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Interview with A. Truman Schwartz, DeWitt Wallace Professor of Chemistry

A. Truman Schwartz

MACALESTER COLLEGE

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Oral History Project

Interview with:	**A. Truman Schwartz** DeWitt Wallace Professor of Chemistry, 1966-2004
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Interview with A. Truman Schwartz

Sara Nelson, Interviewer

January 26th, 2007
Macalester College
DeWitt Wallace Library
Harmon Room

SN: I would just like to start with kind of your first experiences as a faculty member, but if you could start by stating your name and when you came to Macalester.

TS: OK. My name is Truman Schwartz. I came to Macalester in 1966 as a member of the Chemistry Department.

[00:18]

SN: OK, so what did you do after you graduated from college?

TS: I went to the University of South Dakota as an undergraduate (I'm a native of that state). In my senior year at the University of South Dakota I was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship, so I spent the next two years at Oxford University. I came back from Oxford in 1958 and went to MIT, where got my Ph.D. in physical chemistry in '63. I was interested in seeing what the life of an industrial chemist might be, so I went to work as a research chemist for Procter and Gamble in Cincinnati, Ohio. I did that for three years. Then I decided industrial life was just one damned thing after another; I missed the rhythm of the academic calendar. I had always thought that if I ever went into teaching it might be at a liberal arts college. So, at that point I looked around, had

several options (the job market was much better than it is today), and I wound up at Macalester.

[01:23]

SN: So what was the hiring process like?

TS: I got involved in the whole hiring process rather late in the hiring season. We start much earlier now, and I know that they had started earlier at Macalester, but there was still a vacancy. This was in the spring, maybe March. I had sent out about 20 letters of inquiry to top liberal arts colleges. I had no idea whether they had any vacancies or not, I just picked good colleges. As a result of that series of letters, I got a number of invitations for interviews and several job offers. The one that I thought was the most appealing was from Macalester, so I came here. I had known the Twin Cities—although not terribly well—but I knew it was a good place to live. I was very impressed with what I saw at Macalester.

[02:34]

SN: Ok, how did you decide to be a chemist?

TS: I guess you could attribute that to a chemistry set that I had as a kid. I was always making stinks and explosions in the basement of the family home, though I managed not to set it on fire. Another significant factor was a really lousy high school chemistry teacher. You always hear about how important really good teachers are in stimulating students? This was a counter example. Miss L. was a home economics instructor who didn't want to be teaching chemistry. But she had had a course or two, and she had to teach it. She hated the job. And she particularly

hated me, I'm sure, because she would make statements and I would reply "No, that's wrong, it's not that way." Occasionally she would get really frustrated and say, "Well if you're so darned smart why don't you teach the class?" So I did. I was only marginally better than she was, if that. But at any rate, I thought, “Hey if she can do it, so can I.” That was a confidence builder--not that I much needed it.

[03:49]

SN: So when you got to campus as a faculty member, what was your first impression of the campus?

TS: I had only been on campus once before, during the job interview. I thought it was an attractive campus. I liked the location, the grand houses on Summit Avenue, and so on. But more important than that was the institution. Of course I came with a certain expectation that had been developed in my reading and in my experience when I was here on the interview trip. 1966 was a time when Macalester was really on the build. It was a very exciting time to be here. Trustees, administration, and faculty had just done an extensive curriculum review and revision that significantly changed the character of the College. That had happened in 1963. As a result, Macalester was poised on the brink of doing something really interesting and important. There were a lot of financial resources available—although I took a cut in salary to come here. There was also lots of enthusiasm and optimism. We had a very dynamic and effective Provost—Academic Vice-President—by the name of Lucius Garvin, who was instrumental in hiring many of us. He was much more involved in the academic program than the President at that time, Harvey Rice. Harvey was a great outside guy, a good fundraiser, and a real builder. Many of the

buildings around campus that we're currently replacing were built in that time: the fine arts center, the field house, Olin Hall. There was an emphasis on getting better students and better faculty and becoming a national institution. And at the same time Macalester emphasized two things that were very important in my decision to come here: international students, international outreach, and international opportunities for students and faculty; and a commitment to service. The combination of service, international outlook, and academic excellence were three important factors that led me to Macalester. When I arrived I saw that it wasn't just talk—there was a genuine commitment. A considerable number of able faculty members joined at the same time I did, many of them are recently retired but still around.

[06:37]

SN: So how much had you heard about Macalester before you got here?

TS: Not very much. Growing up in South Dakota I knew about midwestern colleges. I had had a cousin who graduated from Macalester before I got here. But I didn't know much about Macalester. It wasn't as well known as St. Olaf or Carleton, for example.

[06:59]

SN: OK, what was a typical day like during your first few years teaching?

