

7-24-2007

Interview with Michael Obsatz, Professor of Education and Sociology

Michael Obsatz

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/soci_oralhist

Recommended Citation

Obsatz, Michael, "Interview with Michael Obsatz, Professor of Education and Sociology" (2007). *Sociology Department Oral Histories*. Paper 1.
http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/soci_oralhist/1

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology Department at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology Department Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.



MACALESTER COLLEGE
Macalester College Archives, DeWitt Wallace Library
Oral History Project

Interview with: **Michael Obsatz**
Professor of Education and Sociology, 1967-2007

Date: **Tuesday, July 24th, 2007, 9:30 a.m.**

Place: Obsatz Home
Interviewer: Laura Zeccardi, Class of 2007

Interview run time: 1:14:36 minutes

Accession: 2007-12-21-38

Agreement: Signed, on file, no restrictions

Subjects

- 00:00 Introduction
 - Move from Education to Sociology
 - Classes and their impact
 - Surviving as a department and faculty cuts
- 07:59 Inner College
 - Upward Bound program
 - EEO program and its consequences
- 11:41 Campus in the '70s: light shows in the Chapel, student demonstrations
 - Hubert Humphrey
- 15:54 Inner College and experimental education
- 17:02 Involvement in social change
- 20:09 Faculty diversity
 - Outreach in the Twin Cities
- 22:54 Tensions brought on by EEO
- 29:01 Macalester and mobility
 - Faculty relationships with students
- 33:12 Mentoring and ongoing relationships
- 34:55 Sociology courses and holistic thinking
- 37:52 Interest in male socialization and violence
 - Children's educations

- 41:12 Work in the Twin Cities
- 42:28 Interim program
 - Building service-learning, experiential education at Macalester
- 46:46 Interdepartmental majors
- 50:03 Students and vocation
- 52:27 MSFEO, recognition at graduation
- 54:08 *Mac Weekly* and student input
- 56:07 Changes: renovation of Carnegie, the gym, et cetera
 - Demolition of the Children's Center
 - Long-term relationships with faculty
- 59:32 Changes in the Education Department
 - Macalester's perspective on vocationalism
- 1:02:23 Changing priorities and political involvement at Macalester
- 1:06:08 Activism on campus in the 70's
 - Counterculture vs. consumerism
- 1:10:50 What hasn't changed at Macalester: deep thought and core values

Interview with Michael Obsatz

Laura Zeccardi, Interviewer

**July 24th, 2007
Michael Obsatz's Home**

[00:00]

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, July 24th, 2007, and I'm interviewing Michael Obsatz, Professor of Sociology, at his home.

MO: My name is Dr. Michael Obsatz, and I'm a professor emeritus, Sociology Department at Macalester. And I will share a little bit of my story there, having been there for forty years. I came to Macalester in 1967, after graduating with a Ph.D. from University of Chicago in educational psychology, and I came into the Education Department at Macalester. And after three years I received tenure, which is unusual these days, but that's how it was those days. And I was really fortunate to do that, so by 1970 I had tenure. And then I was, in 1976, told that I could no longer be full time in the Education Department. That the student enrollment had decreased, and, my choice was either to leave Macalester or join another department. And that happened pretty abruptly. I was told that I would move to the Sociology Department and I could take a semester of courses at the University of Minnesota to prepare me to move to the Sociology Department. And I did that, and I moved to the Sociology Department part time, and I was in the Education Department part time. I never was a sociologist, and I didn't really feel prepared to be a sociologist, but I didn't want to leave the job, and I had tenure for six or seven years by that

time. The other person who was given that same choice chose to leave Macalester. So I took classes at the university in death and dying, and family and sexuality—family was another one and sexuality was another one—and I ended up teaching courses through the Sociology Department in those three areas: human sexuality, institution of the family, and death, dying and bereavement. What's interesting is, the man who was in charge of that shift, in terms of telling me what I needed to do, was named John Linnell. And he was the academic vice president at the time. And when the fall came and I started teaching in the Sociology Department he passed away—he had taken his own life. And I don't know a lot of details about that, but that's what I understand. So I was part time in Education, part time in Sociology. And after a while I realized it was just too complicated to do both, with two departments, two faculty department meetings, just too much, so I ended up just moving into the Sociology Department where I was an associate professor of sociology, which I was from the time of 1977 until the present. And of course I've read a lot of sociology, and I studied a lot. So I was able to pretty much pull off being a sociology professor. But it was never really my area; my area really was educational psychology, which I had some of the best teachers in the whole country teaching me, including, undergraduate-wise, Abraham Maslow, graduate-wise, Jacob Getzels, Benjamin Bloom, Lawrence Kohlberg. These were all professors that I had that were educational psychologists or psychologists. So the challenge was to try to make it in a department where I was not really experienced in the graduate—I mean, I didn't have a lot of graduate courses in sociology. But I think it worked okay.

[03:50]

And I think for the most part, students liked my classes and I had waiting lists for my classes, and they were different kind of classes than a lot of classes at Macalester. They were interactive,

student presentations, guest speakers—I had guest speakers in classes of mine that would come for twelve or fifteen years at different semesters, to educate students about real life. For example in one of my classes, human sexuality, a guest speaker was Susan Kimberly, who was a transsexual and had been deputy mayor of Saint Paul, and talked about her life as a man and her life as woman, which very few people are able to talk about in the way that she talked about it. Like having to buy a car as a man, buying a car as a woman, and being treated differently. Those kinds of things. So my classes tended to be very powerful for some students, especially the death and dying class. And I still get letters from students, thirty years later or more, about how much they learned in my classes and what they remember. Just recently I got a letter David Lapakko, who was a student of mine in the early '70s, who said that the way I treated him in class was something he learned, and decided to do, as he teaches now at Augsburg. And he has a Ph.D. And he was editor of the *Mac Weekly*, he was late to class or didn't show up, and, my main way of dealing with him was to ask him, how his life was going, as opposed to yell at him, berate him, and be mean to him. And he said he always remembered that. And periodically I'll run into Macalester grads who remember my classes from 1968 or 1972, or whatever. And they remember, "Remember when we did this? Remember when we did that?" So overall, just to summarize a little bit, in my years at Macalester I feel like I really made a difference and contributed. But some of the circumstances that I went through were kind of difficult. The Education Department was not always popular at Macalester, and, eventually Wood Hall, where the Education Department was housed, was sold. And the Children's Center, which was called, originally, Miss Wood's School, and then the Jean Lyle Center, was demolished. And so various concerns that Macalester had about teaching and education and small children didn't seem to be reality for some people. And those things were always a struggle—about how do we survive as

an Education Department. And I do think that even after I left the Education Department, there have been concerns about, is—does an education department belong at a liberal arts college like Macalester. So that was one of the difficult things. The other thing that was very, very difficult for me, was the time that Old Main was—part of Old Main was demolished because it did not meet fire codes. And the History Department was homeless as a result of that, and they took over our Sociology offices by coming in over the weekend, moving our stuff out of our rooms, and putting our stuff in the hall, and moving into our office space on the fourth floor of Old Main. And we ended up having to move as a result of that. And I never quite understood how—that they were able to get away with doing that, but that’s a reality that did happen to us, and it was probably sometime in the ‘70s, although I’m not sure. The other thing that was difficult was seeing a lot of professors who were untenured leave Macalester when there was a cutback in money, from—I believe it was the DeWitt Wallace money wasn’t there the way it used to be, and so the choice was faculty members could take some kind of a pay cut overall and keep eleven people, or we could let eleven people go. And the choice was made to let eleven people go. And that was kind of hard, because I had a few friends who were untenured and very creative people, and they ended up leaving Macalester.

