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Interview with Bill Moseley, Professor of Geography

William G. Moseley
Macalester College

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Oral History Project

Interview with: **Bill Moseley**
Professor of Geography, 2002-current; received tenure 2007

Date: **Monday, June 4th, 2007, 1:00p.m.**

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

Interview run time: 49:20 minutes

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Interview with Bill Moseley

Laura Zeccardi, Interviewer

**June 4, 2007
Macalester College
DeWitt Wallace Library
Harmon Room**

LZ: My name is Laura Zeccardi and I'm a new graduate of Macalester College conducting interviews for the Macalester Oral History Project. Today is Monday June 4th and I am interviewing Bill Moseley, Professor of Geography in the Harmon Room of the DeWitt Wallace Library. Alright to begin, if you could state your name and where you were born, and how old you were when you first came to Macalester.

BM: I'm Bill Moseley, and I was born in Alton, Illinois, across the river from St. Louis. And I came here in 2002, so I was thirty-seven at the time.

[00:32]

LZ: What is your educational background, kind of that history, and then what had you been doing right before you came to Macalester?

BM: I have a kind of quirky educational background, because I didn't take my first geography course until I was a Ph.D. student. So, I got a degree in history, like you, from Carleton College, down the road from here. I'm going to interweave personal experience into this because they're related. Then I was in the Peace Corps, in West Africa, in Mali, for two years. And kind of fell

in love with Africa and agriculture, and thought I wanted to make a career in international development. So then I got two Applied Master's degrees from the University of Michigan. One in international public policy, and the other in natural resource management. And then I did development. I worked, the longest stretch, five-six years, for Save the Children UK—it's a British NGO back in Mali. And then I worked for USAID in Washington, DC on environmental issues. And then decided that I wanted to go back to school and become an academic. So, I got my Ph.D. in geography at the University of Georgia.

[02:00]

LZ: What was your reasoning for choosing geography finally?

BM: Good question. When I was in development, I was...well, I was doing a lot of policy type work and a lot of research type work. And some of the best research that I was reading on Africa, particularly on agriculture and natural resource management, was by geographers. Like most Americans, I didn't have a clue what geography was. I thought it was all about maps. I was just fascinated by this subject, and these British authors. So that's what really led me to Geography. It was...I think what was appealing is there's a very old kind of tradition in geography of the study of human-environment interactions. There's a big emphasis on field work. And I think, no offense to history, but I did kind of want to get out and engage with the real world. Although a lot of Africanist historians do do that, so no offense intended. Then the other appealing aspect of geography is that there is a real emphasis on not only looking at how humans manage their environment, in a local context, but the influence of broader political and economic conditions. And that emphasis on scale and understanding that interaction between

broad scale processes and local scale processes was very appealing to me as well. So that's what led, that's what got me into geography.

[03:42]

LZ: How did you come to be interested in Macalester, and kind of describe that whole hiring process?

BM: I had a very positive experience at Carleton. When I began my Ph.D. studies, I think for me the ideal for me was to go back and teach at a liberal arts college. And there are in the kind of top tier of liberal arts colleges, there are only a half a dozen that have geography departments. And fewer still that are in urban areas where, well if you're not inclined to live in the sticks, this is, this is one of those places. In fact, early in my Ph.D. program, I remember a professor asking me, "Where of all places would you like to teach?" and I said Macalester. But, I didn't start here. My first teaching job was at Northern Illinois University. Then when the job opened up here I applied and it worked out.

[04:46]

LZ: Was there any...had you been to Macalester prior to, obviously being from Carleton you had...heard about Macalester.

BM: I heard a lot about Macalester, but had never been here. It's funny you should ask. In the '80s, there was this publication called *The Preppy Guide to Colleges* and I remember both—I can't remember which was which—but both Carleton and Macalester, one sex was supposed to

be rampant and the other there was lots of drug use. Unfortunately I didn't get much of either, but um...[laughter]. If anything it was the other kind of liberal school in Minnesota. So I had positive feelings towards it.

[05:31]

LZ: What was kind of your first reaction when you started at Macalester, kind of the campus as a whole but also more specifically the Geography Department?

