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Interview with David McCurdy, Professor of Anthropology

David McCurdy

MACALESTER COLLEGE

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Oral History Project

Interview with:	**Dave McCurdy** Professor of Anthropology, 1966-2005	
Date:	**Wednesday, January 31st, 2007, 9:00a.m.**	
Place:	Macalester College DeWitt Wallace Library, Harmon Room	
Interviewer:	Sara Nelson, Class of 2007	
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edited

Interview with David McCurdy

Sara Nelson, Interviewer

January 31, 2007
Macalester College
DeWitt Wallace Library
Harmon Room

SN: My name is Sara Nelson and I'm working for the Macalester Oral History Project. Today we're interviewing David McCurdy, on January 31st, 2007. He's a retired Professor of Anthropology. I'd just like to start by talking about your experiences as a faculty member and kind of your first impressions of when you came to Mac. So, what did you do after you graduated?

DM: Graduated from?

SN: From college.

DM: Which time? Oh.

SN: As an undergrad, I guess.

[00:32]

DM: When I graduated from college, I got married, strangely enough, that summer. I went to Stanford University. I did two quarters there, went in the Army for half a year as a Lieutenant,

came out. Another year at Stanford for an M.A., then I went to Cornell University for a Ph.D. And from 1961 to 1963 I was in India doing fieldwork with my wife and we had a baby by then. Came back, finished my Ph.D. in ’64. Got a job in Colorado, at Colorado State University for two years. And then got recruited here as the first anthropologist here, for some reason [laughter]. Actually they had soft money, so to speak—they had a grant for three years, with the promise of continuing the appointment. So, I arrived here. And when I interviewed here, I interviewed in January of 1964. And the high for the day was seven below zero [laughter]. So you had to like it to come. At that point the college was clearly on the make, having I think decided—I think it was in 1960 at a major retreat of the faculty—to go national, which was quite a change. It had been a local school before that. When I arrived, they were recruiting something like over a hundred Merit Scholars a year, by virtually paying for everything that they would need. And we still had commuters. We had lockers in Old Main. By then they had built the Fine Arts Center. Olin was there, Rice was not there yet. Harvey Rice was President in 1966. And I was added to the Soc Department, and they were very nice to me. One guy particularly, who left a year after I got here unfortunately, I liked a lot. The…one of my first impressions was there was a faculty meeting where they took attendance but didn't require it, but you figured they wanted to see you there. That stopped later. Harvey Rice actually prayed over us in those days. I think there were, I can't remember how many new faculty there were that year, something like eighteen. In 1960 I think, less than forty percent of the faculty had Ph.D’s. By then they were trying to hire up, and they did really two kinds of things. They hired younger guys like me—I was only 30 when I came here. And people were more established, who had some publications and stuff like that. So, I always say they hired by the draft, the draft and the trade. Like guys,

athletes, who—some guys who had seen a track record, some guys who hadn't. I always felt that the draft worked better. But, I was in that group. So, everybody seemed to want Anthropology. [04:37]

So I had a great time. I was by myself for three years. And managed, in the beginning of the third year—actually a little before that—to get the Provost then to agree to hire another anthropologist. And managed to hire Jim Spradley that year, which was a great deal. And we were just, we had huge numbers of students. I once had a hundred and forty students in Olin Auditorium. That's gone now, but Olin had this huge—it could hold two hundred and seventy-five people—big. Any of you remember? You never saw it. But, you know, it had banks of seats. It was for chemistry and biology. It had a table with water taps and all of this, and black boards that went up and down. It was wonderful. The only problem is if people sat up in the back. One of the problems I always had in that room is they'd start talking to you like a television set up there. So I'd have to try to figure out ways to involve them down front [laughter], which worked actually.

[05:54]

The other thing that I noticed, and really you should interview one of…I was saying this before to Ellen…wives from the time. I don't know if you have, I don't think so. Because there was a Women's Club made up of wives and faculty women, of whom there were not many in those days. Most of those women didn't work in those days. The transition to women working really happened after 1966. I just remember the first year we were invited to potlucks, to sort of get into the faculty swing of things here. The faculty wives would bring over hot dishes—a Minnesota thing I'd never heard of. One time, the—at that time we had a—Max Adams, who was head of…who was over in… Well, actually, we didn't have Weyerhaeuser yet. There was a

big fight over Weyerhaeuser, whether to build it in the mall out here. Everybody thought that that ruined the vista. And…but they did and by '67.

[07:23]

And Max was Chaplain to the institution. And his wife showed up with the President's wife for a visit, I think the second month we were here. And our kids were running around half-dressed, and the house was a wreck. And there they were at the front door. Carol could tell you all about that—my wife—about what it was like in those days to do that. I, you know, it was local, but you've got to remember the times themselves were—the place looks like a country club now compared to what it used to look like. It was nice, but it, it, we get a little worn grass and we put down new grass now [laughter]. At that time Wallace was simply writing us checks as far as I know. You just, he was under—there were a whole bunch of programs for faculty. There was a faculty babysitting fund, so that faculty could get out. There was a faculty book fund so faculty could buy books. But nobody said how much each individual faculty member could have, and one faculty member one year spent it all [laughter]. It was not a popular thing. I, being somebody very carefully, takes care of my, just very slow about those things, discovered there was no money left by the time I wanted to buy some books. Anyway, I was in Old Main, up here. The wing that is no longer there. And there was the original building here. The facilities in those days, we didn't have Rice. What else, we didn't have a number of dorms where this…this [the library] replaced the East wing partly of Old Main, and this was a great addition. Weyerhaeuser was the library in those days. Um, that's sort of my, my first impression was I had a great time. I really enjoyed it here. I was just trying to build an anthro program. And by ‘71 we had three anthropologists. And that's when the college went broke. So, luckily we got them before they actually laid off 25 faculty members. Don't know if you want to hear about that.

[10:02]

SN: What made you decide to become an Anthropologist.

DM: You know, I think if you interview most anthropologists, particularly from my era, it was a group of anthropologists who got involved in cross-cultural stuff during the second world war, as it turned out, often through language programs. Anthropology was very small. When I got my degree there were eighteen degree granting institutions in the United States, that's all. That's nothing compared to now. I know this because we actually did a thing on this some years ago. Eighty-four people got their Ph.D.'s the year I got mine in 1964. About a third of those were archaeologists and physical anthropologists and linguists. So, there were very few cultural anthropologists. I was an undergraduate at Cornell University. I was going to be pre-med, see. And the kind of story you're going to get out of this is simply that I discovered as I was dissecting my first frog and taking Chemistry and all sorts of things, that I was not going to succeed terribly well as pre-med, although I probably could've, had I wanted to. We had freshmen English in those days, and it was required and I was in that. I wrote some short stories they really liked. So then I was going to be an English major the next year, and I took…they advised me to take about two or three courses over there. And that's when I discovered that I can't write a critical essay. I still can't write a critical essay [laughter]. I hate writing critical essays. I figure if somebody writes something it's hard enough, let alone to have a pack of people criticizing it. There's an art to it, too, and I just never got that right. At about that time, I took my first course in anthropology and I liked it. Then I took a second course in anthropology, and I liked that. And then I just decided to major in it. At that time, at an institution the size of

Cornell, which had…I think there were about two thousand people in my class, a lot of engineers and people there, but still a lot of people. Only eight majors that year at a major university and that department only had six anthropologists in it. It has about twenty-five now, so it has changed. I did very well at that, and I kind of surprised myself as it turns out. Then I liked it so much, I said "Gee, I'd like to be an anthropologist." And my advisor there said, "Go to Stanford, that's a new department [it was at the time] and see, take an M.A., see if you like it." So I went to Stanford, and I liked it. And I didn't like Stanford as it turned out much, and I got recruited back to Cornell. And it was a freer wheeling department there, and I really liked it there. So that's how I became an anthropologist. Then I came to believe in anthropology like a religion. People would say "What religion are you?" and I tell them I'm an anthropologist. Which means that you just want to understand the world through other peoples' points of view, which is not something most people in the world do.

