really had to make a real transformation or maybe it was time to quit. I wasn't feeling that good physically by the mid-'95. So I just decided to take—I was one of the first people on MSFEO, to go on that. But I stayed on at the college for a couple more, four years.

[1:11:48]

LZ: Did your teaching style change from when you started in '62 to when you finally...

JS: Oh sure. Well I remember one of the last courses I taught was—we used this graphing calculator. Which was, for me, was a new device and marvelous. A hand held calculator could do all these beautiful things mathematically with it, but I had never done anything like that, because it wasn't available when I started teaching. Yeah. And I didn't really do a good job of adjusting to the new, these new methods, as well as the younger people did. [Unclear] it's second nature to them. And they'll have student research. We didn't—well I don't know that our students were really that capable of it, and whether we had the time to do it or didn't know how to handle it. There's much more in the way now of student research in mathematics now undergraduate research now than there was during most of my time on the faculty. We've had some summer programs, but there really wasn't—the coursework didn't involve a lot of original thinking.

[1:13:02]

LZ: You had said that you were kind of the first guinea pig for the MSFEO program. What was, what did generally professors do prior to that, when they were about to retire?

JS: Well, they either retired—just broke the connection with the college—or they would stay on teaching. There are some people who—roughly contemporaries of mine—who are still teaching here. Henry West is one of them. He never retired. Jerry Reedy I don't think has retired yet. They're not that much younger than I am.

[1:13:42]

LZ: What types of things have you been doing, or did you do, in MSFEO?

JS: Well I really...I did teach a couple of courses. One course, [a] real full course. And then I did some lecturing for several classes. I edited the departmental newsletter, and that was fun. Collected news items about the department and print that out. And then I had a real chance to do some research, and I did some of the better things I've done mathematically in that time—that I just hadn't had time for previously. Oh let's see...I guess that was pretty much it. I really enjoyed it as a time to get to know the young faculty. And they knew that I was always available. I enjoyed talking, and if they wanted a break or something, they might come down and stop by, stop in and talk. That was a good time.

[1:14:52]

LZ: Well in this last section, I wanted to talk about some broad changes that you've seen throughout the campus and so, I guess my first question is have you seen the types of students or quality of students that come now to Macalester, or even compared to maybe your last year teaching at Macalester...

JS: Oh, it continues to get better, I think. One of the first inklings I had of this kind of change was in the mid-'80s, the Malaysian government decided that they needed a well-educated group of young people in Malaysia. And they started supporting Malaysian kids to come to the U.S. Probably other countries, too. But Macalester got in on this program. We had a group of I think

something like forty—maybe twenty the first year and twenty the next year—Malaysian students. And they were the best kids—they were the cream of the crop. And they came here and so many of them would take mathematics or the sciences because the government prescribed that only certain majors were acceptable, and that they had to come back to Malaysia after completing the program. So we got almost all of them in mathematics. And they were some of the best students that I ever had, I think. And then the quality gradually went down as they probably were maybe being less selective, they had really skimmed off the top already. But then we started getting other students. We had a— In the mid-‘90s I was aware that there were a couple of really brilliant kids from—well, one young woman I had [came] from Bulgaria. And she was a top notch student. And then we had a couple of males from Bulgaria and Hungary. Eastern European kids. And they really were exceptional students. And they just seemed to thrive on what we had to offer. And I felt comfortable with them. I remember one said to me, he said, “You know, we like to take your classes because you teach the way we’re used to [laughter] back home.” And I think I knew what he meant. For them it was a good way. But not for everybody.

[1:17:13]

LZ: Was there, did you find that there was an increase in international students, or was it pretty much...

JS: I would say so. I think so. Although I don’t know if the numbers bear that out. Certainly by 1980, Macalester had enough of the international flavor that really I’m not sure that the percentages have changed that much. They were already doing things like having all these flags

at Commencement, and so on. All different countries represented there. We had Arab students, we had the Malaysian kids, we had a lot of European kids, Iceland, Asian students...