[07:59]

So a few other things I want to just highlight—I was part of Inner College in the 70’s, which was a school within school where students learned on their own with preceptors and did not take classes. And Inner College took place at the time that there were such alternative schools in colleges. For example, I think it was Paracollege in Northfield, in a college in Northfield—it was St. Olaf, I believe, had Paracollege. We had Inner College. And we had brilliant students in Inner College and it—I think it lasted three or four years, and they were able to graduate without

taking traditional courses, but they had to show that they had learned things. And there were six professors involved with that, I believe, and one of them lived with the students with his family. His name was Al Greenberg, in the English Department. His entire family lived in Summit House, at the time, with about thirty students. And that was a very interesting time, back then. So that was—that was a kind of innovation that was tried for a while. The other thing I was part of was an Upward Bound program, which was led by Ray Johnson. And watched inner city kids come to Macalester over summer, learning a lot of skills that they would not have learned otherwise. And I don't know how successful that was, but I think it was groundbreaking for Macalester to really open itself up to students from lower economic backgrounds. And numerous students of color, as well. The other thing that I was aware of was the EEO program, and I was involved in that, which is the Educational Opportunity Program, I think it was called Expanded Educational Opportunity Program, which took place I believe in the '70s. And we had students from inner city areas all over the country coming to Macalester. And that was an interesting program that a number of faculty really supported, and once the students came to Macalester, they were not only economically different, but they had some different ideas about things. And, as a result there was a lot of friction on campus with people—it was expected that these students would integrate into the whole campus, and it didn't happen that way. They were segregated by themselves, by choice. There were numbers of acts that—I would just say of—I wouldn't say violence but I would just say...let's say some disrespectful things went on during that time. And that was pretty stressful for Macalester. In retrospect I don't think Macalester—in looking at myself, I don't think Macalester was really very prepared for sixty to a hundred—I don't know how many of them came—students who were vastly different than the rest of the student culture at Macalester. It was a good effort, but I don't think it was, insightfully, carefully

worked out in advance. So these students had educational difficulties. And I think one of the things that came out of that, and I may be wrong, was the actual decision to have a learning center at Macalester, to help students who had learning disabilities, or limitations in their learning, learn better. And Macalester has, since then I think, had a place for students to go. So was that program successful? I would say in some ways some students really benefited from that program, and in other ways I think it was just a lot of stress for the school, and the school professors weren't necessarily prepared to handle the backgrounds and the educational areas. In other words, what the students were prepared to learn did not fit with what Macalester professors were prepared to teach. So that was a pretty interesting time.

[11:41]

There's a couple of other things that were interesting during the '70s that I'm going to mention. One was the light shows in the chapel, which were psychedelic light shows where students came, and faculty came, and there were light shows all over sheets that were put on the walls of the chapel. The chapel was not built for light shows, but it was adapted to light shows. When the chapel was being built, and I think I came right around that time, there was a great debate on the campus because some people believed first of all, that it would wreck the mall, as far as the openness of the mall. And some people also believed that it needed to be non-denominational. So when a cross was put on top of the chapel, that was a serious issue for a lot of Macalester students. "Why is a cross going on top of this chapel?" Well, Macalester is connected with the Presbyterian Church. Well, that wasn't good enough for some students. This was at a time when there used to be convocation every week, and students had to attend, to a time when there was no convocation anymore, and students did not have to attend anything. So it was a very interesting sort of transitional time. I would say there was a fair amount of drug use on the campus in the

'60s, '70s, '80s, and students and faculty would experience that together sometimes, like, in the evenings or on the weekends. I don't know how widespread that was but that did exist at Macalester. Couple of other things I want to just mention. Macalester students were very active during the '70s about protesting the Vietnam War, and during the late '60s when I was there. And Macalester students blockaded Grand Avenue, they took over the administration building at various times for protesting the war, and protesting other things. So we had a fairly militant campus, and I think we were looked at a little strangely by some of the people around us. A couple of other big things that I think are significant is the time that Hubert Humphrey came to Macalester after losing the election. I think that was 19—I don't remember when it was. It was in the '70s, I believe, or late '60s—maybe it was '68. But Hubert Humphrey came to Macalester, and taught at Macalester and at the University of Minnesota, and this house was bought for the Humphreys, and they were to live in it. And what was interesting to—one of the things that was interesting is the house was carpeted with this very, very expensive carpeting, and Muriel Humphrey came on campus and decided she did not like the carpeting. So all the carpeting was pulled out of the house and was given to the Jean—to Jean Lyle at the Children's Center. So the Children's Center, which had about, probably thirty kids in the morning in nursery school, and thirty kids in the afternoon in kindergarten, ended up having thirty-dollar-a-yard, square yard carpeting. Which they never asked for—I mean they never ordered, but they were happy to receive it. So when you think about all the kids playing on this carpeting, it was kind of an interesting story. It was interesting having Hubert Humphrey at Macalester and we've always had famous people come to Macalester for periods of time. I think two of the most interesting presidents we've had at Macalester were Arthur Flemming, who used to be connected with the United Nations, and John Davis. And those have been, I think, very creative people

who spent a period of time at Macalester. I think I've lived through seven or so presidents at Macalester. When I first came, Harvey Rice was president of Macalester. Macalester always took pride in its Scottish heritage, and there were always bagpipes and there were always parades, and so on, so it's interesting how Macalester has always sort of had that as part of their identity. So those are some of the main things; I'm looking to see if there's anything else that was really significant.

[15:54]

Yeah, I want to say something about Inner College. A number of our students at Inner College are extremely brilliant and successful. And they graduated—either graduated or didn't graduate from Macalester—but they made a real mark in the world. And one of them is David Haynes, who is an African American poet, writer, and the other is Marisha Chamberlain, who is a playwright and a writer. And those two students were in Inner College, as well as a number of others that I can't remember their exact contributions. But these were fairly intelligent and creative students that we had in Inner College. And the interaction was really powerful, and really interesting, to actually set students free to learn on their own, which was a movement in the '70s. Students were more free to learn on their own. That was an experimental time for education. I think it had some benefits, and I also think there were some problems with it as well. So that's a lot of what I wanted to say, I guess. I'm open to questions that you have, and anything additionally.

