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Interview with William Donovan, Professor of Classics

William Donovan

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Macalester College Archives, DeWitt Wallace Library Oral History Project

Interview with: William Donovan

Professor of Classics, 1966-1992

Date: Monday, May 21st, 2007, 9:00a.m.

Place: Macalester College DeWitt Wallace Library, Harmon Room

Interviewer: Laura Zeccardi, Class of 2007

Edited interview

run time:

1:34:20 minutes

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Subjects:

00:00	Background and work before Macalester
	Georgiana Palmer, Lou Garvin
06:59	Prior knowledge of Macalester
	Administrative offices in Old Main, President Harvey Rice
08:46	First impressions of Macalester, Classics Department
	Georgiana Palmer, "Man and His World" course, relationship with
	University of Minnesota, Carleton, Minnesota Messenia Expedition
15:53	"Man and His World" course
17:46	First impressions of Macalester students, independent-minded students
22:04	Large number of new faculty hired by Lou Garvin 1966-1967, shift in
	focus, vocational programs
25:20	Campus climate late 1960's and early '70s, Vietnam War, financial
	difficulties, DeWitt Wallace
29:54	EEO (Expanded Educational Opportunities) Program, teaching cross-
	listed courses
35:31	Teaching in other departments (Art, History, etc.), faculty collaboration,
	taking studio art courses
41:10	Field work in Greece, work in the Classics field
44:25	Students and excavations

47:08	Religious life and ordination into the Episcopalian Church, religious
	activities at Macalester
59:15	Students and religion at Macalester
1:03:07	Student activism, issues, and politics, faculty politics
1:07:58	Faculty-administration relations, Faculty Advisory Council, President
	Arthur Flemming, President John Davis
1:11:50	Student-faculty relations, faculty teaching versus research
1:16:13	Memorable experiences, honors projects, keeping track of students,
	faculty influences on students
1:22:20	Changes in student body, changes in how faculty communicate
1:24:02	Policy changes, curriculum and requirements
1:27:21	Volunteer work with church and involvement at Macalester since retiring,
	work on building projects, Interim, Fall Break
1:32:59	Favorite memories

Interview with William Donovan

Laura Zeccardi, Interviewer

May 21st, 2007 DeWitt Wallace Library Harmon Room

LZ: My name is Laura Zeccardi and I'm a new graduate of Macalester College conducting interviews for the Macalester Oral History Project. Today is Monday May 21st, 2007 and I'm interviewing William Donovan, Professor of Classics, in the Harmon room in the DeWitt Wallace Library. If you'd just like to start by stating your name and where you were born and then how old you were when you first came to Macalester.

WD: Well my name is William Donovan. I was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1929. And I came to Macalester in 1966 when I was 36.

LZ: If you'd just like to—these first questions are kind of about your background before Macalester, and then starting at Macalester. So if you'd just like to start by talking a little bit about your educational background and then what you had been doing before you came to Macalester.

[00:55]

WD: Well I have two degrees from Washington University in St. Louis, and one from the University of Cincinnati. And they're all three in different fields. I have one degree in Art History, a degree in History, and a degree in Classics. My major field of study has always been

prehistoric Greek archaeology. I trained as a field archaeologist. And before I came to Macalester I lived for three years doing research in Greece. Then I took a job at Florida State University, where I taught in four different departments. I taught in Classics, in Humanities, in History and in Art History. Then I took a job at the University of Illinois, where it was half-time teaching and half-time I was curator of a museum—dreadful job—which is one of the reasons I decided to come to Macalester. But immediately before I came here I had been working at an excavation in southwestern Greece, the Palace of Nestor, and I had been working there for a number of years. And then in 1965, I was named Director of the summer program at the American School of Classical Studies, which is a post-graduate research institution in Athens. It's been there since the late nineteenth century. And I was to direct their summer program. Now they normally don't take undergraduates. In fact they don't take undergraduates in the regular program, but in the summer session, they do allow undergraduates to participate. And one of the people—that group includes undergraduates, graduates, people in related fields, high school teachers—and that particular summer session of 1965 I happened to have a professor from Macalester, Ernie Sandeen from the History department. He had been traveling in Palestine and Israel, and he had been told that he was going to teach ancient history here. His field was American church history. But he was going to have to teach ancient history, so he thought he would like to come to our summer session and learn something about ancient Greece. So, he was a valuable member of our summer program, and I had a good time with him. I went back to Illinois the end of that summer, and was slated to return to Greece in the summer of '66 to continue excavating. And all of a sudden, I think it was in November, the door of my office at the University of Illinois opened and in walked the Provost of Macalester, Lou Garvin. And, so, it...what happened was Georgiana Palmer, who was chairman of the Classics department here,