[13:50]

SN: What was the hiring process like for you?

DM: Here? Well, it was very different from now. I was met at the airport. The airport had a single level parking lot, right in front of it. And it was about an eighth the size of what it is now. But, it was a great place because it had direct flights because Northwest could do that. I flew in here, in the freezing cold without the right clothing. And I got met there, and the first thing they did was take me down to the Lexington Restaurant down here. There weren't many restaurants in the cities that were any good in those days, but that one was a good one and it had a great bar. So we went down there, and we drank, and kind of got to know the department members. Then I

interviewed with those guys. You didn't have to teach, you didn't have to do anything like you do now. But, you did talk to a number of—there was a personnel committee, and you talked to members of that, often one at a time. And the Provost, and the President. And since they only had two candidates for the job, and the job was supposed to be for a guy at a level above me. They were trying to get somebody who was already an associate professor, with books or publications. And there were so few anthropologists in those days, that it actually was a wonderful thing, and you could get a job. And so anyway, I had a great time. I thought, "Well I really put these guys away," and I went back to Colorado State. Then I didn't hear anything from them. I didn't hear anything from them for two weeks. I finally called a guy who I had got to know here. I said "What's going on," and he said "Well, we made the offer to the other guy." Said "They all like you better, but he fits the job description". So I said "Oh". And he said, "Also, I don't think he's going to take it." Well, he didn't take it. So they offered the job to me, and they offered it to me at a fantastic salary then, of eleven thousand five hundred dollars. I was only making eighty eight hundred at the time. Just to show you what's happened in the money world here. But this was, I didn't know any graduate who was sort of my cohort, making that kind of money. I mean, that was just wonderful. They paid my moving expenses. So, I came in as a happy person. Even though you took a risk coming to this place, because they didn't have the strong national reputation. It was on the make, but it wasn't like it is now. You know, the only other choice I had, I interviewed at Swarthmore that year. And the minute I set foot on that place, I knew they had decided to hire somebody else. By the time I got there it was just clear. And I didn't like Swarthmore. And I wouldn't have gone there if they'd offered me the job. So they're, this is just a, I don't know why, but I didn't particularly like elite places.

Which is what we're becoming here, but still in our own way, which I've always liked a lot better than Swarthmore and places like that in the East. I'm from the East. I'm from New York.

[17:40]

SN: What was a typical day like during your first few years teaching?

DM: Ah, the typical day question, you guys have been listening to me. Well, you get up. As informants always say, "Well it all depends on the day." And you know I can't remember very well actually from those days. Except that in those days…courses, you know, we had the four-one-four system here, which you've probably heard about. You had an Interim class, and you had, students took four courses, but they were four hours each. That's what you get credit for now, but we taught them for four hours. I came on a two-one-two teaching load, whereas some people had a three-one-three teaching load here. And I negotiated that because the third course is always the killer at this joint. Do two classes and really give it your all, but you start doing three, and it's always what you have to do still. And it's always the course you don't teach as much, and requires more preparation, so it really loads it on you. I had been doing this at Colorado State, and I wanted more time to think and pay attention to students and do more writing and that sort of thing. I had a two-one-two course load. But I would come into the office. I had the nicest office of anybody in my department—they gave it to me, big corner office. What was it? The next year they hired somebody else and divided my office. They took a third of it away. But it was still a nice office. So, anyhow, I had a secretary on this grant. And I didn't know what to do with her. I was supposed to be doing big-time research. I ordered—at the time it was a lot of money—ten-thousand dollars worth of books for the library. I had a lot to

do, and I had really large classes. The second semester I had a hundred and ten students in Intro. I was…my upper division classes were pulling anywhere up to forty, forty-five students. I, one semester did two hundred and ten students in one semester, which is a lot. And that's a lot of work. And in those days I was dividing the intro class into sections once a week, so I'd teach four sections plus three lectures. I didn't have much time to do anything else. My door was always open so students were always wandering in there. So a typical day… When I first started, I can't even remember how I ate lunch in those days. When we hired Jim Spradley, he and I began working on projects together almost immediately, and we went to lunch every day after that. Which is an old tradition in the department, and we've been going to lunch ever since. If you look over there, you'll see our table in the Campus Center. It's not that everybody in the department does it all time, but it… We always wanted a department where people liked each other. And furthermore, where you could talk shop. We really didn't need to have department meetings, because it's a small group, and we could just get the work done, if there was any. There wasn't…my problem was to try to build the department and I talked the Provost into another position basically. Before I came here, I said, "If it works, I'm expecting you to support growth." I mean, finally this first argument was, "Well, it's just you, you draw a lot of students." I said, "No, it's not just me, it's an interesting subject, this is an international school." At that time, anthropology was probably the only department that really did a lot of international stuff. We used to own that, but not anymore, but we did then. There was an international program in Poli Sci that was more like getting you ready for the State Department. But it really, we really didn't have, you know…Econ, and even Poli Sci and everybody else, English, and all the people who are doing international stuff now didn't exist then. So, I was asked to lecture in a lot of different courses. And I was fresh out of India, so I could talk about what it was like in a village,

and what that taught us about things. It was fun. So, I don't remember an average day very well there, and it's hard now. I haven't taught for six years. And I used to be able to tell you, "Well I'd come in and do this, I'd come in and do that," but I'm not sure I could remember anymore [laughter]. But, you know, you look at your mail, I still do that. Now you look at your email of course, and that didn't happen. How I managed to write stuff in the old days, I don't know. It was all on a manual type writer to begin with. I used to draft stuff four and five times, get mad, ball up paper and throw it around the room. I couldn't get started. So, that wasn't very helpful question for you, I'm sorry.

[23:46]

SN: What classes have you taught during your time here?

DM: Well, I have, since I've been here? I have taught a lot of Introductory Anthropology, which is my favorite class. I have taught Ethnographic Interviewing since we invented the course in 1970, almost steadily the whole time. I have taught Ethnographic Writing twice. We gave that up because we needed to do other things. Taught the Anthropology of Religion, which was also called Magic, Religion, and Witchcraft. When you called it that you got everybody in there thinking they were going to do a séance. Taught the Peoples and Cultures of India. And back in the '60s and '70s everybody thought they were going to come in and sit on the floor cross-legged. So, I'd have to tell them that's not what the course was about. I have taught, God, I've got a list on my résumé, I can't remember, some other stuff as well, what have I got? Oh, yeah, Archeology and Human Evolution I've taught a lot. What you—if you go to a college like this one, and there aren't many of you, you end up having a hard time maintaining a

specialization, at least in my field. I discovered after ten years that my expertise on India was declining because I just didn't have time. If I had taught at the U [University of Minnesota] that's all I'd have taught, and here… So you start teaching all four fields of anthropology, you know you're a general anthropologist. And I love to do that. It got me going, later when I got into—we have a unit of the American Anthropological Association, called…we call it general anthropology. And I became President of that eventually. And I'm still involved editing their journal. Because I believe in four field anthropology, which we don't have here but we're trying to get a physical anthropologist now. I don't know if they'll give us one or not.

[26:09]

SN: How do you think your teaching style has evolved?