[17:02]

LZ: Okay. When you were hired in the mid-'60s that was kind of a time of a lot of new faculty hires, and I was wondering kind of what sense of community there was among those new professors coming in, and...

MO: I would say there was some, and we did know each other. But it isn't like we hung out as a group a whole lot. I mean, I remember that was a time when, say, Peter Murray came, and— from the English Department. A number of those professors are no longer living. But it was a very exciting time. And Macalester in the '70s was an amazing place as far as social change, and involvement in social change. And we were ahead of our time. Or, let's just say, forerunners in the areas of racial equality, for example, and diversity. I taught a course through the Education department called Human Relations, which was required by the State Department of Education, and it was a course about getting along with people who come from different backgrounds. So I would say the '70s were probably the most exciting and interesting time. It was also, politically, a time when people who are young felt they could make a major difference in the world. I mean, there was a lot of personal power that kids, young people, felt about *what we can do* together. That's represented in the more current movie called *Bobby*, which was out about Bobby Kennedy's life. And the feeling of the '60s, and late '60s when I came, and the early '70s, and the '70s in general—partly fueled by the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War. I think people were looking at women's rights very, very powerfully, and gay rights. And those were pretty powerful things at Macalester as far as people challenging some of the biases that existed in the culture. I would say that a number of the faculty that came at that time ended up being the non-tenured people who ended up leaving. Not all of them, but some of them. And some of them did get tenure and did stay. At that time you could get tenure in a short time. I think I got tenure, as

a matter of fact, I mentioned earlier with regret, after one year. And I was moved from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor after three years. So things were different then as far as how you advanced. I don't know if that answers your question, but I would say that we had amazingly creative people come in the '60s. Chuck Green. Ray Mikkelson—I think it's Michaelson [*sic* Mikkelson]. People from all—you know, all departmental areas.

LZ: So the non-tenured professors, they were let go as a result of the financial crisis, I'm assuming, primarily.

MO: Yes. Yes. It was the financial crisis. I think that, that sort of stated, we can't keep all these people. We have to let people go, and they were the ones that were obvious, given that they did not have tenure. There were people like Tom Grissom in the Education Department. I think it was Steve Trimble in the History Department. Those are two of them that I remember.

[20:09]

LZ: Um-hm. Were there other areas of the college that were then affected by the financial difficulties in terms of...

MO: Well, the faculty members that left were from all departments.

LZ: Okay.

MO: The other thing that happened during that time was we started having a dance program. And Marge Maddux was hired to teach dance. And that was a big step for Macalester to have a dance program. And the arts building had just been created, completed a couple of years before I came. So the carpeting in the arts buildings, which was in the concert hall and the theatre, were red. And that was because—I don't know if you know this. You know this. Mary Gwen Owen's favorite color was red, and she was leader of the drama course. And the drama course was very big at Macalester at that time. And Mary Gwen Owen really made a contribution to Macalester. Oh, I want to say something else about the times. Macalester faculty were overwhelmingly white males when I came. And over time have become more inclusive of females, number one, and more inclusive of people of color. And that was a conscious decision made at Macalester during the '70s, '80s, '90s. And I think it really made a difference to the school, to create professors—to have professors of different backgrounds. Like in the Sociology Department I think it was, even in the last nine to ten years, most [of] the people are—have dual citizenship in other countries, who are in the Sociology Department. Which is a whole department of four people, but, still, I mean, everyone was from somewhere else, too. Which I think, you know, adds to the school. I would say Macalester's emphasis on internationalism has really set Macalester apart from every other school in the country. And the other thing that made Macalester special was having that kind of environment in an urban setting, where you could actually work with kids from disadvantaged backgrounds. And there was a program called the Dayton Avenue Motivational Tutorial Program, where Macalester students paired up with students from Selby-Dale area, and worked with them on a one-to-one basis for a really long time. So, I mean there was a lot of outreach that went on in the '60s and '70s. That still go on

today. I mean, the community involvement programs, the volunteer programs, are still pretty powerful, and they were very powerful back then.

[22:54]

LZ: You were saying that the EEO Program, while it brought students from different backgrounds, it also sort of polarized them. Do you feel in the long run that it was a service to the college, to bring students of color, students of different background, or was that already happening at Macalester?

MO: It wasn't happening very much. And if we had students from different racial backgrounds, they were very often middle or upper middle class students. This was bringing in students from the inner city areas who had very—economic difficulties. And so it was not just a racial issue, it was an economic issue. And I think some of the students did not have the preparation to be at a small, private, exceptional liberal arts college like Macalester. And the faculty were not necessarily prepared to deal with a student who had come from Philadelphia and say, "I don't really want to learn anything from you." You know, I mean, because most of the time Macalester students were there to learn something, and professors expected that that's why they were there. This was a challenge. And it wasn't only a racial issue, it was an economic issue. And a value issue. People had different ideas about education. So I think it was hard. It was a hard experience for Macalester. It was one of the hardest times that I remember.

LZ: Was that program then, eventually dropped, or kind of phased out...?

MO: Yeah, it was dropped probably within five years, but I'm not sure how long. But it didn't last for that long. I mean, there was damage to the halls, and damage to the rooms, and damage to the cafeteria. And there was a lot of segregation that went on during that program, which created a lot of ill feelings. And that was a problem. It was just a problem for the school, but the school was really not ready to handle that degree of...let's just say, strife. It was difficult. And people were unprepared for it. People had thought that people who came from inner city backgrounds and poor, poor economic conditions would be *grateful* to be at Macalester. I mean, and that was, in some ways, a little naïve. As well as Macalester has traditionally had fairly upper middle class values. You know, making certain kinds of assumptions about people, that were not necessarily true of every student who came, either in that program or in general. I mean, I think part of being the kind of school that it is, there are some people who don't really—didn't really understand the possible differences in attitudes and values in different people. So. I mean it's—that's complicated. It was a very complicated situation. I think it was well intended, and I think the people who were involved in it were very committed to it. The faculty members who got involved in that really cared about these students. Really wanted these students to have a chance. It was basically, "Let's give them a chance. They don't seem to have a chance, so we can give them a chance." What happened is, they got a lot of money to go to Macalester. And students who were middle class students did not get as much money, because there was only a limited pool of money, and when kids from lower income backgrounds got more money, it created strife between middle class and lower middle or lower class students. Even though that was not always talked about, that was an issue. So we had issues among the students, and then we had issues among the students and the faculty. As far as not really understanding each other, that was one thing; but also, there was some envy, and some resentment among the students.

[26:44]

LZ: So was there tension, then, between students and faculty at that time? I guess I'm curious about what that type of relationship was like.