TS: I really don't think that that aspect has changed all that much. I worked very hard. When I arrived I had never really taught at all. I had had no experience except TA-ing in graduate school. Here I was responsible for studying the material, preparing notes, and figuring out how

best to communicate this information. In addition to chemistry, I taught a course which bore the name “Man and His World." You'd never dare call a course that today, would you? Anyway, it was a general education requirement. All freshmen—they were freshman and not first-year students—had to take the course. We had something like 18 sections of about 20 students each. I thought it was an honor to be asked to teach “Man and His World” as an overload. That's how damned dumb I was. I didn't realize that at that point a lot of faculty members were trying to get out of this assignment. But I enjoyed it and I learned a tremendous amount, because the syllabus included philosophy and literature and a little religion and lots of stuff I was interested in but didn't know much about. I learned as much as the students--probably more. So that was a great experience. I always looked forward to all my classes, I found my students to be engaging, and I enjoyed working with my colleagues. I don't recall a lot of anxiety on my part. You hear a lot about faculty in their early years being very nervous and uncomfortable. I don't recall that being a problem, but maybe I've just forgotten it.

[09:06]

SN: Aside from "Man and his World" what other classes have you taught?

TS: Well, I've always taught general chemistry, the introductory chemistry course. I also developed a chemistry course for non-science majors, and I taught that in various different forms with different emphases. I wrote two textbooks for that audience and tested them with Macalester students—one fairly early in my career and then one around 1990. I've always found this course to be challenging and rewarding because non-science majors sometimes bring insights to their interpretation of natural phenomena that might not occur to science majors who

have already been taught the “real” answer. Sometimes those insights are fairly profound, other times they're really off the wall. So, I've enjoyed doing that. I've taught physical chemistry, which is a course that is typically taught to junior and senior chemistry majors. That's the area of Ph.D., and it’s always been a lot of fun.

One of the things that I really enjoyed during my Macalester tenure was January term—Interim Term. That's one of the things that appealed to me when I first heard about it. It was a very exciting experience because it was an opportunity to do things that were too specific or too general, or, in some cases, too damned silly to incorporate into the regular curriculum. It was experimentation and innovation. Interim permitted me to test ideas that subsequently got incorporated into some of my regular mainstream courses. I worked with colleagues from across campus—I once counted up that I had collaborated in January term courses and other interdisciplinary courses with about twenty faculty members from maybe a dozen different departments. So that was a great part of my education—this emphasis on interdisciplinarity. In a similar vein, I taught for a number of years another first-year course, which we called "Ways of Knowing." It was another multi-section course that I helped organize. I've offered several interdisciplinary special courses with colleagues--Jerry Reedy in Classics and some people in Philosophy and English. I've twice team-taught courses on science and literature with people from the English department. I've taught history of science. One of the things I really appreciate about Macalester is it gave me an opportunity to gratify my tendency to be a dilettante. And, you know, my colleagues and other departments tolerated it. I learned a lot, and I think some of my students did too. I was able to bring science majors and non-science majors together in the same classroom to study, for example, the reception of Galileo's ideas, Darwin’s theory of evolution,

or twentieth-century physics. Together we explored the impact that these scientific ideas had on the broader worldview and the response—sometimes positive, sometimes negative—of scientists, philosophers, theologians. I think this is one useful way of showing the role of science in the broader intellectual milieu.

[13:03]

SN: So were those interdisciplinary courses something that was happening a lot when you first started here?

TS: Well, I think the climate was conducive to it. It certainly was not discouraged. Interim Term, in its original conception, was strongly interdisciplinary—certainly that was an aspect of it. And "Man and His World" was intentionally interdisciplinary. In the last ten or fifteen years, as the departments and the faculty have become more narrowly discipline-oriented, there has probably been a reduction in interdisciplinary teaching. There are interdisciplinary courses and collaborations currently going on, but they tend to be a little bit closer, such as chemistry and physics collaborating, or biology and chemistry. I suspect that cross-campus collaboration is not as common as it once was.

[14:20]

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

TS: As one becomes more familiar with the material, and even more important than that, more familiar with how students learn—what gives them difficulty, what is particularly interesting to

them—one adapts accordingly. In that sense, you use your experience to structure instruction in a way that is probably more effective. Certainly the advent of technology in teaching has had a tremendous effect, though I must admit that I didn't make as much use of technology as some of my younger colleagues did. I have always tried to provide opportunities for discussion, student questions, and so on, and over the years I incorporated more of it. But I suspect that the sciences have not gone as far as the humanities and the social sciences in adopting student self-generated learning strategies. Maybe we should have, but we didn't.

[16:04]

SN: Can you talk a bit about the process of getting tenure and what that was like for you?

TS: Well, it wasn't nearly as rigorous then as it is now. Often tenure was awarded before the sixth year. One didn't have to go through all of the documentation, getting student appraisals, letters of recommendation, etc. It was a much more informal. I recall being stopped walking across campus by Provost Garvin and told I had been granted tenure. I wasn't even sure that I was up for it. So that's changed drastically.

[17:15]

SN: Could you talk a little bit about your areas of research?