DM: Oh, the major evolution in my teaching style was to try to get control, as you can probably tell now, of going off on stories that I think illustrate things, but, I could sometimes cover up the main points that I was trying to make. I think people like that. But at the same time, at the end of the semester they would say it's sometimes hard to know. So I started…first thing I'd try to do is outline what I was going to say on the board. Then, the next thing I did was…I got stuck over in the Art Department's lecture hall, and it had a black board this big. And so, I'd been, you know able to use the board pretty much to illustrate what I was saying. And I couldn't do it there. So I started creating stuff that I'd normally write on the board, photographing it over in AV, and making slides of it. I'd run it up to… Once I could get something up there, I could still digress, but people knew where it was. One the main things I'd try to do was make it clear where the points were. Didn't always work, but that was one thing. I think another thing I did

was try to figure a way of reducing the stress between giving people grades and supporting them at the same time. That's a major stress in teaching. You're going along…I used to get these comments on student reviews that said "He's such a nice guy, but the tests!" You know, it's like you got double-crossed. I did grade very hard all the time I was here. Right up actually until the end. And I've had more alumni come and tell me that they got the only C they'd ever got from me. I did expect people to know stuff. They were put, they were kind of… My teaching style is so informal that they didn't always see the points. I was always fighting with that. But I did, I had a hand out called the ethnographic approach to what you need to know to take an anthropology exam. And I'd give handouts, and I started review sessions. And I'd write every term that I had ever done in the last thing between this test and the last one and I'd hold special ones. And a lot got done at those. Now the anxiety was up and people want to know and they would ask a question and I would ask them back to see if anyone in the room could answer them. But, I just wanted them to know that even if they got a D it's not that I didn't like them and that I would be willing to do what I could to help them. I think that helped both educationally and just personally. You know, you sort of mature. I probably hit the highest point in my career maybe back at around 1980, when I, I really think I was just in great stride. People really liked the classes. Then you get a little jaded. That's the hardest thing for a faculty member. They try hard but then when students don't perform or something, it's easy to get down on students. You can't do that. It's…you know, you want to look at students as—you look at your class, it's a challenge to bring them in, not keep them out. There's some faculty members I swear whose main purpose in life is to winnow out the unworthy. And the worthy then like them a lot, but they tend not to… I just believe that education is for everybody, and I just want everybody…I believe anthropology is good for them. I want people to take it, so, that's the way I did it. But, anyway,

that's—I guess, I did think consciously about this. Do you know what the biggest change in the classrooms are?

[31:00]

SN: What?

DM: People get up, leave, come back. It's amazing. A colleague of mine at University of Michigan—he's Chair there, or he was Chair there, he just stepped down—had a whole book on teleconditioning. And Spradley and I had the same thought earlier, that people begin to… If you lecture—see males lecture more than females do, at least my generation. We were lecturers. It's not that we didn't have questions and interaction, but we're not sitting around in circles. I used to joke with students about that—we're not going to sit around in circles here and talk about our feelings. We're not going to do that. And, we're not going to respect other people's opinions if they're full of it. You know? And we're not particularly going to respect them if they don't know anything. In a sense, so a lot of people have been taught to think critically without knowing what they're talking about. We need to know some facts to do that, ok? So that's what we're going to do. But I would joke with them about this and make them line the chairs up. This only started about twenty years ago, you know. There is a kind of feminization of teaching going on all across the United States in colleges and universities, but particularly I think colleges, where classes are small, and it is more of an engagement discussion. I'm not critical of it, I just, I don't do it as well. The closest I could come to it was the research course where the students pretty well—we've got it structured so that they're presenting most of the time, with maybe a lecture once a week for half an hour, or something like that. But I can't even tell how I got off on this

tract, but that certainly is true now. In fact, I felt a little more out of place. I still would teach fifty five students in Intro which nobody else does over here now. It's kind of like a show, you've got to get your energy up. Be funny. Be clear. Be engaging. And you get older, and it gets harder to do that. I started losing words now, too, which is a sign of old age.

[33:47]

SN: What was the process of getting tenure like?

DM: For me? [Laughter]. I love that story. I love to tell the story of how I got tenure. I got here, I had been teaching for two years, ok? And now, the process now is the most stress-producing grind that I have ever seen. It's just awful. When I got here, they had hired me for, on this three year grant. And part of that grant was I could have a half year off, in my third year. That was part of the grant. We do that now after your third year review, because we have enough money do it. But, they didn't normally do that in those days. And in my second year, I was walking down the hall of Old Main up there, and somebody I knew came up and said "Well congratulations." And I said "For what?" And he said "You got tenure." [Laughter] I said "What?" Well, it turned out you couldn't have a half-year leave unless you had tenure. So they gave me tenure. You know, I mean in those days you didn't really have to have publications to get tenure. You didn't. I was…I was beating the odds with enrollments and teaching and I had been doing a lot of other stuff around here. And so that was what it was. But in those days it was harder to get promoted I think than tenure. But, even there, it was relatively easy. The bureaucratic…this sort of bureaucratization of the college really, I thought, occurred when Bob Gavin came as President in 1985. Then he was going to straighten this place out. He looked at

the tenure files, particularly the second year, I guess, and said these aren't good enough. Now, I had somebody up for tenure but he thought our file was good, so I contributed to the bureaucratization because I took a box full of materials over there for this person and I handed them out—two hundred and eighty student comments. And I had all this stuff. And I was a rate buster. He sent everything back and made everybody put all this junk in there. And before you know it, it was just getting… I'd say for Chairs it got to be about three or four times as much work. But, you know, so it was very, it seemed it wasn't a big issue getting tenure. They were happy to have Ph.D.'s in here who were successful, I think. I don't know what they thought. There was a personnel committee, and they did make those decisions, but they weren't nasty. I got put up for promotion in 1969 I think, without knowing it. And they denied me promotion, and I didn't know that either until somebody told me. This time I only had two reviews and an article in press. That wasn't enough for them. So, the next year I had a book contract and some stuff. But there was still a fight about it. I knew I was up for it then. They gave me—they promoted me then to Associate Professor. So, not like today.

[37:41]

Today it's just…a member of my department just got tenure this year, and she worked so hard. Her… I wrote a letter for her, and she sent me her vita, her résumé, you know. She had thirteen of these articles, two books, and one in press. She had this, she had this huge list of things. And I almost wrote on the letter, "I'd like to recommend her for tenure. See vita." Because it speaks for itself. I said…you know I don't have to comment on the quality of this, if she's managed to persuade that many people to use her—publish her stuff—it can't be too bad. I just watch the young people and the stress is just enormous. And then once you get tenure, the relaxation is just palpable. It's wonderful to watch these guys do stuff. Another colleague who likes to bird went

birding on the day he got tenure [laughter]. "Sigh, I'm going to go relax and go look at birds for a change." The next hurdle is they get full Professor, and you should have a book or two by the time you do that. But you got to be able to teach here too. And that's another hurdle that some people don't get over. It's a tough one to measure, teaching always is. So, anyway, it's much harder now. And that's true throughout the industry so to speak, throughout education. They're even expecting people in junior colleges to publish, you know. And there are so many Ph.D.'s that can't get work that it's a buyer's market and they can go hire. It used to be with an M.A. you could work at a community college easy. But that's much harder to do now. So, anyway.

[39:55]

SN: I read about your text book, *Conformity and Conflict*. Can you talk a little bit about the process of creating that?

DM: Sure. I was sitting in my living room—we had a college rented house when we arrived for four years. You know how much we paid for that? The astonishing amount of a hundred dollars a month. Can you imagine that? That house, after we left, they sold it for twelve thousand five hundred. I bought my other house for twenty-eight thousand. It was a bigger house. We just produced a fourth child and we needed the room. To get back to *Conformity and Conflict*, Jim Spradley who we had just hired, came walking in to my office, and said, "How would you like to do a reader?" I said "Oh, yeah, great." And he said he'd been looking, he knew a sociologist, a guy who had done something called *The Sociology of Everyday Life*. Jim Spradley was…he and I got along so well together because we were both really interested in ethnography and little things. Little, inside, what do people actually learn to do in a group, to adapt and survive,

basically is where we are. I've always been interested in that. And I think it's the biggest contribution anthropology can make to the world. And so, he sat down, and he said, “Well you know I'd seen this other book.” And he said, “How about if we try to produce a book with some anthropologists writing about the United States, as well as international stuff?” which at that time had not been done. And I said “Ok.”