MO: Well, yeah, I would just say that students who came from other—from inner city areas who were disadvantaged economically did not necessarily relate well to some of—*some* of the faculty teaching courses in the way that they typically taught them. Because faculty members who typically taught courses did it with a certain amount of assumptions about where the students would be at, you know, educationally. And these students were not prepared. So there were all kinds of additional programs to help the students get prepared, but those also created—you know, I mean, it's like, how do you do that at the same time someone's in your physics class, or in your sociology class, and they can't really write. And they can't—you know, I mean, there were students who, they really lacked, some of them really lacked basic skills. Go ahead.

[27:40]

LZ: When did you start to see that situation kind of...because like, that obviously, I assume, isn't the situation at Macalester anymore, and so when did you start to see things I guess, maybe, even out? Or is that...

MO: Well, when the program was discontinued Macalester started not taking kids who weren't educationally prepared. I mean, there were a lot of things that Macalester did to overlook certain things that these students didn't have. You know, it's like, "Well, okay," you know, "they didn't have a good GPA, and they didn't have this, but we'll take them anyway." And Macalester just

stopped doing that. And you know, when you think about it, you know, it's a lofty ideal, to try to bring a kid in from another background, but it's complicated. I mean, another economic background. The other thing was that there was race connected with this, because a large number of the EEO students were non-white students. And I think that that—that also, even though we had international non-white students, it's, it creat—but the international non-white students who were at Macalester were at a socioeconomic level more comparable to the students at Macalester than the students coming from Philadelphia and Baltimore and other places who were poor. Who were economically poor, and educationally had promise, but not necessarily all the tools and all the skills.

[29:01]

LZ: Um-hm. When you look at—when you compare Macalester in the '70s, to I guess maybe even today, would you say that we're now comparable I guess in terms of different social classes and economic classes and racially, or would you say that one is kind of more balanced than the other?

MO: Well, I think Macalester was trying to give kids a chance in the, through the EEO program, who wouldn't normally go to college. I think right now Macalester is not doing that a whole lot. I think Macalester is requiring students who come to Macalester to have certain credentials, a certain background, and certain recommendations. And so they may be diverse racially but they're not going to be diverse educationally as they were during the EEO Program. I'm not—it's, in a way, it did a disservice to the kids, because when you bring kids onto campus and expect them to operate on a level that other kids are operating on, and they're not equipped to do

that, it's going to create problems, and we should have been more aware of the complexity of that. But we were trying to do good, you know? And you know, and in some ways I'm sure some students did benefit from that, and went on to move social classes, which by the way I think is a really powerful thing in America. I'll just make a couple comments about this. I think you can move social classes in America, and you can do this through education. And I think there are a lot of cultures where you can't move social classes, and if you're lower class to start out with, you end up being lower class, and you have lower class aspirations, and that's it. I don't think that's true in America in general, and I think Macalester's been a place where some low-income kids who are academically gifted have been able to move classes. Move from lower to middle, or move from lower-middle to upper-middle, or whatever. And I don't mean it's just an economic thing. I mean that's part of it, is that kids are doing better than their parents—some kids. I think that's a pretty amazing thing, and that Macalester has been a part of that. Which Macalester, you know, should be very proud of—the fact that through education, kids can actually better their lives. And have more economic freedom and more op—let's just say vocational opportunities than they would have had if they hadn't gone to Macalester. The other thing about Macalester I'll say is the faculty in general is committed to the students as people. And even though faculty members are expected to do research and write, they are still more willing to spend time with students on an interpersonal level than a lot of professors at a lot of other schools. And you know, and therefore it makes the school, the learning experience, more meaningful and deeper for Macalester students. I think that's why some faculty teach at Macalester rather than at the U [University of Minnesota] or at some really large school where they're going to have three hundred people in their class. And I do a talk every year for the parents of first-year students, and we talk about well, what makes Macalester unique, and why—

and what kind of treatment will your child have here at Macalester. And I represent, in a way, the faculty point of view on that. And I say, the faculty who are at Macalester, for the most part, are willing to negotiate, and discuss, and help, and spend time with your child, in a way that's going to encourage and promote your child's well-being at this school. And they will have office hours, or your child can ask to meet with this person, with the faculty member, and I talk about the advising system, and so on. So I do think that's one of the main reasons, first of all, to go to a small liberal arts college. But secondly, I think Macalester does that very, very well. And it always has done that well. From the time I came until the time I left, which was just this last year, I've really seen a lot of very dedicated faculty spend lots of quality time with students on a one-to-one basis. So, that's been always a very powerful strength of Macalester.

[33:12]

LZ: Have you found personally that you've been able to, with certain students, have close relationships either through advising, or through research?

MO: One of my best buddies is now fifty-five years old, he's ten years younger than me, and he was a student in my class in 1973. And we have been friends for thirty, thirty-seven...close to thirty-five years or so. And, I would just say that I've gotten to know some students really, really well over the years. They become mentees after they graduate. So I have thirty mentees right now, and I would say probably ten or twelve of them are former Macalester students who've graduated, who I still watch, in their twenties and thirties and beyond, make career choices and personal choices, and be supportive of, and keep in touch with through emails, and also phone calls. There's a Macalester grad from Honolulu that I'm in touch with on a fairly

regular basis. I mean, so, I mean that's just one example, but you know, I would say that for some faculty they make really life-long connections with students. Not every student, and not a whole lot of students. But probably if you interviewed a dozen faculty members who've been there as long as I have you'll find they've known people for twenty or thirty or more years. People will come up to me now, who I don't quite remember, and they'll say, "I was so-and-so, and I was in your class in 1972, and do you remember when we did this and this and this?" And you know, "And I still remember that, and now that I teach fourth grade, and I've been teaching fourth grade for twenty-five years, I still remember this and this and this." And it's like...wow. [laughter] And that's not unusual for me to run into people like that.

[34:55]

LZ: When you moved to the Sociology Department were you able to still keep kind of your personal interest in education, I guess through either your teaching and types of courses you offered, or through personal research?

MO: I would just say that I've always been a person who was an educational psychologist. And in the Sociology department all my courses had a psychological and educational component to them. So if it was "Human Sexuality," there was always the psychology of sexuality and the educational aspects of sexuality. If it was "The Family," it was always—included education. If it was "Death and Dying," there was always an educational component. By the way, Death and Dying class wasn't just about death. It was about loss. So a loss included abortion, and divorce, and infertility, and all kinds of losses that people go through. And looking at grief, and the complexity of the grief process. The other losses are developmental losses, like from childhood

to adolescence, or from adolescence to adulthood, or the aging—you know, going on in age and the loss of, let's say, some capabilities that you had when you were younger. So it wasn't just about death. Although what we did do, is we visited funeral homes, and we visited cemeteries, and we really talked a lot about what life means. And so students would graduate and would come out of the Death and Dying class and they would go, "I have a new appreciation for life that I didn't have before." So it's interesting how, of course, how death can actually teach people about life. But I would say all my—I'm an educator, and I've done therapy work in my career, and so I've always been interested in psychology and education. And the sociology part is really also very much a part of me, as far as looking at how males and females are socialized in America, and what are some of the positives of that and what are some of the negatives of that. So I did workshops all over the country on healthy boys, healthy girls, how are boys being raised, how are girls being raised. And that's a sociological thing. So I'm kind of a—oh, I would also try to integrate some spirituality in some of my classes. And not—that doesn't mean organized religion, but it means looking at how people's spirituality affects their choices. And what different spiritual opportunities or beliefs people can have. So that—I'm, you know, I was taught by Abraham Maslow in 1960, and I was nineteen years old, roughly, at the time, and he was very holistic about the whole person. So I really tried to make sure that in my classes at Macalester we really looked at the whole person, not just the academic or any intellectual part of the person, but the personality, the feelings, the needs, the wants, the spirituality, the emotionality and the spirituality, and the physical component of the person, as well as the intellectual component.