TS: I started out doing research on the physical chemistry of proteins. I had done some of this in graduate school and done more of it when I was at Procter and Gamble. So when I got to Macalester I started a research program where I was studying the energy changes associated with

the change in protein shape, which is important because so many things about biological systems depend upon the shape of these big molecules. If you change the shape of an enzyme, it doesn't work. If you change the confirmation of a hemoglobin molecule slightly, you have sickle cell disease, and so on. The question is, "What are the factors responsible for maintaining a particular configuration?" Some of these issues are also associated with the prion diseases such as mad cow disease, which was something we didn't know about then. I did some collaborative work with faculty at the University of Minnesota, and through them I was able to make arrangements for the loan of a calorimeter to measure energy changes that attend conformational change. I involved some students in that research. With Macalester support I spent a summer at the University of Lund in Sweden doing this kind of work, and a number of publications resulted.

At the same time I was doing that, I got more and more interested in pedagogy and in trying to produce instructional material. Instrumental in this were the courses I had taught and the notes I had developed. In my course for non-science majors I was using an historical-phenomenological approach in the way I presented this stuff, and it seemed to be working. So I drafted some sample chapters and an outline and sent it off to some publishers and was issued a contract. That book was published in 1973. I retained this interest in pedagogy and devoted more and more time to developing courses, writing and lecturing about them, teaching summer institutes for high school teachers, working on curriculum development, and serving on national committees relating to science education. So, over time, I gradually changed my orientation from laboratory research to educational research and to writing course materials and textbooks.

I think it's important to note, as you think about the way in which the college has changed, that the kind of activity I've been describing was OK. I don't know if it's still is. A number of faculty who came at the same time I did, people like David McCurdy, some mathematicians and historians, wrote well-received textbooks. The Rosenbergs, who came later, are another good example. In a big research university writing textbooks is generally considered a waste of time. It may be a way to make money, but it's not a way to develop your reputation as a scholar. I firmly believe that a place like Macalester, where we work so intimately with our students and where teaching is a high priority, is an excellent origin for textbooks. Part of this is because you have to be somewhat of a generalist to teach at a place like this. You can't specialize as much as you do in a large research university. That generalizing is a benefit in writing a textbook. We're probably also more sensitive to how students learn and what helps them learn. And so, some very successful books came, have come out of the Macalester faculty. My colleague Emil Slowinski is co-author of a very influential college textbook in chemistry. Wayne Roberts in math wrote a number of textbooks. It's an important tradition, but probably less common now than it once was. Today faculty are more likely to write papers and monographs than textbooks. And that's OK, but I believe it would be unfortunate if we would not have some people on campus who can take advantage of their familiarity with teaching and their good interaction with students and capitalize on that to write effective textbooks.

[22:50]

SN: Has collaborating with students been something that's always been important to you?

TS: I have not collaborated as much as many of my colleagues have. Early on I collaborated

with students in laboratory research and some did honors theses under my supervision. I've also worked with students on some of my writing projects. I've hired students to help do background research, check information, and proofread materials. I think it's been beneficial to them. Some of those students have gone on to careers of an education nature. Others have not, but hope the experience has been stimulating. And of course since so much of my work has involved teaching, in a sense I've been collaborating with my classes. My students have been the guinea pigs, and I've tried out ideas on them. The only trouble is that most Macalester students are a good deal more teachable than the average college or university student. If you go just by Macalester students you tend to set the level a little too high.

[24:12]

SN: Now I'd like to talk a little bit about your time as Dean of the Faculty.

TS: OK

SN: So how did you become Dean of the Faculty?

TS: Well, that's a long story. I'll spare you all the details, but in the fall of 1974, all hell broke loose. The President was a guy named Jim Robinson who had come from Ohio State University. He had precious little experience of liberal arts colleges and he came, to be sure, in a difficult time. He took over from Arthur Flemming. Arthur Flemming—I don't know if you've picked this up in your other conversations—was a controversial president. I think it's fair to say that he represented a sort of social consciousness that was very important in the history of Macalester.

He succeeded Harvey Rice, whom I've already mentioned. Flemming brought another dimension to the College, that of social involvement in projects such as EEO, the Expanded Educational Opportunities program, which brought many minority students to campus with massive financial aid. The creation of EEO was generally supported by the faculty and by the Board of Trustees. The tragedy--and I use tragedy advisedly because I think Flemming was in many ways a tragic character—was that we were going to do everything. We would achieve academic excellence, strengthen our tradition of service, and continue our emphasis on internationalism. Key in this plan was a major commitment to diversifying our student body and providing the necessary support. We went at this very naively, I think. We were unprepared for the challenges—we being the faculty, staff, administration, everyone. In order to launch EEO a lot of money was required. Arthur Flemming talked the Board of Trustees into—temporarily, we thought—drawing money from the endowment. Flemming must have greatly overestimated the funds that would be available from DeWitt Wallace, our chief benefactor, and from federal resources. And so, when this money was not forthcoming, the College found itself with a major financial challenge, which was exacerbated when Wallace withdrew his support. We were dependant on him for something like twenty percent of the operating budget. Moreover, faculty and staff morale was at a low because much of what had been promised us did not materialize. Our high expectations were frustrated. There simply wasn't enough money to support the wonderful opportunities we had hoped for.