[41:49]

So that Interim, we devised a course called "Here Comes the Judge" and "Here Comes the Judge" meant we sent about 35 students out to sit in courts, and to do observations of court behavior and write papers. They went out everyday and met once a week, so we had the rest of the week to work [laughter]. That was another thing. We sat around talking about “How could we have a really good course that really works, and not spend so damned much time doing it,” you know? And that was one of our solutions. And people loved that so much that the semester would start, and they’d still be going to court because they wanted to see how a case came out, you know something like this. Anyway, so we started to work. And the other thing we discovered about each other was that we like the same stuff. We went to lunch everyday and compared notes, and I'm a great believer in audience. I'm not a great researcher. I have colleagues who are marvelous, and have spent all their lives doing fieldwork and are very good at that. But I did think I could translate anthropology to people, and that I had a sense of how to do that. I think that came out in that process. And I think that affected Jim, who later had a wonderful sense of audience, too. He had a little more formal approach than I did, and so we kept talking. He also had, both of us had a sort of psychology background. I didn't take psychology, but psychological anthropology was big in those days. And I can't stop and explain to you want that meant, but it meant to me that you look at how shared knowledge, which is

culture, affects individual behavior. Most Americans think that everything people do is individual behavior, and they downplay the fact that there are actually sort of rules and plans and things—to do things in a certain way, talk certain ways, and do stuff, which is culture. And so I also thought that culture was what people knew. That is, behavior—there was a big argument in anthropology about whether culture was patterned behavior, or if it was mental, that produced the patterned behavior, and I was with the mental side. Jim had an undergraduate degree in psychology. And he was really, that was his first love. And for some reason, that helped us with audiences. We discovered anthropologists—that we liked stuff where anthropologists were writing for broader audiences. And we discovered a couple of famous anthropologists doing that, so you could understand them better. And we thought, "Geez, our undergraduates would like that a lot better." We actually sat down and worked out a design for the book, sort of design principles for the book as we went along for about a month and a half, where… Articles had to make a point, clearly make a point. They had to be about something. They couldn't just chat about fieldwork. And that it was better if you saw—if they had examples of people using their culture to involve students in that. It was also good to have articles about stuff people cared about at the time. The Vietnam War was going along, and if you look at the cover of the initial book that we came out, we got the idea for that cover and actually mocked-up... Anyway, we found people...we had an article in it called the "Hair: The Long and the Short of It," because hair was a big thing in the late '60s. And beginning in the '70s a lot of people didn't like these long-haired hippies. Somebody had written this article on the meaning of hair. So, we had that article. And then a guy named Terry Turner, who was at Chicago but is now at Cornell, had written something about the Tchikrin Brazilian group body ritual or body decoration among the Tchikrin. It was in *Natural History* magazine, so it was written for the public. And we paired

those things. And we started pairing all these articles in there as a design principle. And produced the book. There wasn't anything like it. We knew that there was nothing like it, but we had no idea if anybody would like it. We just did what we thought would work. And the book came out and we wiped everybody out. I just couldn't believe it. It helped pay off my house. It sold, the book sold for $4.95 if you can imagine that. Can you imagine that? It did go up over ensuing years some. God knows what people are getting for it now. It's pushing forty dollars I think. It's just amazing. But over time, Jim and I did four editions together before he died.

[47:29]

What's happened in the interim is that there's less and less quality stuff printed for the public. *Natural History* magazine has gone the way of the *National Geographic*. It's lighter, more pictures, smaller stuff, more personal, to the point where you kind of lose points and you don't have authority. We also had an idea incidentally about what's called "anthropological feel," or something like that. That if you're writing about the US, you don't want to sound like an economist or a sociologist. You want to sound like an anthropologist. And how do you do that? Anyway, since he died, you know, I've just had to go with the flow. In the '70s, internationalism hit the skids. The Vietnam War killed it. Everybody wanted more American stuff. So the book, I got less paired stuff, but more American stuff in it. Then by '80, on into the '80s, internationalism began to pick up. And if you look at the book now there's still…I kept looking for articles that compared here and there. And since I couldn't find anything out in the public domain so much—and people had by this time copied us. I was starting getting people to write for me. I'd see something, I'd say, "Oh geez, that would go well, send that to me." And then I'd edit that, sometimes re-write it, frankly, send it back, just for the audience, you know? I knew

what I wanted, and other people… In fact, we have articles that were written for another purpose, but I could see a purpose for them if they were rewritten in another way. So I've been doing that ever since. I'm right in the process of doing it again. And I'm getting tired of it. This will be the thirteenth edition. Maybe it will—because that's unlucky in Indo-European lore—maybe it will tank as they say. And I won't have to do it again. If it would just not sell then I could just let it go, and retire on my retirement. But anyway that's how we got into that one. It was very collaborative. He was a collaborative guy, and I am too. I do better work that way. I learned to write that way, too. And I can write ok, but I really learned to write during this process. We did a textbook together too, and that was a lot of work. It sold okay, but I let it go in 1980. There were so many textbooks then. It's such a lot of work and our textbook was the only one that had characters in it. That was another…so people really liked it for a while. Oh well, yes.

[50:49]

SN: Can you talk a little bit about your pets?

DM: Well, it's my wife….

SN: Do you still have...?

DM: She's not a pet. My wife loves animals. And the first year we were married, she said she would like a dog. Well, this is a stupid thing to do when you're in graduate school, and you're twenty-one or twenty-two. I started really young, see. She and I were the same age. So we got

a basset hound, and named him after an anthropologist, Alfred Louis Kroeber. Kroeber was the most stubborn, crafty dog I've every owned. He was a wonderful dog, but he would just, he loved to get out and roam and he… Somebody came to the—when we lived over here we had a screen door in the back, he could just push it open. Somebody would come to the front door, and by this time we had another dog and….we'd have to go see who it was and you'd hear the back screen door go 'clunk' [laughter]. He didn't care who was at the front door, he trotted out the back. Anyway, she…by the time we got here we had our first exotic pet—a Cayman alligator. Who I named Mohammed Ali-gator. And before you know it Mohammed had a—I suppose this is not…this is not meant to deride people from Islam here at all. But we did have the boxer Mohammed Ali, and that's why we named him that. He had converted to Islam. But anyway he got a fungus operation, so every day I would catch him. And that little sucker could bite. And with hydrogen peroxide I would wipe him off. And I finally got him cured of this thing. And he grew and he grew, and we finally gave him to the open school. And he managed to survive over there for about three years, but they were feeding him erasers and all sorts of junk, and it finally killed him. Well, then she became a docent at the Como Zoo. And in those days Zoos were not run the way they are now, where you practically put on a pair of latex gloves to handle anything. They've learned a lot about animal behavior. They had a pair of jaguars up there that were producing babies. Oh, by this time we were also—let me just sum it up.