[37:52]

LZ: Have you taught basically the same courses since moving to the Sociology department, or...?

MO: For the most part. I did teach a few additional ones. One was Male Socialization Issues and Violence. I added that course probably in the '90s. And it was a very popular course as well. My courses would have a thirty people limit—a limit of thirty and a waiting list of fifteen, you know, usually. And so there were—I mean, we looked at domestic violence in that course. We looked at violence against women, we looked at rape and other—you know, I mean, it was a pretty heavy-duty class, looking at male issues related to violent behavior. We also looked at male issues other than violent behavior. But how society raises its males has an effect on everybody. Because men tend to get into some power positions, and then have power. Men also are related to women in various ways and that affects women. So one of my pet peeves is about the objectification of women in America. And we talked about that in all my classes, and how when women are objectified it's easier to abuse them. And so, the objectification of women—which has not come a long way since 1960. I mean, we could talk about women's improvement since 1960 as far as economic power and political power and so on, but when it comes to objectifying women in the media, we have not come very far. And I talk about that all over the country. And until we come far on that issue, we are still going to hurt, abuse, dominate, and be cruel to women in this culture. And so that's got to change. And what I mean by objectification is not looking at women as people, but looking at them as objects, and focusing on what they're wearing, and what their bodies look like, and all the rest of that. And I think that when that becomes the primary way women are looked at, it encourages stalking, it encourages abuse, it encourages violence and rape. So I'm very, very strong on that issue, having two daughters of

my own. By the way, I've had three kids. All of them had the opportunity to go to a liberal arts college as a result of my working at Macalester. None of them went to Macalester, for obvious reasons—they did not want to be around their father. But two of them went to Grinnell, and had very, very good educations at Grinnell, and my son got a scholarship to go to USC film school, and is a filmmaker, and chose to go to film school. Which Macalester did not offer. But being at Macalester for the amount of time I've had, having the tuition benefit for children, has been extremely valuable for my three kids. And I would say my daughters' Grinnell education—two daughters, going to Grinnell—have been very, very important to them. And I would say they're similar to Macalester. The one thing that's really different is they were not in urban settings. And they missed out. My one daughter who did volunteer work had to be bussed into Des Moines in order to do that. So, you know, I'm glad they went where they wanted to go, and they certainly did well. But we still have some things that Grinnell doesn't have. You know, and I think that's pretty significant. What else do you have?

[41:12]

LZ: Has some of your personal research involved the Twin Cities and taking advantage of being in that urban setting?

MO: I've worked in a lot of different areas in the Twin Cities, and one of them is the fatherhood area. And we had a program connected to Concordia that I worked with, which was very diverse as far as economic background, and racial background. And I worked with Clarence Jones, who's an African American man. And we would talk about absent fathers, we would talk about fathers who have economic problems, and so on. I mean, so I would say that—yeah, I had been

involved the Twin City community, in terms of research and in terms of workshops and trying to make a difference. Especially in the area of fatherhood. And it involved caring fatherhood, which I think is a big issue in America, and I could talk about that for two hours. And the big issue is thirty-six million kids in America without a biological dad, who are under the age of fifteen, and I think that's a serious issue. So yeah, I would say there's been some cross-linking with other schools in the Twin City area, but also just the general community, knowing the people in the community, and working with people in the community has been a good thing.

[42:28]

LZ: Going back to when we were talking about your courses, were you involved then in the interim program when it was still in...?

MO: Always. Yes, I was big in the interim program, and I was, in a way, sorry to see the interim program go. And one of the things that I would do in the interim program is I would take kids on a retreat. We would go on a twelve-day retreat during interim. And we would discuss all kinds of issues on personal growth, for example. And they would live together in a house, or in a cabin, or several cabins, and have to eat together, cook together, and everything. And then it was like a training ground for looking at interpersonal issues, as well as they did reading, and they did writing, and so on, and journaling, and all that. And that was just one of the things I did during interim. And I find interim was a pretty significant time, because it allowed an in-depth experience, and when it—when people chose, people on faculty chose to, like, eliminate it, I thought it was a loss. But you know, and—but there were reasons for it, I guess, that people had. I think a lot of students early on got a lot from interim. Interim was valuable as far as

immersion. And you know, there are other schools, like Colorado College, that have—all their courses are taught one month at a time. And I think that that's a whole different thing than having two semesters and having an interim in the middle, which is what we had. So that was a difficult thing. One thing I didn't talk about that I wanted, really wanted to talk about is community—service-learning. And I was involved with Karen Trail-Johnson, Julie Bunn, Martin Gunderson and I created a manual for service-learning for faculty. Which still exists. And what Macalester was a forerunner in, I believe, is creating a service-learning model, so that students can actually learn from their service to the community. And it was based on academic excellence. It was not just “you get in there and you do this stuff for the community,” but you have to research it, you have to read about it, you have to learn about it, and then maybe you're ready to go in there, and maybe you also have to reflect on, after you go in there, on what you learned, and what was different than what you thought, and all the rest of that. And so service-learning, I think, is a very, very important aspect of Macalester. I think one of the pillars is service. And service-learning, which was bringing service into the classroom. So my classes had a service-learning component to them. Students had to do something of service in an area related to the course during the time they were in the class. That was both in the education classes and in the sociology classes. And students learn by doing, and they learn by actually experiencing. So, experiential education I still think is crucial for students. You can't just learn about it, you have to be involved with it. So. So I wanted to make sure that—first of all, Karen Trail-Johnson has done remarkable stuff. I don't know if she's still at Macalester, but she's really contributed a lot to create a climate for good service-learning experiences and volunteer work, and so on. Another person that has really helped in the area of internships, which is very, very, powerful, is Denise Ward. Denise Ward has made a—I mean, I don't know if she's doing

that now, because she's been in a different situation, perhaps, but she was a very involved in providing internship experiences for students who wanted to get out in the world and practice what they'd been learning, and experience things so that they could come back to the classroom being more capable than they would have been otherwise. One of the things that's interesting about Macalester is the semester abroad program, or semester away program, including, for example, Urban Studies in Chicago. And Urban Studies in Chicago has always been an incredibly powerful program for Macalester—I don't know if we're still doing it or not. But what would happen is students would come back from Chicago, back to campus, and what they needed was debriefing from what they'd experienced. They didn't always get the debriefing they needed, and for some students who'd been away in a really different kind of environment, the transition back was a challenge. But still the fact that they were able to go on these programs, and get academic credit, and learn in a really different kind of environment was really, really helpful to a lot of students.