[1:17:56]

LZ: Given that you were a student at Macalester, how have you seen student life change, from what you would typically do, to entertain yourselves...

JS: Well, I know what we did. I'm not sure I know what students do now. I never have learned to deal with the drug scene, really. I was never aware of a student of mine...I couldn't be sure that this kid was using, or this kid wasn't. I think most of our—the students that we tended to attract in mathematics were not attracted to drugs, and the things that accompany that. So that in a way, it's like having two different parallel worlds going on. I would read stuff in *The Mac Weekly* and I thought, "Well gee, I don't know any of those kids." So I don't know that—I can speak from what I remember. Well, I lived in a dormitory. And I meant to mention this earlier anyway. Well we had—there were no co-ed dorms. We had one male dorm—was Kirk. And the two women's dorms. Well the women's dorms were the ones that had all the rules. Because the feeling was if you control the girls then everything is safe, and the boys will be boys. And boys were boys. And there was, in Kirk Hall, there was some wild life. It was pretty tame by today's standards. But there was drinking. And I remember one night—well we had a house mother. Was a faculty wife. And I remember this moment of panic—we'd been drinking beer in one of the sections and somebody spotted her coming across the courtyard of Kirk, and she was headed right toward our section. And what do you do to get rid of the stuff? Well I remember their trying to flush a beer carton down the toilet. It did not go quite well. But nothing really

came of it. But there was that kind of life then. I think drinking is probably much worse now than it was then. But there was still drinking as part of, well, it was part of the rite of passage I guess. I think more of it went on off campus. It was harder to drink on campus, and you didn't need to. You'd go to—there was a bar down here. The St. Clair Pub. The St. Clair Pub? [The Fairview Palms] There's still a bar there. A 3.2 joint. And then there was O'Gara's, and places like that. Downtown there were bars.

[1:20:39]

LZ: Do you remember when the dorms became co-ed?

JS: Oh yeah, that was I believe in the late '60s and the early '70s. A lot of the things went on then that I'm not sure of exact dates. But if there was a new trend nationally, Macalester was very likely near the originators on that. There was just a feeling on campus...well, I guess the biggest change in the student body I think probably took place starting around 1965. When we really outgrew the five state mentality. And were getting kids from the East Coast, from the West Coast, and they didn't want the Macalester that was here then. They changed it. A lot of change. Well part of the outcome—I mentioned this—Macalester was regarded as the center of the drug culture for the Twin Cities. And it took a while to overcome that reputation. And in some people's eyes, the college is still that far out lefty place.

[1:21:50]

LZ: Do you feel that activism among students has kind of declined?

JS: No, I don't think so. Although, gee... I'm not sure. Well they, see— Let me read something. Did you see the piece by Katherine Kersten in the *Star Tribune* last week?

LZ: Oh, I've heard about it, I haven't read it...

JS: And well, Doug Stone called. I'm sure he called a number of people. And amongst them he talked to my wife and asked if she'd write a letter. And I wrote a letter, too. To the *Star Tribune*. This was never published, but...but I said here I thought that—I'd been thinking about this interview when I wrote this. I said, "There's much that remains that was [here] forty years ago." I was comparing it to the '60s, because she mentioned that. "Macalester has always been fortunate at attracting a core of students who are very bright, keenly aware of the imperfect world they are in, and passionately committed to working toward real solutions and real problems. In the '60s the issues were internationalism, civil rights, and Vietnam. Now they are a bit more 'diverse' and include internationalism, gay rights, and Iraq. The students are just as passionate and often as misguided in their enthusiasms now as they were then, but are optimistic that the results of this generation would be as positive in their impact as those of their predecessors. I don't see a stark contrast, but rather a continuity and a vision. The process of becoming mature thinking adults is not always pretty, but it is necessary." [unclear]

[1:23:44]

LZ: How have you seen changes within faculty, perhaps in the quality of professors...