she suffered from emphysema and her health was very poor, and deteriorating rapidly. So she had decided to resign. So they were looking immediately to replace her. And Ernie apparently told Lou Garvin that he had had a good time with me that summer, so Garvin showed up. So, that's how it started. I came up here and interviewed in December. And I told them there were any number of things—I had a number of demands. I wouldn't come unless I was funded for my excavating season in '66. I was just shy of earning a sabbatical, and I wasn't going to come here and lose a sabbatical. So...and then my wife and I have always been on the same, we're in the same field—we met in Latin class in graduate school—and she'd worked with me. We both got Fulbrights independently. Before we even started dating we'd applied for Fulbrights and we each got one, to study in Europe, and we were married before we went. And she got a job at Florida State when I was there. She was teaching at Illinois in the Dean of Women's office there, working with married students. So that was one thing. I said I'm not coming unless there's something that my wife will be doing up here. So Macalester brought her up for an interview in February. And at that time, we had—all colleges had a policy that forbade members of the same family teaching together. So, in every place we'd been, they'd always waive the rule, but they could only do it on a temporary basis. Part-time temporary basis. That's what happened here. Macalester waived the rule, hired her, but only temporary, and only on a part-time basis. But, we decided that we would start that way. She ultimately took a full time job at St. Paul Academy, where she finished her career. She's still working, but in the same field. So, I went to work in Greece that summer, and the end of the summer, in August, we moved up here. So that's how I got here.

[06:59]

LZ: Had you heard of Macalester before you had been approached?

WD: Outside of meeting Sandeen, I had never heard of the place. I had never been to Minnesota. I never thought I would end up this far north. And it was beyond beyond from where I was. And I ran into, at Illinois, there was a Professor Solberg in history who had a position here, resigned it because he thought the place was so terrible. So he warned me. This was not a place you wanted to come. Primarily because of the President, Harvey Rice. I must confess my first meeting with Harvey Rice was amazing. I took the job anyway. But, I was in the office of the Provost, Lou Garvin, and at that time they were over here in Old Main, and they were on the upper level. Garvin's office was on the side facing the chapel now, and the President's office was on the other side. And in the corridor in-between was where the secretary—Jackie Peacock was Garvin's secretary—had her office. Helen Reinecke, the President's secretary, had her office inside, on the south side. But at any rate, I had been talking to Garvin, we got up to leave his office. We came out into the corridor, and just that moment Harvey Rice bursts through the door from his office getting ready to leave. Probably to play golf or whatever. So Garvin said to him, "President Rice, Professor Donovan is here interviewing for the position in classics, would you care to meet him?" And Rice said "no," and walks off. So that was my introduction to Harvey Rice.

[08:46]

LZ: Well, beyond that first meeting with Harvey Rice, what was kind of your first impressions of Macalester, the college, and also the Classics department.

WD: Well, I came in December to interview, so this was a frigid place. Well, the Classics department at that time was Georgiana Palmer—and she'd been a one person department through the Depression. Then shortly before I came, they hired an instructor to assist her, Ted Brooks. And Classics was a, obviously, a very small department with very few students, struggling to survive, period. In order to survive Georgiana Palmer had taught herself Russian, so she started offering Classics, Latin, Greek, and Russian. So, then they had hired another person as an instructor in Russian, Alexander Gus. So it was Classics and Russian, and there were three people when I came. But it was quickly decided that Russian really didn't make much sense to be with Latin and Greek. Of course, what's happening today in the Classics department here is the same thing. You add Arabic to expand the possibilities of enrolling students. So, that was the nature of the department when I came. Gus was quickly separated from Classics. At that time we had a course, and this was what my wife was hired to teach in this program, called "Man and His World." Unthinkable title now, but that was the title. And it was required of all students. This of course was one of the questions on the sheet you'll get to sooner or later, that's probably the difference then and now. Then, there was a common experience that students had at Macalester. Now, there is very little that students share in common here, outside of Springfest, I think that's about it. But, then, there was the course, "Man and His World" they all had to take. There was required attendance at convocations—there were three a year. We had, interesting again, the title, "Confrontations". And there were, students had to go to I think four or five of those a year. So there were these common experiences that students had, and "Man and His World" was a big part of that. And when I arrived I said to Garvin and to the other faculty, I said, "Look, in a small department with just two of us, if we have to keep Latin and Greek, there goes our entire teaching load. And we can't participate in the all-campus program

of 'Man and His World.' We really need to expand—add a third position—to enable us to do, to participate in the 'Man and His World' program, as well as maintain our major." So there was a tremendous battle to convince people that we needed that third position. It was finally approved on the understanding that the Classics Department guaranteed it would always staff at least two courses outside of its own department. Of course, once we did that, got a person, then they abolished "Man and His World." So, and one of the rules of college and university life, once you create a position, it's impossible to get rid of it again. Classics continued from that time forward with three positions. Then of course the struggle was to figure out what you're going to teach to enroll enough students to fill courses for three faculty. My real problem in coming to Macalester was that I had never had any experience at a liberal arts college. My entire experience was with institutions with graduate programs. I had graduate students at Illinois, I had graduate assistants, and the whole pattern of life is, for research, is you teach at an institution where there's a graduate program, you teach courses that are related to your area of expertise, you have graduate students who assist in that, and consequently you've got research projects and you publish the results of your research and all this. Coming to a liberal arts college, I was offered a job at Washington and Lee and I turned it down because I would have been the only person and they had a language requirement. That meant for the rest of my life I would teach elementary language. My field was Greek archaeology. You know, to spend my life teaching Latin one, Latin two, Latin one, Latin two, over and over again, didn't attract. So I turned down, I'd never considered a liberal arts college. And I wouldn't have considered Macalester except for one thing—it was in the Twin Cities. I had a number of colleagues here already that I knew. The relationship with the University of Minnesota was extremely important. And that's the only reason that I seriously considered Macalester. In fact, before I even came,