[46:46]

LZ: Talking about some of these programs that have been established, that we have now, are there programs like interim that have been dropped, I guess maybe even kind of—I know there's been some departmental shifts. Are there either policies or things that have been dropped that you feel that have really lessened the quality of the college, or the education that students could have gotten?

MO: You know, I'm not really up on everything that's been dropped in the last five years, or six years, because I was on the MSFEO Program [Macalester Senior Faculty Employment Option]

and I wasn't, you know, involved with a lot of the decision-making that went on. So I'm not sure what's been dropped. I know interim—I think interim was probably one of the things that I remember as something that hurt, that I think hurt, the education process of some students. If you tell me some things that've been dropped it would be easier to answer that question.

LZ: Yeah, I guess I was thinking more when you were actually at the college.

MO: When I was at the college? I don't know a lot that was dropped.

LZ: Okay.

MO: You know, I mean, the EEO Program was dropped, the Inner College was dropped. I wish there were—I wish there had been some component of Inner College that was kept more. Where students—and there is. There are two things that came up that were good. One is independent study that students could do, and the other was IDIM, the individually designed interdepartmental major. And I sponsored a lot of students getting independent majors, where they would work with three faculty members from three different departments and come up with a major. And some of the students who did that learned a tremendous amount of just putting that together. Interacting with people from different departments... So I think that still exists, I don't think it's as, probably, popular as it used to be, but I don't know that. But I can see where, if used correctly, that's a very, very powerful way. The problem is, when you graduate and you have an interdepartmental major and you want to go on to graduate school, they may say, "Well, what was your real major?" Because the interdepartmental major, like Peace Studies, or

[unclear], whatever, doesn't exactly resonate with some graduate schools. One of the things that I really want to say is that one of the goals of Macalester to me is not just to create academicians for the future, but to create people who know how to interact in the world, and who have good values. And so I've always tried to integrate those two things. So it's good to have academic knowledge, and to know how to do research, and to read books, and to be able to synthesize and analyze and all that, but it's also really important to fit into somewhere in the world where you can actually make a meaningful difference. And figure out where that is, for you, for any one individually. So a lot of my work with students individually, as a mentor now, but also as a professor then, was to help them sort out what their purpose was, so they would have a meaningful life. Because I think the worst thing is to have a person work at a job that they hate, and have no actual commitment or attachment to emotionally. And so if you can find something you love to do, where you think you're making a difference, then you have a life that has a chance to, first of all, affect the world in a positive way, and secondly, make your life more fulfilling.

[50:03]

So I think a lot of students end up doing that in some way or another. Some students that go into politics, some students who write. You know, Macalester created the Mixed Blood Theatre. I mean, it's an outgrowth of Macalester. It's all Macalester-run. I mean, the director, Jack Reuler, was a Macalester student. Faye Price. There's a bunch of other people from Macalester who ended up acting there. I mean, Mixed Blood Theatre was originally a Macalester thing. I mean, these people came out of Macalester and created this because the Twin Cities did not have a mixed racial theater. I mean, and, you know, I mean, now it has Penumbra Theater, which is a primarily African American organized theater, but at various times it was not... Anyway, so you

know, Macalester's made its impact locally, as well as internationally, I think, and that's just one example. We can see Macalester students who are, like, in the movies, or who are actors at the Guthrie, and so on. I mean we've had students who've really, you know, gotten in front of people in various ways. I remember one of my students was named Porter McNeil, who is an active politician in Illinois. I mean, I'm sure he's had a political career that is amazing. I mean, I knew him probably twenty-five, thirty years ago, or whatever. One of the most beautiful things about teaching at Macalester for a long time is watching people grow up, and go into the world, and do their thing, and actually be, you know, forty, fifty years old, and look back at their lives and say, "Look, this is what I've done, and Macalester played a part in that." You know. So, that's one advantage to not having moved around a lot, for me—to be in one place and actually watch that evolve over time, stay in the Twin City area. A lot of Macalester students stay here. Some leave, many leave, but a chunk of them stay in this area. One of the things now that I'm involved—one of my mentees, and maybe more than one, are in the music scene. Local music scene. And it's interesting watching them start out through Macalester and end up creating their own music, and being in the music scene. So that's you know, not typical, but I get to be part of that. What else would you like to know?

[52:27]

LZ: So you've been on MSFEO since...

MO: Since 2000.

LZ: Okay.

MO: Yeah. So six years of that. And then, retired last June, officially, although paid until the end of August, as we get twelve-month pay. And they had a really nice retirement dinner for us, they gave us honorary degrees—this was four people. At graduation, I got to meet Marian Wright Edelman, who blew everybody away at graduation, which was great. And she and I are still in contact because I've sent her my information about bullying, and raising non-violent children, and I think there may be some future things that I will be doing with her. But it was the first time that Macalester retirees were recognized at graduation. And it may happen from now on, I don't know, but I was very fortunate to be in that group of four people, which was Jack Rossmann, Sears Eldredge, Jim Stewart, and me. So that was pretty powerful. And at the dinner, Walter and Joan Mondale were there, George Latimer was there—who I had as a student at Macalester, his son. And George Latimer said, "You really affected Tom's life, I want to you to know that." And he went on and on, and I won't go on and on about it, but it was really nice to hear that from someone who'd been the mayor of St. Paul? Right? You know, and so on. What else would you like to know?

[54:08]

LZ: I did have one question before we started talking about, kind of, reflections and changes. I noticed going through *Mac Weekly's* that you wrote a lot of articles, kind of as a guest columnist for the *Mac Weekly*. And that seemed to be a unique thing for a professor to be involved with...

MO: You know, I don't remember that.

LZ: Okay. [laughter]

MO: I think I probably wrote some things for the *Mac Weekly*. But I've always written a lot. I've always written, you know, besides books that I have out, I've written columns for newspapers and I've written articles in newspapers. And, if you Google me, you'll find like, seven thousand things you know, of various things that my stuff's been in. So I guess I did, I probably wrote a few pieces for the *Mac Weekly*. It didn't seem like it was exceptional or anything, I mean compared to what other people—

LZ: I think more what stuck out was we had someone say before that they wouldn't have wanted students in faculty meetings, just like they didn't care to read the *Mac Weekly*, and so I was wondering if there was ever kind of that...feeling.