The result of that was that Jim Robinson was hired in 1971with sort of an impossible job to do. Unfortunately, his personality did not make it easier. He tended to be somewhat aloof from faculty and from others. Finally getting back to the start of the 1974-75 academic year: the

opening convocation was held in the Chapel, and it was picketed by a group of students. The students were objecting to some cuts that Robinson had imposed upon the EEO program with very little consultation with faculty or anybody else. Students had also occupied the administration building. Some of them were minority students, mostly African American, but there were white kids as well. And as you can imagine, this was a very traumatic way to open the academic year. In that awful, awful convocation session students were booing the President. Some parents who had brought their children to Macalester collected them, walked out, and never came back. There were financial problems and problems of control; and within a week or two Jim Robinson had resigned. To make things even worse, Robinson had tried to be his own Academic Vice-President because he didn't like the finalists that the search committee had identified. And so when Robinson left, there was no chief academic officer or Dean of the Faculty, as the position was then called. Robinson's Executive Vice-President, Charles McLarnan, took over as Acting President. At this point the faculty said we need to have somebody who represents the academic end of things. In the course of a week or so, there was a kind of a popularity poll by the faculty. Three of us emerged as finalists for the position, and Chuck McLarnan made the final decision. I had started the academic year teaching, with expectations of normal semester, and a few weeks later I was Dean of the Faculty. I moved into this position completely unprepared, except for lots of committee service over my eight years at Macalester. That's a long answer to your question.

[30:44]

SN: What were some of the things that happened while you were Dean of the Faculty?

TS: Well, the first year I did all I could to try to keep the place together. I admit that I sometimes felt that my colleagues—who were extremely and understandably anxious about the conditions—wouldn't trust me with a quarter to get an ice cream cone for them. I am, of course, overreacting. I think I probably enjoyed more support than the Acting President or most of the other people in the administration. At least my faculty colleagues knew me, warts and all. They knew my strengths and weaknesses. Remember that the College was operating with big budget deficits. We were trying to dig ourselves out from under this situation. The Board of Trustees decreed that in order to balance the budget, a certain number of faculty would have to be laid off. In other words, they would be fired. I thought that to just look for the people who were most vulnerable—the ones who didn't have tenure—and fire them, was a hell of a way to run an academic institution. It doesn't make any sense in terms of trying to put together a coherent academic program. I was also convinced that this indiscriminate firing of the most vulnerable would lose some of the people that were the future of the College. They were young people who had a lot of promise, faculty members we really wanted to keep. I presented my recommendations and arguments to the Board of Trustees. I may have a copy of my talk somewhere in my files, but I think I can paraphrase it. I acknowledged that I was speaking without the authorization of my colleagues, but I thought most of them would agree that for the good of the College, we had to avoid a thoughtless hit-the-most-vulnerable-and-lay-them-off approach to academic planning. That's not planning at all, that's surrendering responsibility. Maybe with time things would get better. So I proposed cutting everybody's salary for that year in order to balance the budget—to reach the mandates that the trustees had put down. Of course, Chuck McLarnan knew about my proposal and he wasn't so sure that it was the right thing to do, but he went along with it. I also told the Trustees that this was a one-time expedient, and they

approved the plan. As a result, I had the dubious pleasure of cutting everybody's salary—an across-the-board cut of a certain percentage. I was deeply gratified by the understanding and support I received from most faculty members. So, that was my first year as Dean of the Faculty. It was the year from hell. It was terrible! Morale was awful and I did all I could to try to retain people. I talked several into staying who were set to go elsewhere and who subsequently became campus leaders—people who have made a tremendous difference at the College. There's no point in naming names, but I'm proud of what I did. The next year (1975-76), everything began to turn around. It wasn't overnight, but the arrival of John Davis as President signaled the beginning of a new era at Macalester.

[35:33]

SN: How long did you serve as Dean of Faculty?

TS: Only two years. My second year in office was John Davis's first year as President. John is one of my favorite human beings. Of all the Presidents I have known during my tenure at Macalester, he was the most crucial in terms of reestablishing the College on the path it had been set on. I think the reason John was so successful is, first of all, that he's one of the most positive people I have ever met. I have never left his company without feeling better about myself, about him, and about the world. To give you a notion of the man's directness, honesty, and insight, let me tell you about my first conversation with him. It was when he was looking at the job and being looked at by the Trustees. He had been the Superintendent of Schools in Minneapolis. He asked to see some of the officers of the College. I vividly recall the first question he asked me: "I have a doctorate in education and most of my career has been in elementary and secondary

educational administration. To what extent will that be a liability with the faculty?" I replied, “Well, if you're smart enough to realize that it could be a liability and direct enough to acknowledge it, you might be able to overcome it." He certainly did. The first session at which John was introduced to the faculty he began to exude this incredible enthusiasm. He restored our faith in ourselves, which was exactly what we needed. He also restored DeWitt Wallace's faith in the College, though that took some years of balanced budgets. John Davis has the rare ability to bring you bad news, if necessary, and you still go away feeling good about yourself. In the early years of his presidency, he didn't have much money to give out, but he would say, "This is a wonderful idea. This is a great opportunity. I really wish I could provide the financial support, but it’s people like you that make Macalester work." Unfortunately, some administrators can piss off people while bringing them good news.