BM: I was...I mean during the interview, and when I came here to teach, it was...it felt like a good match to me. The students were very engaged, demanding but in a positive way. They had high expectations for teaching. And liberally inclined, so, whereas other places I had taught in Georgia and Illinois, when I played devil's advocate I was playing the liberal side. And here to get conversations going I would play the conservative side to be devil's advocate. It felt good, yeah.

[06:26]

LZ: What was your impression of...like what was the state of the department and the professors and that kind of thing?

BM: Yeah, good question. I started in the Fall of 2002. And I don't know if you remember, but finances were tight at that time. The stock market was down, and the college was trying to conserve on expenses. And there was a decision made to do fewer things better. And there was a report that came out that Fall which actually suggested that the Department be eliminated.

Which, as someone who had given up a job someplace else, and had come here for my dream job, that was a little scary. So at the time there's just, there's only one tenure track faculty member in the department, David Lanegran, and then myself. I was newly hired. And then we had some temporary people. So that was kind of a tenuous and scary time. It was, I think it was a bit of bad luck in that the department's numbers were kind of at an historic low right at this point in time when the college was thinking about cutting back. Since that time it's just been going gang-busters, where we have...I think we're the sixth largest department in the college in terms of majors. This Spring we had something like a hundred majors. So very large department, given the fact that we only have five tenure track faculty.

[08:12]

LZ: Was there a reason other than low numbers that the Geography Department had been targeted?

BM: I...it's interesting. I think some people thought it shouldn't be part of the traditional liberal arts curriculum. Geography is a much bigger discipline and major in other countries. It's very big in European universities, Canada, Australia. And I think in part, given the history of the United States, which at times is often kind of myopic, we're not particularly interested in international issues, geography has suffered because of that. I think Geography came to Macalester in part—the department was started in the '40s by Hildegard Binder Johnson who was a German woman who basically said if you're going to be an internationally minded college you're nuts if you don't have a Geography Department. So I, I think geography makes a lot of sense, in particular at a place like Macalester with its internationalist tradition. But I think some

people were looking around and said, “Well other liberal arts colleges don't have geography programs, why should we?”

[09:38]

LZ: What did you perceive the relationship between students and faculty to be when you first got here?

BM: Within Geography, or the college in general?

LZ: In general, yeah.

BM: Well I previously taught at public universities, where there's a lot of distance between faculty and students. You know, one has to be in serious hot water before they will come and see their professor in their office, or they'd much rather see a teaching assistant. And here it's, it's...I mean there are still students that are afraid to come and see you. But in general, I think the relationships between professors and students are much closer. And to my way of thinking it's much healthier. And that I, you know I particularly enjoy situations where, you know, I know students for three or four years. I have them in multiple classes, they go on and do advanced research. And it, there ceases to be a professor-student relationship. It's more one of peers, working on common issues.

[10:57]

LZ: Could you talk a little bit more about that transition from a public university to a place like

Macalester?

BM: Well it wasn't huge for me, because I had been a student at a liberal arts college. So I knew what places like this were about. But it is a more demanding place to be a professor because at a lot of large public universities, you can coast a bit on the teaching. I mean once you got your class down, and the incentive structure really encourages research, so that's what you focus on, and you can't do that here. Plus there are still high research expectations. So, I think for me it was...I welcomed the opportunity to work more closely with students and to get to know them better, but also it's a more demanding approach to teaching.

[12:04]

LZ: What did you, what was kind of your first impression of the administration and then what has been your relationship as a faculty member with the administration.

BM: Well, I think initially since they tried to close down our department it wasn't particularly positive. But, that changed. And I think that the administration became much more supportive. And I've also been actively involved in African Studies, and that—so we have a program or a concentration in African Studies—and that came to be, and the administration was supportive. And I'm also actively involved in Environmental Studies, and Environmental Studies similarly was on the chopping block at one point. There was a real question whether that would be downgraded to a concentration or persist as a major. And so there were—it's funny, just when I felt like I got out of the woods with Geography, Environmental Studies was under threat. But they eventually became quite supportive in Environmental Studies. So that's, that's been

positive.