[53:42]

We raised, people would bring in raccoons to the Zoo, baby raccoons, what to do with these? So we raised five of those over the years. We had a snake, a big boa constrictor named Julius Squeezer. Actually we had two of them because Julius One froze to death by mistake and Julius Two got so big—we had him up until about six or seven years ago—one of our graduates has

him down in Indiana. Both of these things got really big. They were thirty, thirty-five pounds snakes by the time we got them out of there. We used to have department field days at my house—actually twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. I would always advertise, "You get to meet Julius Squeezer." And then we had another snake the zoo gave us named Cleo, Cleopatra, because of Julius Caesar. And Cleo is a blue indigo, and she is very smooth. A wonderful snake. Loved to wind herself around you and everything, so and you could bring her out. She didn't bite anybody. Julius actually did, once. He was, most of the time, if he thought there was food there he'd do that. And we used to feed him psych lab rats. They'd, you know, kill their rats at the end of the semester over there. And I'd go over there, I came home once with a bag of rats that was so heavy I could barely lift it, put them all in the freezer. We had rats stacked up in the freezer. They had a baby jaguar, three days old, they needed to place with somebody. So they placed it with us. And we raised the jaguar for over three months. And she just tore the house up. And it was a great experience. She would stalk us. She'd sit on our stairs, and you walk out of our kitchen and you can't see there. I've watched her do this. Her eyes would dilate, she'd hear you coming, and then she'd just leap off the stairs on you. Bite. She'd rip around the house. We made her sleep in a cage at night. Carol was much better at controlling her than I was. So we got known for this. And we had a lion for six weeks. Then we had a tiger, but not for long. We had…anything else? Well, cats. We also had two dogs, and often two cats.

[56:29]

There was a—*Mac Weekly* interviewed us about our pets, and I pointed out that my old cat at the time had urinated on some papers that I was grading [laughter]. I had them on the floor. She was getting too old, she was having trouble. In the interview I told them this, but I didn't expect

it to be the headline. The headline was, “McCurdy's Cats Pee on Papers.” So we got known for this anyway. And then—because students were over there. Back when you could drink, the field days got pretty good. I, I think one year we used to have The Traditions over. I think one year we had about two-hundred and fifty people over there. I would just say the Intro classes—I’d keep reminding them for months that we were going to do this, you know. I’d say “Bring friends.” I’d say, “Listen, I don't want to encourage drinking, but there will be some beer there.” And so forth. Well, they'd all show up. At first we had volleyball. We had all sorts of things. By this time we had our department t-shirt. That came along before we had a department—Soc-Anthro. It looked like our shirt now, but it said “Sociology-Anthropology” on it. So the animals would come out, so you could handle all these. So we were really well-known for this. Now alumni ask me "You still have animals?" I say, “No, my wife is a volunteer at the state zoo. But, you know, if you're really good there, you might be able to touch an aardvark.” In fact, she did—she fed aardvarks after her five-thousandth hour or something of volunteering, as a reward and I have pictures of that. Aardvarks are really neat, incidentally, but anyway... We just, you know, we want to travel now. It's hard, so we just have an old dog who won't die. She's thirteen now, she's staggering around for a year. We had the world's smallest cat for many years. She lived for twenty-two years. She only weighed four and a half pounds, and she was really tiny. I mean, she was chunky, she wasn't thin. She was bigger than thin, but she was tiny. And so I would bring her out. Then I would also, I’d have signs that "Margaret Meade says 'You must attend the Anthropology…'". I like to sell things. So anyway, those were the good old days.

[59:25]

SN: Now we're going to move on to our next set of questions, which will focus on how the college has changed over your time here. Which, I'm sure, you'll probably have a lot to say. So I guess we can start with students. How have you seen the student body change?

DM: Okay. The student body, I think particularly recently, but the student body is better prepared than it ever has been. Everybody out there has complaints about folks not being able to write. My experience in the last years of teaching here was that basket-case writers were not so common anymore at this college. So, one change is that you're taught—that you come in writing better. Another is that with the kind of media availability there is now, I think a lot of people have a lot broader background in a lot of things. When I started teaching, the term culture was not used. Literally, I had to teach it. It either meant a kind of tradition that you might teach in a language or fine arts program. That was culture, high culture but also cultural tradition, maybe. Now, everybody uses it. They don't use it quite the way anthropologists use it; most of the time they don't. But, it's amazing to me that this concept that we invented has made its way into—and I just notice this about students. A problem now is to dispossess people of what they think it was, is into what we know it is because we have the inside track. When I first got here, there were a lot of Merit Scholars who could do very well on tests. That's how they got to be Merit Scholars—SAT's, basically. They were brought in, and many of them came here because they got a free ride, not because they wanted to come here. There was a good deal of cynicism. It was still a liberal college. It always has been, even before it went national. Flew the United Nations flag. I've talked to older folks, and it really, of all the colleges around here, they actually had a demonstration against putting an iron fence up. It's mostly down now, but over around the dorms where the women's dorms were, you know to protect the women. Even so, my notes—I

taught at Colorado State, which was an open university. They took damned near anybody if they were warm. There were some good students there, but by and large, it was a real challenge. I liked that challenge, but it was different from here. So, the students were a lot better prepared here than there.

[1:02:38]

In the doldrums, as I put it—back when Wallace pulled out and we lost all our money, I mean we lost a third of the budget, practically, in 1971. That's a huge hit. A lot of students dropped out of here. We had a terrible…we accepted a lot, and a lot dropped out. By this time, Arthur Flemming, who was President only for a couple of years, but helped with the process of losing Wallace. He, he was a big figure in the United States. And Wallace…those guys got us that president. But, you know, he wanted an equal opportunity program for black students, for example, and he got that. So we got very, very liberal. Sort of activist liberal. And we had a lot of kids, I thought, who were kind of rebellious, who…and I think this is still true to some degree. We don't have sororities and fraternities here. They tended to be kids who were fairly bright, in high school, who thought of themselves as this. But also had a hard time joining things. I think to some degree that's still true. Although, I haven't been involved. I happen to like that kind of student better than a lot of people, once you turn them on. We've had some remarkable students, from the period when a lot of people were dropping out. Those…students in those days, at least here, took greater chances than students do now. I hate to say that to you, but I think it's true. They would try stuff. Grades were not important in the ‘70s. In fact, nobody would talk to you about a grade. If you gave them a bad grade they wouldn't come and see you about it. Students today have been taught to negotiate everything, right from the time they were two days old. I watch my grandchildren learning to do this, all of you do this. Parents don't say “Do that,” they

say “Dear, wouldn't you like to do this?” And you start—you watch them negotiate. My parents thought we did this too much [laughter]. We did it too much. But that makes a difference. After the money started to come back and the college's reputation began to steady and go up, and the requirements to get in here grew and the application pool went up, it seems to me that… [1:05:30]

I was listening to my colleagues. I still go to lunch, because it's fun to just listen to them talk about it. At least for the first semester they were just having a great time. I mean we had wonderful students in the freshmen seminar. They had this great class. And I just think people are doing some remarkable work. I've published about thirty-six, -seven students over the years. And I'm still doing it. And I've got a couple of recent grads now who are in graduate school, and trying to get articles for *Conformity* out of them because they're doing such wonderful work. So, I do think…students were probably more ideological. Is that true? Probably. Political Correctness, if you'll pardon the expression, got really big about fifteen years ago, to the point where you’d get in a classroom and the big problem I had was to point out that actually America was not the hegemonic beast in India. In fact, when you visit there, they don't even know where you're from anymore. But, people assumed it must be true. And I said, “Well, you got to go there and just see.” Last time I got into that fight was quite a while ago. By then, you didn't have Coca-Cola, and all the other stuff. And then I point out, look you've got about seven or eight south Asian restaurants around here. Is that hegemony? Your language is full of Indian terms like "khaki" [laughter]. You know? Madras shirts. Where the hell do you think that came from and so forth? That's always a problem. But it's not just here, and a lot of colleges particularly—if you go to a bunch of them, I think you'd find some of the same things. I think negotiation. The two things that I think most—and the lack of taking chances I think is national.