Davis’s leadership made a tremendous difference in what I did. The whole atmosphere changed; it again became forward looking. We were able to restore those salary cuts midway through John Davis' first year, and I was delighted to able to occasionally say “Yes,” rather than always “No.” I greatly enjoyed working with John, and I was tempted to accept his invitation to continue as Dean of the Faculty. But I missed my students and my life as a professor. I had tried to teach a course a year while Dean, but I felt I was cheating my students. So I told John and my faculty colleagues that the increment wasn't worth the excrement, took a salary cut, and went back to the classroom. Most of the time I've been very pleased with that decision. But I feel very honored to have been a participant in starting the rebuilding process. Most of the credit goes to John Davis.

[39:52]

SN: I also read that you gave a commencement address?

TS: I actually gave one and a third commencement addresses. The first one was in 1975 and it was that year from hell when I was academic dean. The seniors had requested Gary Trudeau, the Doonesbury cartoonist, as commencement speaker. Chuck McLarnan, the Acting President, somehow got the message wrong, and he invited Pierre Elliot Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada. He would also have given a great talk, but he wasn't the Trudeau the students had in mind. Therefore, it was probably a good thing that Pierre Trudeau turned down the invitation. By then it was too late to invite Gary Trudeau. The way I describe what happened next is that somebody went up and down the halls of Old Main, where the administration offices were, asking "Does anyone want to give a commencement address?" I said, “Sure.” It was just about like that. The seniors were not terribly enthusiastic at the news. Some of them who knew who I was, others didn't. There were cartoons in the *Mac Weekly* of some comic-strip character giving the commencement address. As a matter of fact, I think the address went pretty well. The class of '75 has invited me back for every class reunion that they’ve had. I have always threatened to give the same talk, claiming that they wouldn't recognize it anyway because nobody was paying attention the first time around. The other time I gave a commencement address was in 1981. The seniors that year decided they wanted to have three professors speak. There was one professor from the humanities, Robert Ward of the English Department, and one from the social sciences, Chuck Green of Political Science. I represented the sciences. Chuck, Robert, and I each spoke for about seven minutes, something like that. It was an interesting idea, but hasn’t been repeated. Incidentally that same class invited the three of us plus a few other faculty

members to speak at a recent reunion.

SN: Alright, I'm ready to move on to the next set of questions.

TS: OK, I'm sorry.

SN: Unless they're something else you want to say.

TS: No, that's fine.

[43:27]

SN: OK, we'll focus on the ways that you've seen the campus change during your time here. So, I'd like to start with students. How have you seen the student body change?

TS: Students have always been one of the great strengths of Macalester. One of the reasons I came here is because the students were good, and they have continued to be outstanding. We've always had very bright students, and the brightest today are probably no brighter than they were when I started. But the average has increased, there's no question about that. The top is still very high, but the bottom has risen considerably. Of course the students reflect the times. My favorite students in my entire Macalester career were those who were here in the late 60s and early 70s, when campuses all over the country were in turmoil. There was great opposition to the Vietnam War. It was the time of great student independence. In some academic departments that independence reached a level where things pretty much broke down. Students were

questioning the system—and there was a lot to be questioned--especially a very unpopular war. It sounds like déjà-vu, doesn't it? Moreover, in the 60s the nation was struggling with problems of racial equality and civil rights. Students were so critical of the contemporary politics, military policy, and so on, that many of them had pretty much given up on higher education as a way of trying to remediate the ills of society. This attitude seemed to be particularly true of those majoring in the social sciences and the humanities. The sciences tend to attract somewhat more purposive students. They're a little bit more goal-oriented, because they often have more tangible goals—graduate study and jobs that may be more available than in other disciplines. Our students of the 60s still worked hard, they still saw the point of their education, they hadn't completely given up on what they were learning. But they had a wonderful streak of independence. Some science majors tend to be a little bit too willing to take what you give them and not question it. In the late 60s and early 70s, they questioned everything.

I remember Bob Elwell in physical chemistry in 1969. I had just given what I thought was a brilliant lecture on the Carnot cycle, which is a fairly abstruse way of presenting thermodynamics. It seems to be completely remote from experience. Bob raised his hand after this wonderful presentation and asked, "What does all this shit have to do with the real world?" You know, that's not the way science students talked when I started at Macalester, and it's probably not the way they talk now, but it certainly got my attention. The point is, what Bob called "that shit" has a tremendous amount to do with how the world works. The Carnot cycle models the directionality of natural change. But, I wasn't making that clear. It was to me self-evident that this theoretical stuff does have a tremendous impact on the way in which we interpret and structure the world, but I wasn't conveying that. It was Bob's outspokenness, and

the outspokenness of a lot of his contemporaries, that really tested me. So I said to myself, "Hey, I'm teaching one of the most relevant subjects in the whole curriculum, and I have some responsibility to make that obvious and clear." I cite this as an example of wonderful way in which the students I had during those troubled times were unwilling to just accept the pronouncements of the professor. But they still recognized that education is our best hope for doing something about the system.