JS: Oh the quality is just overwhelming. Many times, even when I was Chair, we would have to scrounge to find somebody to teach this course. We really, we tried to get the best person we could. But we didn't have the money. We interviewed computer scientists for five years in a row, trying to get somebody to come to Macalester. But there was always someplace that was able to offer more money and a better situation than what we could offer. And then it was around in the 90s, mostly with Bob Gavin I guess, that there was enough money available to hire some really quality people. And I think the college has done very well at doing that ever since. And they've also toughened up—you mentioned the tenure process. And I think you're aware of some of the difficulties of that now. And the hiring process, the third year review—all of these are really a tightening of the whole...they're more demanding of quality on the part of the faculty. Resorting to outside reviewers to...well, is this person really doing good work? Bring in somebody from the outside to tell you whether they are or not. I was more of the school that the peers, the people that the person would be working with, should be really the best judges of whether this is a person you want to continue to work with and whether they'd be good for Macalester. But we've outgrown that now. It's become a much more...I can't think of the word. It's just a different place, [unclear] and probably better place. I think that this was inevitable. It had to be, otherwise Macalester would be pretty ordinary. And might even be in trouble. But I am optimistic that things are good now and I am very grateful they are.

[1:25:56]

LZ: Do you see Macalester heading in a certain direction in the next ten years?

JS: Well, what does the long range plan say? I never could get too excited about that. I think, sure, it... But if you look at it, for me, it's just a continuation of what Dr. Turck was talking about. Charles Turck was talking about internationalism. Well what are we talking about now? It's internationalism. And this is the way it should be, I think. Macalester should be a world community, part of a world community. And we've got enough problems to work on. And we should be trying to work on them I think. The best thing that Macalester does it to produce graduates who really think it's important to do something about these things and to not be so concerned with making money or reputations.

[1:26:54]

LZ: So when people say that Macalester has changed a lot, for you as someone who was both a student and a professor—

JS: I don't see it. The basic stuff has not changed that much. The peripherals—you talk to alums now back from my era, and they—"Well this is a different place entirely from the place I knew." But I've seen them both and it's not that different.

[1:27:18]

LZ: What is your involvement with the college today?

JS: I don't really...well, I'm here [laughter]. I don't really have any active involvement now. I like to go back occasionally, although I've been doing less and less of that. Visit the department or faculty. And I've stopped in—I had a half hour talk with Emil Slowinski today. And other

faculty I'll run in to. But there's no active connection. We do go to church—we are members of Macalester Plymouth Church right across the street, so we get up here once a week. But very seldom anything to do with the college. Though there are some college connections there. There are some students who show up and some faculty who come to the church.

[1:28:00]

LZ: Are there faculty that live in the area that you would have taught with that you still keep in touch with?

JS: Oh yeah. Well, there's the department. Wayne Roberts was one who came a couple years after I did and he's still around. We always try to talk whenever we're together. People like Truman Schwartz, Henry West, these were all people who came in that influx in the '60s. Wayne Wolsey... Then the younger people, there I don't know nearly as many of the younger faculty now as I used to, when I was actively teaching. But I still know most of the department. It's been a good experience for me. They've got some really capable people there, like Tom Halverson, I mentioned is one of my favorites.

[1:29:00]

LZ: Well this last question I like to close on, but I realize for you there might be two responses. Do you have a favorite memory as a student, and then do you have a favorite memory as a professor here?

JS: The answer is yes. I think—I thought about this. And I can't mention events, but all I can do is mention is people. And it all boils down to connections, and memories of working with people, beside people, and getting to know them. And it just has been a continuing joy. Former students, former faculty, people of my era—alumni. It really, that's what it comes down to.

LZ: Well those are my list of questions. Is there anything that you wanted to add that we maybe didn't talk about?

JS: Oh, after I leave here I'll probably think of twenty more minutes of stuff I could talk about, but I think you've got enough. This has been a wonderful experience for me. I appreciate the chance to do it.

LZ: Thank you. It was very fun.

JS: Well, you did a good job.

LZ: Thank you.

[End of interview 1:30:19]