I, I, that's not us. That's national. I go to the national meetings every year and I talk to guys who teach a lot. I still do a workshop on teaching with some other folks. And that's just a constant problem. The whole society is that way. God, you practically put on armor to cross the street. [1:08:27]

And it's just, you know, when I was a kid, we took our family in a VW bus. We had it packed up to the back door with four kids bouncing around in the back. You go to California. You didn't think about what would happen if you—first of all if you were to think what would happen to you, you wouldn't drive a VW bus at all, since if you hit anything head-on you were going to lose the lower half of your body. And that all your kids would go through the front window. Well now, as you know, everybody it's just like eggshells out there. And, yet, you know a lot of anthro kid are going off to Africa and places like this, getting all the good diseases you get and doing what anthropologists always do. Language skills are better now. So, you know, I'm very impressed. The competition to get in places has put a lot pressure on high schools and private schools to produce more uniformly good folks. And everybody complains about education in the United States. But I think that it's really good, particularly for the elite. If you don't teach the elite, just talk to some teachers some time. It's a good ethnographic study of what it's like to teach. If you can last more than three years you're special. It's not easy out there. The state looks down your throat from one side, and the students are… My wife was a Special Ed teacher for thirteen years—behavioral kids—it's just amazing. They only threatened to kill her four or five times. I think five of her students that she knew for sure are in Oak Park Heights, high security prison, for murder. It's tough. But that's our social program for kids like that—it's to give them to special ed teachers. Well, anyway, that's how the students have changed. I must say it was a lot easier to teach when I didn't have to copy edit papers, which I did do. I would

copy edit for four or five pages sometimes on a long paper, just completely. I had that for me. I was not a very good writer when I started. My Cornell University, my advisor there did that for me and it was very helpful. I can't stop it. I'm an editor by nature. Well, oh no, don't do that. Yes.

[1:11:14]

SN: How has the faculty changed?

DM: Well the faculty is…I think, uniformly better prepared, more professional. Still, I think, good teachers. You would know this better than I. So, I can't tell. Tenser, more harder to find, probably, than they used to be. They're under a lot of pressure. Furthermore, you're hiring people who expect to be, and who are career-minded. And when I first was here, it was more like Mr. Chips. You're going to put on your tweed jacket, go to that small college and smoke your pipe, and commune with students and stuff. That was kind of an image. In fact, I had somebody on my Ph.D. committee, said behind my back, he said, "McCurdy, he's really going to be better suited for a small college." Which is absolutely right. He was absolutely right. I kind of stuck it to him later by out-publishing most of his other graduate students, but not properly, because you don't get a lot of credit for publishing for students, unfortunately. However, everybody knows who you are. It's wonderful [laughter]. I know guys who publish a lot—nobody's ever heard of them because only six people read that stuff, in "x" journal. But, anyway… The faculty is…I'm delighted to see the amount of new faculty here. Although new faculty tend to be older. I started teaching at twenty-eight, that's very rare now. I got my Ph.D. in six and a half years, which I thought was long, for at least the humanities and social sciences.

Certainly for anthropology that's short. A lot of people taking seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven years to get it, so that you're into your mid-thirties before you're trying to get work. And that's sacrifice, folks. You know, it's a nice life, if you can do stuff you're interested in and you like students. You should like students. And I think a lot of faculty do. I know some faculty who don't, but I… You know, you should actually like young people. It's a lot of fun. And when you get old, you're the only old person who's been hanging around young people and they're all complaining and saying, "Oh yeah, but...". You know, you're up to date. You do it with your own kids, if you have them, for a while, but things change. I don't know any of the so-called cultural meaning, popular cultural trends very well. But, because I hate most of them [laughter]. But, I'm also, as a good anthropologist, "What the hell, this is what people do here." You know? OK.

[1:14:39]

SN: How has the political climate on campus changed?

DM: You know, it's hard to tell. It's still obviously liberal. People run off on… I mean, I was right in the thick of it back during the Vietnam War. I got so upset about that war that I could barely talk to people about it without losing it. We were just killing people by the thousands, our own guys were dying. I just went crazy. And so we were involved in the anti-war movement. So was everybody here. I tried—my feeling is, when you're going to do this stuff, you've got to have reasons. And you've got to think about your audience, which is a theme in my life. So when I demonstrated, I dressed up. Literally. We were in a number of demonstrations. We were photographed, we were all of those things. My wife and I would dress up. I'd put a tie on,

and a top coat if it was cold. We flew an American flag. And there was a lot of anti-American flag stuff going on. And we made our own peace flag, I used a motorcycle tire to get it round. I was riding a motorcycle even then. So…and over the years, I've seen… Sometimes I've seen ideology—I got…I just think it's really liberal. I think the sensitivity on racial stuff—maybe I got more conservative lately—but I thought that was a mistake, actually. I still do. That it's been very hard for black faculty for example to stay here because they're expected to be black faculty. So much. And they actually want to be faculty. It is really hard on them. And if you look at over the years, we've hardly been able to keep anybody. And if they're any good, of course they can get better jobs any…better meaning higher paid, more prestigious jobs elsewhere. But I'm just saying, these kinds of movements have been used to bludgeon people and stuff. But that's who we are. And, I'd much prefer it this way than to go to a conservative school. I was a consultant at—I won't name it—an institution down in Indiana where everybody wanted to be a lawyer or doctor. They had fraternity and sorority systems. I'm a fraternity guy, incidentally. I used to love to tell the class that. They'd all go [gasp]. And I said, "And furthermore I liked it." They'd go "Oh." "I was in the army and I liked that, too." [Laughter] Just drive 'em nuts. But both of those are true. But, still, we're not that, that's not what we are here. And it's a more interesting place. It just is. I never taught at another local institution, but Jim Spradley taught a course up at Hamline once, and it was just a lot duller. They're real nice, and they were interested, but somehow it's just a duller school to teach at than ours. We have more interesting people here. I hope that's still true. Again, you know, I haven't taught since 2000. That's a long time. I teach a class now and then, but I just don't know you anymore. So, anyway, the political climate is always going to be liberal.

[1:18:32]

The style changes. You know, that's what changes. I was talking to some older grads before I got here, and they said the same thing. I said, "really I don't…" Some of the older guys, we used to have required chapel. The year before I—well the first year I got here—the women still had hours here. You had to be in your dorm by a certain hour, you had dorm mothers. Men wanted to take you out, they'd go over to the dorm and buzz you up there. This is the way I went to college. Men were thought to be ok. We were safe, but women were not safe, and people wouldn't send their daughters here unless they were safe. So, I don't think they put it that way. It was just expected, that's the way you did it. I was part of the liberal newcomers. We did two important things. Faculty parties began to have liquor at them [laughter]. My wife partly did that. Started with sherry, but it caused quite a stir. The other thing is, we voted to turn over student life to students. Then we immediately got…we're the second institution in the United States to have co-ed dorms. And although we never admitted it, we had co-ed bathrooms almost immediately. Which did, you know…

[End of Disc 1 1:19:57]

[Disc 2]

(Started with sherry, but it caused quite a stir. The other thing is, we voted to turn over student life to students. Then we immediately got…we're the second institution in the United States to have co-ed dorms. And although we never admitted it, we had co-ed bathrooms almost immediately. Which did, you know…) I used to say to students, "This is going to stress some students here." You know, maybe it's, you're supposed to have this, but there are going to be

people who are stressed, and you've got to pay attention to that. They have a right to be stressed. So I was always being contrarian with some of the liberal notions. We had a—just a side story I just have to tell you—we had a separate sort of free college thing. I can't remember what we called it. It was in a house that burned down on Summit. About forty students living there. What was it called, the Open—no. Anyway, and people were sort of into smoking dope and—usually marijuana—and it was pretty illegal then. You had to do it sneakily. But they thought they were being funny. And they had invented rituals, and one of them was to "fernur" [sp?]—that was their word for it. They had these smooth stones, and you—they had this little ritual. So they thought—I was visiting them over there—and they said "Would you like to do that?" And I said "Sure." And so I fernured [sp?] the stone, and I said "Stone, make me rich."