[49:25]

SN: How have you seen the faculty change?

TS: The faculty has become more professionalized, more focused on their disciplines. I think they're reflecting several things. For one, it's a difficult job market, which means that you want to retain your mobility, and to do that you build a reputation by writing books and publishing in journals. So there's more of a commitment to the discipline and to individual professional work than to the institution. I think the College has lost a bit in that respect. Some of this also reflects demographics. Many faculty used to live within a half a mile radius of Macalester—the Tangletown area. There are still people living there, but now the faculty is dispersed all over the Twin Cities. That means that there's less faculty coherence. Of course there are still friendships among faculty, but most of my friends are contemporary colleagues, and Macalester was the locus of forming those friendships. Over the years, Macalester has become less of a family. We used to have family fun nights every month where faculty and staff would gather at the gym and our kids would run around. The social structure has changed. In my early years here, the faculty was much more homogeneous. We were mostly male and white. Most of us were

married, and though our wives were college educated and had often started careers, many temporarily set those careers aside to stay home and raise children. We took care of each other's kids, we helped each other move, we got together on weekends and drank Buckhorn Beer at $2.50 for a case of 24 bottles. This social interaction strengthened loyalty to the College. Of course, the College has been greatly enriched as the faculty, staff, and student body have become more diverse. I don't want my geezerly nostalgia to take away from that.

[52:40]

SN: How have you seen the political climate on campus change? This one's always an interesting question.

TS: I alluded earlier to the late 60s and early 70s and all of the turmoil of those times. During that period most faculty and student sentiment was considerably to the left of center. I think that's been characteristic most of my tenure here. I occasionally read the *Mac Weekly*. I have a theory that in order to retain mutual respect, students shouldn't go to faculty meetings and faculty shouldn't read the *Mac Weekly*. But it's a useful source to gauge attitudes and opinions. . Apparently there are some who think that Macalester students have lost their spirit of independence and their willingness to espouse left-wing positions. I doubt if that's true. In general this has been a liberal environment, and that's been true of faculty and students alike. The issues in the late 60s and early 70s were issues of racial policy, equality, opportunity, war and peace. Those seem to me a more substantial than some of the interests that have engaged students recently. It sounds patronizing, but it seems to me that some current students are much more concerned about Coca-Cola vs. Pepsi-Cola, than they are about a completely unconsciable

involvement of the U.S. in Iraq. That suggests misplaced priorities. Of course you can discount that as the ramblings of an old fart.

[55:08]

SN: What have you seen as some of the most significant events that have happened during your time here? This can be national events and how they've impacted the campus, or events within the campus.

TS: I've already talked about some of these things in the context of the campus. I came at a significant time in the history of the College because it represented a major change in aspiration. Macalester had been a rather parochial place that educated Presbyterian ministers and nurses and schoolteachers--good people who were strongly committed to service. But the College apparently had limited expectations of being nationally recognized. This was a fairly local institution. That changed with the new curriculum. Macalester got much more ambitious in '63, shortly before many of us arrived. There were eighteen hired the year I came, and roughly the same number in 1965 and 1967. This indicates the tremendous change that was going on. There was a great sense of building and expansion. Harvey Rice raised the money, Lou Garvin articulated the academic goals, and the slope was positive. There was money for everything—even for babysitters and buying personal professional books. Then we had a further kick-up. Arthur Flemming was, for good or bad, one of the most significant influences in the history of Macalester. He challenged us to meet our social responsibilities. We were going to have all of the wonderful academic opportunities, and to this we added leadership in the social dimension. There was tremendous optimism, and when our great expectations were not realized, great

disillusionment followed.

A popular sport around here used to be to speculate on why DeWitt Wallace pulled the plug. I believe the main reason was because the Trustees and the President had invaded the principal of the endowment. If you're a good Scotch Presbyterian, like DeWitt Wallace, the worst thing you can do is to eat the seed corn. No doubt Wallace was unhappy with the *Mac Weekly* and campus ferment—he was a fairly conservative Republican, but not as conservative as many people thought. When money stopped coming from Pleasantville, our high expectations took a terrible beating. And it took until partway through John Davis's tenure before finances really started improving. The financial crisis of the 70s slowed our progress, but did not significantly alter our collective goals. Under the presidency of Bob Gavin, we were again in the position where we could emphasize academic excellence. That's what Bob did when he made some very strong hires during his presidency. Unfortunately, he didn't get along very well with the faculty and with the people that worked for him. Gavin's greatest interest was in the academic end of things. He had been provost for a number of years at Haverford, where he had also been a professor. He went through a number of Provosts here, I suspect because he was unwilling to delegate sufficient responsibility and authority to the chief academic officer. But there were some positive decisions made under Gavin, including an increase in preparation and expectation of faculty and students. I would characterize the presidency of Mike McPherson as kind of a plateau. Mike is a wonderfully nice man, a very engaging fellow, and I like him a lot. But it wasn't a time for changing direction. It was rather continuing the emphasis that we'd had before. I really don't know Brian Rosenberg that well, and I've stopped going to faculty meetings, though I'm obviously very interested in what's happening. Brian has been willing to address some fairly

serious problems. Some of them have not been very popular, especially the introduction of need-aware financial aid, but it was probably a necessary thing to do. It's too early to make any sort of prediction on what Rosenberg's legacy will be.