[13:28]

LZ: In the years that you've been here, what issues have you seen students really grab a hold of, and put at the forefront.

BM: In terms of broader kind of public concerns or specifically about the college?

LZ: I think public concerns. I know in the '60s and '70s, a lot of retired professors talk about the Vietnam War and protests, and I'm curious if you've seen kind of parallels for this generation of students that you've seen?

BM: Well I came here in the Fall of 2002, so that was the run up to the start of the Iraq war. So there was a lot of concern about that. I participated in marches protesting against our involvement in the war. Other students were involved in those, and there was a variety of public forums where that was discussed. So that definitely initially...there's always lots of interest around when there are major elections. There was a decision to do away with "need blind" admissions, and there's a lot of student concern about that and I think that concern lingers in different ways. Then, it's probably because I'm involved with Environmental Studies, in the last year I feel like there's been a lot of student interest and concern about global climate change.

[15:12]

LZ: What level of student activism do you see at the Macalester campus if you were to compare

it to either where you previously taught, or just in general?

BM: It reminds me of Carleton. I was a student at Carleton in the '80s, and there, it seems kind of antiquated now, there was concern about nuclear war and disarmament, and then divestment from companies involved in South Africa. And so there would be people who would live in shacks in the common space, which I see here, too. So, it reminds me a lot of that. You don't see the same level of activism—I taught at the University of Georgia and the University of Northern Illinois—you just didn't see as much of that.

[16:06]

LZ: To kind of move in and talk more about your kind of personal teaching experiences. If you could just kind of describe what types of courses you were teaching right away at Macalester and if that's changed to what you're teaching now.

BM: Well, I've taught four courses. I mean, I teach five courses a year, but one of the courses I teach twice. I've taught the same four courses since I've come. Intro...Human Geography of Global Issues, two environmental courses—People and the Environment and then an upper level seminar, Environment and Development—and then Geography of Africa. I'm quite keen to teach another type of course. I just haven't had the opportunity to do that, given the demands of our Department. We're...we wrestle because we have, we teach a lot of large classes and we have more students than we can kind of adequately deal with. But, in terms of the way that courses have evolved, when I taught the environmental courses at the large public universities, they were kind of "the" environmental courses. Here we have an Environmental Studies

program. So those have shifted and evolved over time to have a more distinctly geographic flavor to them. I think with all my courses they've...you tinker with the assignments and they get better. I mean, I'd like, I'd like to think the courses are much better now than they were when I first started.

[17:50]

LZ: How many courses do you generally teach per semester?

BM: We have a two-three teaching load. So it's two one semester, and then three the other. Of the five, this year will be the third year I've taught a first year seminar. And then I teach a senior seminar, so those are smaller. Fifteen, twenty people, and then the larger classes are thirty to thirty five.

[18:16]

LZ: What is that contrast like teaching a freshman first-year course, and then teaching a senior sem and kind of coming in and going out, you see them?

BM: I like them both a lot. In part because I love teaching smaller classes. And those courses are deliberately made small, so if it's not those courses I don't have an opportunity to teach a small course otherwise. And you know first years, they're, they're so eager. They'll do anything you tell them. They're not cynical. But it's...I...I really enjoy the first year seminar because it's, you're also their adviser. So you get to know them better. But this...the senior seminar is great too, because this year in particular, I had a number of students in there who had taken my first

year seminar. So it's like kind of coming full circle. And it's...the senior seminar in particular is like a traditional graduate school seminar. I don't lecture. It's a lot of reading and discussion and it's very advanced work, so it's... By the time they get through that course, they more or less are familiar with the same literature I'm familiar with, and we can talk the same language, and it's great.

[19:50]

LZ: This...I have the question, "Have you felt accepted?" which I think it's fair to say that you have. But what have been kind of your students' reactions to your teaching style, or other faculty's kind of comments on your teachings, if any?