MO: Oh, okay. It's interesting that you mention the students in faculty meetings and all that. I always thought that student input was important in whatever we did. So it isn't like students would get to choose, or vote, but students need to be heard as far as what they felt about certain things. And I thought Macalester sometimes was very good about that, and sometimes didn't quite do enough about that. The other thing is, I mean, I think by reading the *Mac Weekly* you learn a lot about what students are thinking about, and I think that's helpful if you're a professor, just to understand what they're thinking about. So I've never had a problem with—you know, I didn't always agree with what was written in there, and I didn't always think what was written in there was that worth being put in there, but for the most part I think it did tell you something about where some students were emotionally, were educationally, and so on.

[56:07]

LZ: Well now I wanted to talk about some changes that you've seen and if—I want to ask you, first of all, what comes to your mind when you think of biggest changes, and then I've got a few kind of bullet points that we can talk about as well.

MO: Okay. Big changes at Macalester? You know, I don't remember a lot of big changes. I remember when they renovated Carnegie Hall, and it was like, "Oh, we get to have new office space. Wow!" That was so exciting. Because it used to be a biology area, and we used to—we had sinks in our rooms, and old plumbing sticking out, and all that. And so, I mean, there have been some really neat renovations that I think that have made a really big difference. I remember when the library was in where the administration building is now, and now we have—you know, we've got a state of the art library that we didn't have before, so that was cool. I mean, so actually physically Macalester has been improved a lot. I know that the theatre needs—the theatre complex is going to be improved. And it's interesting, that last time that was built, I mean, it was built probably in the '60s, I think, so it's probably time to do something with that. I know the new—the gym *finally* is being replaced, which is a good thing, because that was outdated. By the way every time we have graduation in the field house it was a disaster, compared to having it outside. For whatever reason—I remember one year we had graduation in the field house, and the sound system didn't work. So the parents in the audience who had driven from, or flown from all over the world for graduation, couldn't hear what was going on. And they ended up recording it and sending a recording to every single parent whose student graduated that year, because they couldn't hear anything in the field house. But I think it's good

that Macalester's continually changing. I think the demolition of the Children's Center was kind of sad. Because it sort of stood for something that Macalester believed in, which was the education of children. And the fact that we actually had an on-site, on campus site for students to work in, I thought was really good. Jean Lyle, who was the Children's Center teacher, director for a really long time, who passed away a number of years ago, was a pretty remarkable person. And I worked with her for years. I would say one of the amazing things about Macalester for me was working with the different people I've worked with, and knowing the different people there over a period of forty years is pretty amazing. I mean, I could take my relationship with Jack Rossmann, which is not necessarily a close relation, but I have known him for forty years. And there's a lot to say for knowing somebody for forty years and seeing them evolve and take on different jobs, doing different things, and you know, and to watch them be, like Jack Rossmann as an example, consistently supportive of students. And there are a number of people like that, I'm just—he's one of the people that just comes to my mind. Jaine Strauss is another example of that. I mean, there are people all over the campus who are like that. So actually, having long-term relations. But changes? I think losing those eleven people was really hard. I think losing the interim was a prob—was hard. Other than that, can you think of any changes? Because I would like to hear some—

[59:32]

LZ: One thing I wanted to ask you about was I know you can only minor in education now, you can no longer major in that and so, were you at Macal—I don't know how recently that—

MO: I have a lot to say about this.

LZ: [laughs] Okay.

MO: You could never major in education at Macalester. You could major in a subject, or you could go into elementary education, but you still had to have a major other than that. But what you could do is graduate from Macalester being certified as a teacher, which you can no longer do. Okay. And so, you know, there were courses in methods for secondary, and there were courses in methods for elementary. And what it meant was students could actually student teach, and be supervised, and I did a lot of the supervision of student teachers during those ten years I was in the Education Department. And they could come out of Macalester a certified teacher, as well as a history major or whatever else there were majoring in. I think it's too bad. And I—at one point there was a big debate about vocationalism at Macalester, and there were some people who were anti-vocation. Like, Macalester is supposed to be a liberal arts college, and not into preparing people for the world of work. And I was thinking, “Well what do you think these people are going to do? They're not going to live off other people for the rest of their lives. Everybody pretty much has to work.” And so the idea that vocation was beneath Macalester was a problem for me. I've never considered vocation beneath anything. I mean, and I look at vocation as just not just a job, but a calling. And I see that as integral to being a human being. So the idea that, like, we would never—I mean, we never really did have a—oh, maybe we did, I don't know—a nursing program? We might've. But I mean, St. Catherine's is the place that people have always gone for those kinds of things, and I don't think that makes St. Catherine's any less of a significant place, because people have learned how to be social workers or nurses or teachers at St. Catherine's. So I think we've had not always the best attitude toward that at this

school. And, one way I thought about that is, Macalester has, in some ways, an elitist notion that the rich don't have to really have jobs. And if you go to Macalester, you can be rich enough not to work. And it's like, that isn't really true, and that isn't who—that isn't what our student body was about. Our student body was never rich enough not to work. So somewhere there was a little bit of, let's just say, the elitism, that some people believed, over the history of my time at Macalester. Which did not fit with me. And also didn't fit with, for example, multicultural education. Or some of the other pillars. So, anyway, that would be one comment about changes in that. What else were you asking about, the changes?

[1:02:23]

LZ: Have you seen changes, I guess, in the student body, and, maybe in terms of their backgrounds, but also the way they conduct themselves at Macalester, and activism, I guess? And maybe this is a more recent question, since you have been involved with Macalester up until very recently.

MO: Yeah, I really, you know—I would just say, I know students now, who are students at Macalester and who have recently graduated, who are *extremely* active in wanting to bring change into the world. But they happen to be particular students that I know, and they may not be representative of the whole campus. I remember people talking about, okay, the move now has been for students who want to have service jobs and help the poor, to people who want to have rich jobs, and earn a hundred fifty thousand dollars a year. And that there's been a shift from students who wanted to do the former to students who want to do the latter. And I would say, I don't know if that's really true. I mean, I assume it's true for some students, but I think

that there has always been a consciousness at Macalester about helping people, and serving people. And I think it's there in our student body now too. Maybe not as strongly... Some people—this is a tangent—but some people who went to see the movie *Bobby*, who I've talked to, who are young, said, "I wish I grew up in a time where I felt I could really support my political candidates, and I really believed in them, and I also thought that *I* could make a meaningful difference in the world. I really wish I had that kind of experience." And that's what students felt in the '70s. Really, that they could *really* support their political candidates. As a matter of fact, you may not know this, but fall break—you know about fall break?—started as a political, a time for people to run around and support their political candidates. We did not have fall break when I started at Macalester, but fall break was implemented, I think, shortly after that, so that people could campaign for Hubert Humphrey, or Eugene McCarthy, or whoever it is they believed in. And fall break used to be a week off of school plus two weekends, and it used to be nine days, total. So people could, in October—and that's why it's right before election, within three weeks of election, usually—could do that. And of course we have fall break now, it's usually four days or something like that. So it originally started as a politically activist time. It was really exciting in the '60s, but remember, the '60s and '70s, guys were scared to death they were going to be drafted. Guys had gone through the lottery, and they had numbers as to when they were going to Vietnam. And there was extremely important anti-Vietnam sentiment in America, but it was also true at Macalester. And it was different than Iraq, because right now you're not—if you're twenty years old and you're at Macalester, you can still take your two years after graduation before you go to graduate school, and not have to worry that you're going to be sent to Iraq. Whereas back then, if you took a year off from school, you could very easily be in the military. And this was a guy thing, okay, but it still was an interesting time, because the