[01:36]

This was the year when pants, the poor look was in. Everybody had to look poor. So, you had jeans, and if jeans had holes in them that was better. But you could patch that, but you couldn't patch them on the outside because you didn't want to look fancy. You know, they couldn't be good looking patches. And it had to be on the inside. So, more worn things were the better. And then, tennis shoes were in, before work boots came in a little later. But, tennis shoes were in. Clean ones—everybody would give you a hard time over clean tennis shoes. So you wanted to get those dirty. And then you wanted to wear holes in them. I had a student study this once, and we had this whole row of—and that was good. And then you'd tape them with duct tape or something. And that was even better. And then if that was worn through, that was best. So, you know, everybody was trying to look poor. Then they'd go back, of course, they had their—we called them hi-fi sets, back in their rooms. I mean, they weren't poor, a lot of them. But, I used to love to tell them, "Look," I said, "I was in the army and we had a dress code there. We had to

wear uniforms and polish your belt buckle. And it was pretty rigid." And I said, "But, the dress code around here, which is informal, is heavily enforced and it's about as rigid as the US Army." A female student came in, she said—she was in corduroys, you couldn't wear corduroy pants. She said, "you know I can't, I can't fit in jeans. I managed to find these corduroys. It's just the way my body is built. I can't do that. And they keep, they keep after me." I said, "Well, it's ok. You just keep wearing those. And it's good to…occasionally we need people who don't quite follow the cultural expectations, because every human society has people like that, and it's good for them." But, those, it's not like that now. Though I can spot a Macalester student in a group, easy. Usually, maybe, first-year students don't look right for a while, right? They bring all this stuff here. They don't know what to wear, particularly women. But guys too. And it takes a while. Then you got to put on weight too, because the food is so good. That's another change, if you want to know one. Once we got the Campus Center, while that floor is designed for traffic jams, god the food is about three hundred percent better than it ever was before. It just…I know you get tired of it. But it is just amazing. It's so much better. And all those cookies and bars you get, and stuff. I can't imagine how you can stay thin here, you know. I can gain weight here easy, when I eat here. Yes. Next question.

[04:49]

SN: What were some of the significant issues and events that you experienced here?

DM: Significant issues?

SN: It could be national or campus...

DM: Well, the campus, the liberalization. Actually, what happened in the late ‘60s was, they had hired like nineteen new faculty in '65, eighteen in '66, and a bunch in '67 and ‘8. And that was very hard on the new faculty. I felt sorry for them. We were paid more, to get us. Many of them didn't have degrees. Although some of them had gone back to get them [unclear], so they were part-time graduate students, and got their degrees. You had a school that was more religious and more local. And it was… We changed—we went with the ‘60s times. That was just a shock to the place. I mean, on Homecoming, there were tricycle races out here, when I first got here. We still had rivalries with St. Thomas and Hamline. There was still Chapel. There was still Convocation. There were all these things. And within three years they were all gone. We had yearbooks. They went. Which is a damned shame. It's really a shame. You sit at my age, and you look back at your yearbook. It's fun to look at, because you probably don't… Well with digital cameras, as long as you back up your hard drives, you'll have a lot of pictures. But there were captions with peoples' names and stuff. You can kind of remember what it was like. Anyway, so that was a major change. The Vietnam War was just really dramatic. It, it's hard to imagine how that affected the United States. It just went on and on.

[07:02]

After Kent State, we had a march out here that started at the University of Minnesota, came all the way along the River Road, and up Snelling—I'm sorry—Summit Avenue. All the way, picking up marchers. By the time we got to the Capital, we had forty thousand people. Which was, for this state, the biggest demonstration I think it had ever had. It was just amazing. We had about eighty wounded vets in the front of this thing. To me, this was a time in my life… We were running hard here as a faculty. We'd meet at seven in the morning to talk about how

we could channel student energy and our own energy. So that this didn't all fall apart. Classes actually were canceled for part of that spring, because the country was just in such an uproar. And it just—we look upon those times as good, strangely enough, because people felt so together. I mean, it was just… It's not that there weren't—I got into politics then. Locally I was a state DFL, state whatever, rep. State committee, I guess, I can't remember. We had fistfights at the conventions between the Humphrey guys and—that was in '68. Humphrey and McCarthy… We were big McCarthy people. So, it took a lot of energy. I was opposed to nuclear plants in those days, too [laughter]. So, that was something. Then, it…you know, we went through the '70s and it kind of cooled down people. And so there weren't any big events. I thought, you know, going broke was an event here. We went through a tough four years with a President named Jim Robinson who didn't understand colleges at all, and did some really stupid things. Then there was a huge fight between the EEO [Expanded Educational Opportunities] office, the special education office, and their students. And the administration was trying to cut back funds. And so, in 1974 for example, a group of students took over the, the—what's the number of the building across the street where the financial guys and…

[09:57]

SN: 77 Mac

DM: What's that? 77 Mac? Thank you.

SN: They took over 77 Mac for two weeks. And that drove President Jim Robinson out of the college. He took a job, right in the middle of that, he got a job in Florida. He had been hiding

huge deficits. The place was really on its ear. That summer of '75, they couldn't make the payroll in August, and a Trustee wrote a check so they could do it. The Trustees hired John Davis. And they have been negotiating with Wallace about ways…could we go into our endowment—we had a cash flow problem—to take some money, and you know… In the end it all worked. We owe John Davis for a lot here. Not educationally particularly. He didn't tell us what he was doing. He actually made money for several years, to put that money back in, as far as I can tell just looking at the records. And Wallace was impressed by that. And before he died we got back into the will. And it just makes, it's all the difference. Now our problem is everybody thinks we're rich, and we're not as rich as we used to be. People have got to give us more money, to keep up with what we're… So, that was big. You know, I think from then on it was, for me it just, it was…for me, in 19— It was really anthropology. Jim Spradley died in 1982. He got sick in 1981 with leukemia. He was a very well known anthropologist. And my big problem with Jim was to keep him here. I managed to do that. We had one other anthropologist, and both of them left. One because he had a—he was a religious guy, but very popular. He looked like Apollo. And a great anthropologist. But he had a conflict between anthropology and Christianity that, in the end, his wife particularly couldn't get over. And he left teaching. And Jim died. Suddenly, I had a department with somebody who was hired to replace the guy who—the younger guy who left—and there were just two of us. And we had, that year we had twenty-eight majors graduate. That was just wild.

[12:39]

So, I had—we had to hire and rebuild the department. I had to talk people into giving us a fourth position to try to cover all this. And it worked. But it was very stressful. So most of my stress from then on, in the events I think of here, were trying to deal with the program, which was

really what I came to a place like this to do. Most people didn't do things like that. But I'm a promoter, and I just wanted to do that. I believe in my discipline, so I came here to do that. And it's been hard going because nobody knows what anthropology is. And yet, students like it. They don't come here for it, but they like it, so we convert them. Not all of them. And it's harder now, because there are a lot of good teachers in a lot of departments and a lot of interesting things going on. And we've lost our international, our lock on international…expertise. And it's a lot harder to do fieldwork overseas now. I could never do what I did when I first went over I lived in a village for a year and a half. India would never let me do that now. So there really have been a lot of big events, that have… You know, I thought, I mean it was, in the college's life getting money was very important. I happen to be a great supporter of the current President. I know that some students are mad at him for various things. But he's the smartest guy I've ever seen in that office. He's got, he's the best fundraiser I've seen. And he handles the faculty really well. And I think the administration is fairer than it used to be, under him. So, I like that. So, that's, that's all I can tell you.