BM: Well, I think generally positive. I did get tenure, so it couldn't have been that bad. I think my department traditionally taught a lot of lecture style courses, and now there are several of us who do more discussion-based courses. But at the time I came that wasn't the case. So that was kind of new, but the Chair of the department was very open to that. So I, you know, I had to experiment with that a bit. I...it's funny, when I came here I thought of myself as a really good researcher who needed to work on his teaching. So I put just a lot of effort into teaching. And I would like to think that the lectures have gotten better, and I've...I've tried a lot of different formats with discussion, and I'd like to think that that's getting better too. Some students love discussion, and others hate it. So, it's funny, you read evaluations and one student will say, "I want more discussion" and the other will say, "We do too much discussion, I want more lectures." So with the exception of the Senior Seminar, I've always done a mix. You know, some lecture, some discussion.

[21:35]

LZ: Does Macalester's location in the Twin Cities play out in the classroom for you, given that...

BM: Yeah, it's... I have students, for example, do an assignment where they go out and visit different ethnic markets, and do some observation and if possible talk to the proprietors. And I think in particular I do this in my introductory course, the first year course. And unless people are from the Twin Cities, they think this is kind of white-bread Midwest, and then they go up to University Avenue and there's this thriving Hmong community, and you know, there are pockets of Latino communities. So that's very eye-opening for them to see. I think that's... I have another exercise where they ride around on the bus, and it's, it's basically an exercise about public transportation and commenting on how well or not well it's working. But they also get to see a lot of different neighborhoods, and think about different people that use public transportation. So yeah, it's a great, it's a great resource. Certainly better than Northfield was when I was an undergrad.

[23:04]

LZ: So you did receive tenure this year, and I'm curious what that process was like for you, here at Macalester.

BM: Um, not that bad, really. I...I think you kind of know if it's going to work out or not a couple of years before you actually go up for tenure. But you are not completely relaxed about it until it actually happens. So it was, it was um, fairly clear to me from the start what the

expectations were, and what I needed to do, and I just kept hammering away at that.

[23:49]

LZ: What are some of those expectations that the college anticipates that you'll do?

BM: Well I think it was always, for junior faculty, it's mainly teaching and research. There aren't, there are low expectations for service, although I did get quite involved in service. It...people are always reluctant to quantify research output. But, kind of one to two peer-reviewed articles a year, or a book would count for more. But, you know, it's—your teaching has to be good. Nobody gets tenure without being a good teacher. But that alone will not do it. You also have to be a productive scholar. In...like I said, I always felt like I was a strong researcher, so I wasn't as worried about that. So I, you know, since coming here most of my energy was really put into working on my teaching.

[24:54]

LZ: What types of personal research have you been doing, kind of specifically.

BM: Well my dissertation work was on poverty environment interactions in Mali, in West Africa. When I was in graduate school in the late '90s, there was this kind of conventional belief that you'd see in a lot of the policy literature that poor people are more inclined to degrade the environment. So my dissertation was about questioning that relationship. And in Mali where I work, the big export crop is cotton and the wealthier farmers tend to do more cotton. So in fact that relationship is the reverse in Mali, because it's the wealthier farmers that are growing more

cotton which is problematic for the environment. So, when I first got here I was still working on that. The summer of 2003 I went back to Mali and did some follow up work. And, I mean, Mali is really my first love in Africa. I speak the local language. I was a Peace Corps volunteer, it's just, I'm very comfortable there. But, there is an expectation at Macalester that you will involve students in your research, and if you work internationally that's very challenging to do. I had visions of taking a student to Mali who would completely flip out because they couldn't deal with the cross-cultural stuff. And, I mean, I saw, I've seen that happen with fellow Peace Corps volunteers. People that just couldn't handle it. So, I thought a lot about, you know, how could there be some sort of institutional structure where students could come, learn about a place, kind of come to grips with it, and then go on to do advanced research for me. And it just so happened that in my early years here, they were in the process of launching this new study abroad program in Cape Town in South Africa, with the theme of "Globalization and the Environment", which fits incredibly well with what I do. So...I decided that I would move my research to South Africa. And I mostly, most of my research deals with the environmental dimensions of agriculture in Africa. And in South Africa, since they got independence in 1994 or the apartheid regime fell, there's been a big push to give land to black farmers because agriculture had been dominated by white, large white farms. So that process is known as land reform. So I've been studying land reform in South Africa. And concurrently with that, I've been, I teach an introductory seminar as part of this study abroad course. So now I've had a couple of students who have done that program. Part of that program is doing independent research so some of those students have worked on themes closely related to my research. And by being there I can kind of hook them up with some of my contacts. And then some of them have gone on to turn that work into honors theses or, I have a student this year who got a Keck grant. She just went

back to South Africa to do more research. So those are the two pieces. Mali and then South Africa.