draft loomed large at Macalester. We had a lot of people who were anti-war at Macalester, who were determined that they would flunk the physical, or go to Canada. And I'm talking about students, a lot of students. So when the lottery came into being, when anybody could be drafted, not just—you weren't student deferred anymore—the campus mood just changed. So in a way Macalester students had privilege during that time of being student deferred for a period of time.

[1:06:08]

But the activism of the '70s—the anti-war activism, as well as the civil rights activism, and the gay rights activism, and the women's rights activism, were all part of the campus. I mean, we would have talks on the campus about all these things all the time. So, it was really very powerful. The undergraduate school that I went to was as radical as Macalester at that time. So I came from that. And then coming to Macalester was kind of a continuation of my undergraduate education at Brandeis University, which was in the Boston area when the Kennedys were powerful, and becoming—coming into their own power in the early '60s. So it was a very activist time. And then coming to Macalester in '67, after going to a fairly radical graduate school at the University of Chicago for four years, you know it was like, okay, it's just sort of a continuation of that. And I would say one of the sad things about our culture right now is I don't think students feel they have as much of a voice now as they did back then. So—I think they do have a voice, and I think that there are things that students can do. But we have become, as a nation, less concerned about the underdog than we were in the '70s. That has radically changed in this culture. I mean, there still are a lot of people who are concerned about people who don't have rights, you know. But still, it's different. It was like, the *main* thing. We should talk about psychedelic drugs a little bit, and “Make love, not war,” and stuff. Because it was interesting at Macalester at that time; there were people who were using drugs, and there

were people who weren't, just like now there are people who are and people who aren't. But the culture, the counterculture was very pronounced at Macalester at that time. So you would go to a wedding of two Macalester students, or graduates, let's say, and they would have a hippie wedding. They would have it outside, they would use wildflowers instead of cut flowers, and bought flowers. They would have musicians from their friends, they would have—make their own clothing that they would wear. And they would have people bring food. So you could actually have a wedding for fifty bucks. I mean, a nice wedding, that everyone would enjoy. I mean, I'm just giving that as an example. And I went to numerous student weddings during the '60s and '70s where it didn't cost the people hardly any money, we—"Oh, Grandpa has this barn, out in," wherever it is, "we'll have a wedding and if it rains we'll just go into the barn," you know, "we'll have it out in the field." And it wasn't unusual to have that kind of thing. And it's interesting how we've become more consumer-oriented, more materialistic, and these days weddings cost between twenty thousand and a hundred thousand dollars. And people of the '60s who went through this time sometimes look at that and go, "I don't understand why these people are doing this." You know? But I'm trying to paint that as a real feeling around Macalester at that time. It was very much about "small is beautiful." It was very green friendly. I mean, if you want to think about the green movement today, it's nothing like the green movement was a long time ago. I mean, people were really into conservation of energy. They were really into, you know, "We don't need big cars." I mean, the book *Small is Beautiful* came out. And people were into wanting to preserve the environment. So that was—you know, it's interesting, it's going on now, and it's with Al Gore, and all the rest of this, which is fine. But it's almost like that's a reaction and—I mean, that's a little like, going back to what was very prevalent at Macalester. So the word "hippie," okay, has some negative connotations to it, but the positive

part of that was that people believed that the most important thing was community. And Macalester's always stood for community, so it fit in with Macalester then pretty well.

Although, some of the things the students did were absolutely outrageous, you know? And the school would not support some of what some of the students did. But the value of caring for the community was pretty powerful back then. So, I don't know if that helps. Whether students are like that now? I think a lot of them are. But I think—some of them are, you know, I mean, you know, so I couldn't tell you, how much has changed.

[1:10:50]

LZ: Would it be a fair assumption that the changes that have occurred at Macalester aren't necessarily unique to the college but more of a sign of just the changing of times, and that you would find similar situations across college camp—similar college campuses to Macalester today?

MO: I think that's true, but I would—I want to say something about—Macalester in some ways hasn't changed at all. And I think that that is really interesting because I think Macalester stood for things that it still stands for. And I think on some level the values that are encouraged at Macalester, if you take them to heart and you really believe them, are eternal values. There's the theme song, what, "Macales—Dear old Macalester, ever the *same*." And when people read that, you know, or sing that, they go, "Oh, my gosh, what are we singing this?" But there is something the same about Macalester. Now, not everybody at Macalester has always had integrity, and not everybody at Macalester has always been honest, but I do think that the things that this school has stood for have sustained it over the last—over the time we've been here.

And from talking to people who graduated and went to Macalester even before I came, Macalester in the early 1900s, and beyond that in the '30s and '40s and whatever, Macalester has had a vision of a world of people getting along. And I think that that's the same. I don't think it's always played out exactly right at Macalester itself, but I mean, I think as far as what Macalester has tried to convey, and what Macalester represents has not, on some basic level, changed. And that's a really good thing. So I can run into somebody who's eighty-five years old who went to Macalester and graduated forty, what, sixty years ago, and they'll say, "Do we still have this interest in service?" or whatever, and I'll say, "Yeah, we do." So I think that there's been a lot that's changed in certain ways, but I really think that the power of Macalester and the main mission of Macalester has really stayed the same for that period of time. And it's had good values, and values ahead of its time. You know, I mean, I think Macalester, in it's—you know, it didn't always live up to its diversity issue. I mean, it really cared about diversity, it didn't always represent that. But it was always pointed out as important, that people look beyond the surface. And that's one thing I want to end with, here, that Macalester is a place of deep thinking and deep thought. And it does not respond to superficial things, but it looks beyond those things to what really matters. And what's really significant is how we're all alike, rather than different, on a core level. So I think students who've come out of Macalester have, in some ways, a different understanding of the world than students who don't go to places like Macalester, as far as really seeing the deeper, underlying connectedness of everything. And that's what I tried to convey in my classes, and in my interactions with people: that even though we're different in some ways, and we look different, and we act different, and we have different backgrounds, and so on and so forth, there's still some core human things that are really

powerful and really beautiful. So, I think Macalester has represented that pretty well over the years. I think we should end with that.

LZ: I think so. Thank you very much.

MO: Okay! Good!

[End of Interview, 1:14:36]