Macalester is a microcosm that reflects the macrocosm. In my opinion, the Vietnam War and the associated unrest of the late sixties and early seventies constituted the most important external influences. More recently, the increase in ease and speed of communications has had a profound effect, as people have become electronically linked across the campus, the country, and the planet. This has no doubt sped up student responses to national causes and issues. The focus has shifted from the campus to the wider world. The Center for Global Citizenship is a response to these changing conditions. Macalester is much more an institution of the world than we were when I came, more than I would have expected. This has enriched the institution immensely. Some of my best students have been international students. We're very fortunate in having them. I wish even more of our domestic students studied abroad. While I recognize the importance of globalization, I fear that we've lost community among the faculty, probably among the student body, and in the way in which the faculty and the student body interact with each other. But that's also happening in Grinnell, Iowa and Northfield, Minnesota. Even the archetypal small-town college campus has been greatly altered. Many Carleton and St. Olaf faculty live in the Twin Cities and commute to work. I admit it's pure nostalgia to go on at great length about how much fun it used to be when we were all one happy family. In fact, we probably never were.

[1:04:03]

SN: How have you seen the relationship between students and the administration change?

TS: Our students have always been quite willing to speak their minds and criticize the administration. It seems to me that some of the students are a little more intemperate and maybe less well reasoned in their criticism of the administration, at least from what I read in the underground press, if not the *Mac Weekly*. I think that's unfortunate. Maybe we faculty are not very good role models. I would hope that in an academic institution, if anywhere, it should be possible to express a variety of opinions, and to hear those opinions with respect. Respect is not the same thing as agreement. But this is an institution where the free exchange of ideas—whether you like them or not—should be encouraged. You know, I'm not at all worried that the academy in general or Macalester as a case-in-point is being overrun by the far left. But when any political dogma enjoys the great majority of support, you have to be very careful that that opposing ideas aren't squelched. Certainly I think the students and faculty at Macalester are generally pretty far to the left of center. I would hope that although a born-again Christian Republican doing ROTC at St. Thomas might find this environment a little less than completely congenial, such a person would not be stifled in his or her ability to express opinions and beliefs. I worry that in the fervor with which students hold positions, they sometimes are not as tolerant of other positions as they should be. I got a bit off track in my answer to your question, but in a sense it's relevant.

[1:07:12]

SN: Well, I actually just have one last question. What's your favorite memory of Macalester?

TS: [Pause] I have so many good memories, that to pick one, would be very very difficult.

They tend to fall in different categories. Some relate to teaching, for example the tremendous elation that comes when students excel: when you read an exam paper or a term paper that really excites you because it's done so well. A different sort of memory relates to the event that I alluded to earlier--when I cut the salary of every faculty member. For the most part, my colleagues supported me, and that made me very proud of their commitment to the College. I also value more light-hearted interaction with my colleagues, especially in the faculty jazz band. We call ourselves the Generation Gap, and some of us have played together for 35 years.

I almost forgot one of the highlights of my teaching career—a seminar course that Jerry Reedy and I taught to a group of seniors. We brazenly called it *Scientia et Humanitas*. It was an impossible effort to summarize a liberal arts education in a semester. Actually, some students initiated the course. They came to us and said, "You guys are interested in a lot of things, would you be interested in leading a seminar of this sort?" We had, I think, fifteen or twenty students registered, but twice that many showed up for every class. We met in Carnegie Hall one night a week. We were supposed to meet from 7:00 to 10:00. I never got out of there before 11:00 p.m. Jerry and I would be exhausted, but the students would move to O'Gara's and continue. It's the only course I've ever taught where students not only submitted all the assignments, but also initiated activities and circulated ideas. This was before the days of e-mail, so they used campus mail to distribute copies of unassigned essays and papers they had written relating to topics in the course—"This point just occurred to me; I read this article; Let me suggest this book." It was like a graduate seminar. It was everybody's dream of teaching, but a one-time-only deal. I was afraid to try to recreate it because it was so good. I felt like Faust: *Verweile doch! du bist so schon!* "Wait, stop, it's so beautiful!" It was great!

[1:11:00]

SN: Could you talk a little bit about the faculty jazz band? I've never heard anything about it.

TS: Oh, you haven't heard us play?

SN: No, umh-uh.