[28:48]

LZ: Have you done any sort of local work...work concerning things kind of more locally with students?

BM: I have done that with my students. I had a student this year, Laura Kerr, who...she studied Hmong farmers in the Twin Cities. And I was, I was always very curious about Hmong farmers, in part because I was aware of the fact that they were bringing an agricultural system from a different part of the world and transplanting it here. So I was just so psyched when she, we came to this agreement that this is what she would do. So she did a bunch of interviews with Hmong farmers in the Twin Cities. There's about a hundred to three hundred of these, and she interviewed a subset of them. And just a very interesting honors thesis about how these Hmong farmers in a way didn't completely reject but selectively adopted Western or American farming techniques, but used a lot of their own techniques and really came up with this kind of novel hybrid more organic approach to agriculture. Which got in the news recently, because with the big push for ethanol production a lot of these Hmong farmers don't own farm land. They're renting it, and some of these Hmong farmers have been unable to rent farm land because of this push for ethanol production. So we actually, two weeks ago, we had an op-ed published in the *Star Tribune* which came out of her research. And we actually tomorrow we have an interview with Minnesota Public Radio, and the day after with National Public Radio. So that's been a very exciting topic.

[30:50]

LZ: What is the benefit for you as a professor to continue to do work like this with students?

BM: The benefit? It gets me psyched man, it's cool stuff. I mean, this is my passion, this is my love. So you find other people that share the same interest and you know, you get off, it's cool stuff. But, I mean, I don't want to make this just sound like an intellectual orgasm. It's also, it's important stuff. Because US agriculture is pretty buggered. You know? It's, it's, there are lots of environmental problems with US agriculture, and it can't continue that way. And so by studying groups like this, they...you get the sense that there's a different way that it can happen. And similarly in Africa where I work.

[31:39]

LZ: Do you feel that because you're on kind of the younger end of the age for professors, at least here at Macalester, that you're able to more easily connect with students?

BM: I think age is a state of mind. I think some students don't realize how old I am, because I did...I really had a ten year first career before I got into academia. I think it's...if you're excited about something, you know, that's, well to me at least, that's what's important.

[32:11]

LZ: We've talked a little bit about the South African study abroad program and the African Studies program, and I don't know if there's more that you have to say about that, but I'm kind of

interested in how the African Studies, they offer I think it's a minor, and how that got started and how that program plays into other fields at Macalester.

BM: That's a good question. Obviously, one of our most famous, if not our most famous, alumnus, Kofi Annan... So when I came here, I thought it was disappointing that we didn't have an African Studies program. And about that time, the college came up with new guidelines about what, you know, a major had to have so many full-time tenure track faculty. And they created this new category called a concentration, which, it's good and it's bad. It was meant to be a vehicle so that faculty who had certain interests could come together and create a program. But they were very nervous about making any kind of financial commitment to these programs. So in theory at least these programs are completely unfunded. They're to receive no resources. That's not completely true in reality, but that was the idea. So, it...we had had a number of faculty come about the time I did, who had interests, research interests in Africa. And this new type of program became a possibility. So we made a proposal to create an African Studies concentration. Which I think is wonderful, and I think is incredibly appropriate for Macalester. I mean, given the traditions here, I think we should have strong area studies programs for all the major world regions, and we don't incidentally. I think a lot of the focus has been on internationalism and international studies, and ironically in a way, the area studies programs, for reasons I don't completely understand, have suffered because of that. So we, we, did create this African Studies program, but we have a very small budget now. And we have no power over which faculty are hired. So if people leave, like Hilary Jones, in the History Department left, and she taught four courses in African studies, that's a huge hit for a program to take. And it's not a hundred percent clear if another African historian will be hired. So I, I guess I frankly wish

that...I mean I understand that the college doesn't maybe want to make the commitment right away, but if there is student interest maybe for three or four years, you can demonstrate that these classes are filling up, and there are lots of people getting a concentration. I feel at some point there should be some sort of financial commitment. And I'm not saying make it a major, but give these programs a small budget. Give them the ability to go over to History and say, "You know, we think it would be a good idea if you hire an African historian."