[14:32]

SN: OK, well, I just have one last question, actually—

DM: Yes!

SN: —and this is one that's always kind of a problem for people. But do you have a favorite memory of Macalester?

DM: A favorite?

SN: A favorite memory.

DM: Oh…geez. Yeah it is a hard one. Because there are a lot of favorite memories. They're little things, actually. The second year I was here, a faculty member—who you may have interviewed, I'm not sure…came in my year—we had a Christmas party. It was held down at the old Science Museum, in an upstairs room. The whole faculty was there. We had a student band that night. And that's the first time we had liquor. And some of my colleagues mixed the punch. And there was a bottle of…oh…about three bottles of hard liquor stuff. I mean, it was really strong. Everybody got pretty drunk. One of my colleagues who's very funny roasted the president. It was tear-producing funny. That's a favorite—to me it just said, "This is great. This, I'm glad I came here for that." There have been, there was another—I know another one. I'm sort of a contrarian. We had, during the EEO years, we still had, we had cheerleaders here. We had this string of losses going. It went to fifty eight I think. And we had six black cheerleaders, and we had one white cheerleader. She happened to be one of our students. I went to a game. I went to several now, and they had come in with black high school cheers. And you know, the cheerleaders from St. Olaf were out there. And they were very white and they had the rosy knees and little skirts on. Our cheerleaders were out there with these wonderful black high school cheers, that had double meanings, and all sorts of things. And they would throw the white cheerleader, they put her in the middle, and throw her in the air and do all this stuff. And this lasted for about three years, and I just loved it. To have a college where you could get away with this kind of stuff. I won't name anybody, there was just…we had one woman who was all of six

feet. And she wore high heels slightly, which of course was against all the rules. But because she was black, she could do that. She had a pierced nose, which was odd in those days, and she was just stunning. And I said, "Only at Macalester can you get this kind of contrast here." It's not that a lot of schools don't have black students, but this is just wonderful, here in our wonderful ACTC area and to have that. I loved that. Is there anything else?

[17:49]

My favorite things are parties. I just love parties at my house. The last story you'll have to endure was—the one problem is to not get everybody really drunk at parties. So, I had kegs one year, and I couldn't control it. So I used to buy 'em by the case. And one year we had twenty-six cases of beer we went through. And I could just cut people off by not bringing a case out. But I had one student, he was a major in our department, who did get very drunk. We kind of got concerned about him. So I said, "look somebody has got to take him home." And he lived in a house that we used to own over where, what is it, JBD or whatever it is over here. What's the new dorm?

SN: GDD.

DM: GDD. Sorry. See, I don't even know. There was a house there. He lived in that house. So somebody took him home. We were kind of, almost cleaning up, and who comes staggering back in. It was the same guy. It just reminded me of…that handling drunks is not a lot of fun. But he was very amiable about it, and we had to take him back home again. But those parties were just really neat. You got to talk to people and have fun. It's why I came to a college and not the University of Michigan, you know what I mean? It, it just…be more collegial. You get

to know some students, and it was very nice. And it's been that way the whole time, really, so that's a favorite thing. That's all your questions?

[19:31]

SN: Yep, is there anything else you want to talk about?

DM: Probably not. If you could ever overhear luncheon conversations, you can hear lots of stuff about infighting. And all the rest of stuff that does happen here, during…you know you can't deny that... You know, for me, I had to learn Upper Midwest culture. I think sometimes that regional cultural differences in the United States are more important than ethnic and racial. I don't like the term racial anymore. But, those are at least defined groups. Even more importantly, cross-cultural misunderstanding because people don't expect them. You can't be direct here. I'm a New Yorker, and I'm pretty amiable, I thought, most of the time. But, I can get pretty direct, if I get… And you can't do that. You know, I just had to learn. I know a lot of…I play music in this town. I have a lot of friends here, and I've learned how to give directions and stuff. "You know if a feller were to maybe take a right on such and such, and it, you know, it…you know you might find it's a little faster, I think you know, I think I noticed that maybe the traffic is a little less thick over on that side of town." You know, if you were…you know you don't think about that. And then the denials—there's a three step path to accepting something from someone. Say, "Would you like a cup of coffee?" You say, "Oh no, [unclear]." You say, "Oh it's no trouble." You say, "Oh, you know, I…is it made?" "Well, no it's not made, but I can do that." "Ok, but just a small, small cup." I watched, I've watched two guys in my living room do this. My wife is offering. And we noticed it immediately. When we moved in here, we had a

little group of kids. And my wife had, she didn't work then. When women didn't, it was wonderful, for men. She'd bake cookies. And she'd say, "Does everybody want a cookie?" Our kids said, “Sure.” And the other kids didn't say anything, and so didn’t get a cookie. And pretty soon, one of our kids, “Mary is crying because she didn't get a cookie.” Because Mary didn't say she wanted a cookie.

[22:33]

You just… If I looked at who the most influential faculty members were here, from here—they had to come from Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, and maybe Wisconsin. It really is what's clear. Now we're getting people from all over the place. And I…it's interesting. I don't go to faculty meetings, so I have no idea of what that looks like. But you know, get out there and really tell them like it was. I did that several times. Just stopped them dead. I mean, that was not what you were supposed to do. My friends, we had a couple of guys who were Jewish guys from the East, they liked to argue. They expect to argue. And they get in a class here, particularly when I first started here. They would get in a class, and pretty soon students wouldn't come to class anymore. I mean they thought they were being disrespected by... And these poor guys didn't understand. They didn’t understand that what they were doing was culturally different. We have a retired guy who was from Brooklyn. And I get… He likes to talk this far away from you. Well, you don't do that here. You have to… I know this, so I would just stand right there. I don't much like it either. My mother is from England—was from England, she's dead now—and they didn’t do that either. But I also grew up with a lot of Jewish kids who, from New York, and they talked a lot closer, and you just get used to that. And loved to debate things. And you get into it. And it’s not personal, but people were taking this stuff personally here. So you have to learn not to do that. It's not that things don't get done, and people don't have opinions—they do.

But I have never figured out how. Ever. Somehow you get to a meeting and it's been decided somewhere and you don't know where. You can talk, but nobody will exactly tell you why. So, that's my final point. And if…I had a student from Boston. And we were talking about this. She was Italian. I grew up with a lot of Italians. I like Italians a lot. And, she was telling me, there was this big feeling—and I don't know if it's here anymore—that the kids from the East were kind of stuck up, preppy guys. Is that true anymore? No? It was when we were more on a make, to recruit students, and we were getting… The interpretation of the Midwesterners was that these kids were kind of stuck up and didn't respect them and stuff. The kids from the East thought you couldn't tell what anybody from around here wanted. They wouldn't tell you. Neither of them understood that they were simply being who they were, from where they came from. And that no, the kids from the East weren't stuck up, they were Easterners. She began to demonstrate this. And she looked at patterns of who hung out together, and it was quite clear that.... When I get a guy—one reason I like this President is he's an Easterner. I immediately liked the guy. I understand him. I feel comfortable with him. He just talks straight out on stuff. I love it. I know some faculty don't like that. So, being a cultural anthropologist is what you do. This is what we do, you know. And most people don't see it, so there. And the lesson in life is try to. Then you won't take things so personally. What's cultural and what's not? People will go after you personally, so you have to know that. Anyhow, thank you for interviewing me, I love to be interviewed.

SN: Thank you for your time.

DM: Sure. You're welcome.

[End of Disc 2 26:53]