TS: Oh my gosh. Well, a bunch of us who had been playing instruments for years and who all got to Macalester about the same time found each other in the late 60s. Our first gig was a party sponsored by a long-dead organization, the Macalester Women's Club. The Women's Club was composed of female faculty and staff members and wives of male faculty and staff members. Anyway, they were looking for entertainment, and a group of us got together and played some New Orleans style Dixieland jazz. Dave McCurdy from Anthropology played banjo, Jim Smail from Biology played piano, Charlie Norman from English, trombone, Harley Henry from English, clarinet. I played trumpet, and I think Al King from Music played tuba or string bass. We had a drummer, too, I think. We had fun, so we continued to practice and play. I think our second public performance was at Shakey's Pizza Parlor. Before long we were invited to play at other Macalester events. We called ourselves the Generation Gap because there was a pop group called the Cumberland Gap at the time. The personnel and instrumentation of the band and the music played has changed over the years. For a few years we spun off a quintet called the Baja Manitoba Brass, which played for commencements and other formal events. Now we're assembled into sort of a small big band. At full strength there are about a dozen of us, including some alumni as well as faculty and staff. Mostly we play things that were written even before

we were born, and that's pretty long ago --Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, stuff like that. We mostly play for Mac gigs, and occasionally off campus. We're happy to take money, which we plow back into music, but to tell the truth, we'll play for beer.

[1:13:49]

SN: Well, I think that's all of my questions. If you have anything else you want to add, feel free.

TS: Well, what I really should do is turn all these questions on you, Sara. Let me ask you this, what insights have you gained from your job of interviewing faculty? What have you learned?

SN: Well, I've learned a lot about Macalester. And I guess the most interesting thing has been just talking about this transition from the mid-sixties to the early seventies, and how much the college changed. It's been really interesting to talk to people who were students here in the early sixties and then came back as faculty in the seventies, to a place that was completely different, and that sort of experience.

[1:14:38]

TS: David Lanegran, your professor, was one of those people. You say the place was completely different. I think those differences were less significant than they might seem to be. I genuinely believe that what the College stands for--its vision, its sense of self, its priorities-- have not changed that much. To be sure, a significant watershed happened in 1963, a few years before I arrived. Among other things, there was a decision to make Macalester a much more secular place. I'm not a veteran of the strongly Presbyterian-connected Macalester. We've been pretty

secular ever since I was here—that "Man and his World" course that I described was the last hurrah of the religion requirement. It was recast in secular forms. We did read sections of the Old Testament, but more as a philosophical or historical document. So that's certainly changed since the early Macalester. But I think the Macalester that I signed onto--an institution genuinely committed to doing a good job in providing excellent quality education, with high standards and high expectations, and providing that education to able students--that's remained the same. As I indicated, the quality of the student body has increased, the expectations of faculty have shifted towards higher levels of professional achievement in their disciplines. But I think it's still part of the same continuum. The commitment to service continues to manifest itself, though with our emphasis on academic quality, we may have backed off a bit from service. I don't know—I'd to like to see some statistics. Are as many Macalester students volunteering for service jobs as used to be? There appears to be more of a formal connection between academic programs and the service dimension than was previously the case. The Center for Global Citizenship is a manifestation of that. Internationalism remains a great strength and a genuine commitment. It makes us different from many liberal arts colleges. I think that our commitment to domestic diversity is also strong, though we've sometimes been inept. We don't do everything superbly well. In all of this, we've obviously made a lot of mistakes. Part of the frustration of faculty and students is that we have fallen short of achieving the high goals that we have set for the College and ourselves. A great tendency for self-criticism has been characteristic of Macalester for as long as I've been here. Faculty often exhibit it, and the students pick that up early and quickly. That makes for a less than tranquil place. There is dissent and questioning, and that can be frustrating. We waste a fair amount of energy because we don't have a uniform vision of what these commitments mean. The point is that I think that in general terms, the goals are shared.

The difficult times have been when the resources fell short of helping us achieve those goals.

[End of Disc 1 1:19:57]

[Start of Disc 2]

TS: To a greater extent than I would like, our standards for institutional achievement have been external-- Carleton or Swarthmore or Haverford or Williams. These are all good places, but I am convinced that what Macalester really has to do is not try to be a midwestern version of Amherst, but to be the best Macalester we can be. It's useful to look at what other colleges do, and to see how we compare in terms of student achievement, faculty salaries, budgets, and all that kind of stuff. But when we set the direction for the College, that direction is something that we have to generate. We have to establish our own internal standards for achievement and expectation and work at trying to meet them. With growing self-confidence, perhaps we can free ourselves from worrying whether Macalester is 25th or 24th or 26th in the *US News and World Report* ranking of liberal arts, colleges. We—I really should say "you"--the Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, alumni, and student body--need to decide what we're going to do, and then do our damndest. It doesn't mean we'll always agree on how to achieve our goals, but that's part of the fun and part of the challenge. We talk a lot about community. And sometimes we are better at talking about it than achieving it. I have nothing else to add, except to ask understanding and indulgence for my tendency to still identify with Macalester. I'm sorry for having gone on at such great length, but that's the risk you take when you ask an old geezer to talk about a place that's been very important in his life.

SN: Oh, no.

SN: Thank you for your time.

[End of Disc 2 02:24]

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