[35:51]

LZ: Is it unusual for a liberal arts college to have an African Studies program?

BM: There are plenty of others that have African Studies programs. A number of them are combined with African and African American studies. I don't always like looking at what the others are doing. I mean, I feel like if, if, Macalester has a certain tradition—if for example our niche is internationalism, then maybe we should be doing certain things that others aren't doing.

[36:30]

LZ: The study abroad program, was that something that was established prior to your coming here, or was that something that you've seen develop, the [program] to South Africa?

BM: The idea had been gestating for a number of years. The first time it was done occurred during my second year here. It's a consortium between Pomona, Swarthmore, and Macalester. So it rotates. So there's someone from the US teaches that core seminar from each place and then it goes around. So a guy from Pomona taught it the first two years. I've taught it the past

two years. Next year it'll be Swarthmore. But eventually it'll come back to Macalester.

[37:15]

LZ: Is that a program designed specifically for geography majors?

BM: It's not really. It's...I think the initial impetus in fact came out of the sense in the study abroad office that there were a couple of issues. There weren't a lot of study abroad programs for more science-oriented students. I think often times there's a...most students I speak with love their study abroad experience, but they feel like academically it wasn't very rigorous. So I think there was a sense that they wanted to have a more rigorous, academically rigorous program. And then there was an interesting, something that dealt with globalization. So I'm told at least that they looked at several potential sites around the world. And then settled on Cape Town, which is... I mean, South Africa was relatively isolated up until 1994, and then just kind of full bore entered into the global economy and adopted some very kind of neo-liberal policies. So it's a great laboratory for looking at globalization. So, we've, we've, a number of geography majors have done it, but the other two big groups would be Environmental Studies and International Studies, but we've also had students from other programs.

[38:46]

LZ: On average how many Macalester students do that program?

BM: Well it's deliberately capped at twelve total. So we have twelve students from the three schools, plus two University of Cape Town students. But the last two years, there have been five

Macalester students.

[39:07]

LZ: So is that fairly competitive then, given the numbers?

BM: It is fairly competitive, but it's also kind of a... They're interested in students with particular interests. So, I don't think you have to be Einstein to do this program. I think what really is more important is that it closely matches your interest.

[39:35]

LZ: Going back to the Geography Department as a whole, we've talked about how numbers have risen, have there been other departmental changes that you've witnessed, and are there things that you're kind of looking, anticipating, that will happen in the future or hope that might happen in the future for the department?

BM: Well the... We have five tenure track faculty. So we have Dave Lanegran, the Chair. He's got to be by now one of the longest serving faculty members on campus. He was, he's an alum, and then started teaching here I think in the early '70s, a really long time ago. But then I was hired. And then after me three new faculty members. So you know we have four relatively young people. The other three haven't even gotten tenure yet, and then Dave. So we're...we're quite young. But in a way, you know there's a big baby boom cohort of faculty at this college. And as that generation is retiring, it, it's...there's going to be a lot of rapid change. I think the History Department is like that, too. You have a big group that's retiring now. Some of what

you see in the Geography Department of kind of one old guy and four younger people is reflective of these broader trends. Which is, that's, this is a big challenge for the college to kind of replace itself in a...without too much institutional turmoil. So it's, it's really an exciting department to be in. And I think what's going to...I'm...I feel incredibly blessed that Dave has been there, because without him, you know—some kind of institutional memory and guidance and knowing how the college works—I don't see how we would have kept everything together. But it will obviously be a big change when he leaves, and he's going to retire in three or four years.

[41:56]

LZ: Can you speculate as to why the department does have now one hundred majors and just in the five years you've been here, you've seen it go from kind of small to quite big now. And is there a larger trend there, or does it have to do with the department?

BM: Both. Geography, like I said, has always been a small discipline in the United States. But it did go through kind of a low point in the '80s. Then from the 1990s forward, there were a couple of things that happened. Geographic Information Systems, this kind of computerized mapping, came on the scene. And that, coupled with, I think a lot of issues that geographers are particularly well-equipped to study—like globalization, like global climate change—serendipitously have lead to a...the discipline as a whole in the US is growing very very rapidly. I mean, just at an astounding rate. You also have an advanced placement AP test in geography now. So you have a lot of high schoolers coming up who have some sense of geography. And that wasn't the case before. So now it's...there are new Geography Departments being

established. You have other colleges that aren't necessarily creating Geography Departments, but hiring geographers. Like Grinnell has hired a geographer. Carleton is thinking about starting a department. Colorado College has hired a geographer. So that I think there are those broader trends. Then I, I just feel at a place like Macalester, for me at least, geography is kind of this quintessential liberal arts major. It's a very broad, synthetic discipline, that pulls on a lot of different areas to study and understand problems. So it's, I'm sure the faculty, you know, it doesn't help that we have—it doesn't hurt that we have good faculty. But I also think it's just a really interesting subject. So it's...you know, no offense to statisticians, but I'm not trying to sell statistics here. I'm selling this really cool subject, that I think once you get into it, it's, it's very enticing.

[44:34]

LZ: I don't know if you'll know the answer to this, but do you find that a lot of Geography majors have other majors that kind of compliment the Geography major?

BM: We have a number of double majors, but I don't know if it's unusually large compared to other majors. Because my general understanding is that there are a lot of double majors at the college. So, we have more students double major in Environmental Studies than any other major. But you know, Poli Sci, History...Urban Studies, there's always been a lot of double majors there as well.

[45:13]

LZ: Do you have a stand out memory thus far at Macalester?

BM: A stand out memory? Ok, tenure was nice. I can't point to one single thing. I think I felt good when certain books have come out. And I felt good about certain accomplishments of my students when they... I just had a student this past spring, Sara Nelson, her honors thesis, she was looking at land reform in Tanzania. And it got the, at our big annual meeting, it got the best student paper award for an Africa related paper. So you know. Laura Kerr I mentioned had this op ed in the paper. So it's really nice to see certain students do especially well.

[46:14]

LZ: In the next few years for you at Macalester is there anything that you're particularly excited about or anything that you'd like to bring about?

BM: Oh I have big plans! [Laugh] I think historically the Geography Department has been known for urban geography and GIS, of which I really do neither. Because I primarily work on development and environmental issues. But I would like the department to become a bit broader and more reflective of the discipline in general, so that Macalester students can see kind of the full breadth of geography. But that happening is somewhat of contingent on what the administration thinks. I would like to see African Studies, not necessarily become a major, but receive a bit more resources, and through other departments attract more faculty with African Studies interests. And...because I have such a tight relationship with Environmental Studies, and two of my courses are cross-listed there, I would like to see that department continue to flourish. We had a failed search this year for a physical geographer, and we're going to be searching again next year. So I would like that to work out, because it'd be a nice symbiotic

thing between the two departments. I think on a more personal level, now that I have tenure I don't want to say you have a gun to your head, but you...you...you are trying to publish as much as you can. And now I feel I can be a little bit more deliberate and choosy, and really focus on things that I want to do. I would also like to find a way to get back to Mali. To do some more, you know I've been working on South Africa for the last couple of years. I know I'll continue to be involved there, because of the study abroad program. But as I mentioned at the start, Mali is really my first love. So I'd like to do some more research there, and perhaps find a way to bring students there. It's a hard place to be, but it's just, it's a fascinating place too.

[48:58]

LZ: Those are all my questions, but if there's anything that you want to add that we haven't talked about...

BM: I don't, I don't have a lot to add. It's been, it's been a great first five years here. So I'm excited to see what the future brings.

LZ: Alright thank you very much.

BM: Thank you.

[End of Disc 49:20]