the university faculty called me and said would I sponsor a program at Macalester, the Ancient Cities Program. And we had a series of lectures from the university and elsewhere which I headed up, and we did this program. That was set in August before I had even arrived. And followed it up a number of years later with another one called "Catastrophes Through History." So it was that relationship, and then of course, once I was here—I started in '66—in 1969 we started an excavation. And it was a cooperative excavation called the Minnesota Messenian Expedition, to southwestern Greece. And it was Carleton, Macalester, and the University that participated in that. So it was that connection that made it a place that I considered, and it worked very well as far as I'm concerned.

[15:53]

LZ: Could you just go back and elaborate a little more on the "Man and His World" program and what that actually entailed for students?

WD: Well, I actually didn't teach it. But...and you'll probably get a lot of people who participated—Truman Schwartz participated. One of the great things about it was that not only did it give students a common experience, it brought faculty from a number of different departments working together in that program. It was...at that time, one of the educational programs that was very important was general education. The idea was that every student started off and you took two years in a very general program, and then you specialized, you declared a major at the end of your sophomore year. And you went on to specialize in some field. And "Man and His World" was basically a course which was to pull together, in a general education pattern, an introduction to humanities, and basic science, and things of this sort, for the non-

specialist—sort of the history of science, more than obviously not lab science but history of science, and its relationship to general history and to literature. So, that was the nature of the course. They would agree after much discussion on a syllabus of books that were to be read and general topics that were to be covered, and then each section taught by a member from a different department would cover those books and cover those topics, but obviously the discussions and the emphasis would depend upon the individual instructor. So that was the nature of the course.

[17:46]

LZ: Could you kind of describe your first impression of the students at Macalester and how they had compared to other students that you had taught?

WD: Oh, students are students. I mean, you know. One thing that was very nice—you see, at Illinois, half my time was not dealing with students at all. I was in that museum. Then, they had me doing things like trying to keep the football team qualified. So they had invented a course called "Athletics in Antiquity" and I taught that. And it was a partial credit course for athletes. So it was that sort of... And here I came, and initially I taught only—well, I think the first year, did I teach any Greek? I think it was all Latin when I first got here. But, what was wonderful was I had very few students. It meant that, for example, a couple of years later we produced this pamphlet about our Classics Department. And one of the things, in the background, they had a picture of a class. Well, you look this was held in the basement of, what was then the commons over there, where the food service was. There were about what, four of us, four students and me. It was that kind of seminar kind of experience and it was wonderful. It was absolutely

wonderful. The students, I think most of them were from Minnesota. I mean it was definitely...we did not have as wide a diversity of students from different geographical areas, then as we do now. And at that time, most of them were more traditional students, I would have said. But characteristic at Macalester in all of the years that I've been here, is one always finds a fair number of students who are very independent-minded, and they won't take anything for granted. And that's been exciting. It really has. The vast bulk of students are more or less the same everywhere. But one characteristic that I've found out—I don't know, because I've spent from '66 till I retired here, so I don't know whether one would have found that elsewhere. But certainly my experience here in Minnesota has been, your typical student who does what's expected and gets the kind of grades that you expect of a good student, that's Carleton. Here, what you get is a student who won't take the courses you tell him he or she needs to take, will insist upon writing a paper or doing a topic that you think is probably foolish, but they're going to do it anyway. And as a teacher one learns a great deal. I had one student here, Jim Benson, who alienated practically every faculty member on this campus. He thought most of us were fools and told us so. And he started off in music, and then he switched to classics and he didn't want to take anything but classics, and ultimately he went off to India and he lived there for many years, and he learned Sanskrit and came back and has a faculty position at Harvard and he, you know, he's been... But he went his own way, and I've had a number of students like that. So I would have said my experience, the experiences I treasure are the Mac students who rock the boat, challenging students. That was fun.

[22:04]

LZ: I know that Lou Garvin really went on a mission to hire a lot of professors in the 1960's and I'm curious of how that was like for you to come to a college campus where a lot of the faculty was new, and how that...

WD: In those first two years, '66-'67, seventy new faculty members. I mean, when you think of the size of our faculty, about a hundred and sixty right now, we're talking about a tremendous turnover in those first two years I was here. Well, it...there was a certain degree, and I must confess, I was young and I didn't know the place, didn't know the history, didn't know the culture. So I tended to be, I'm sure, rather scornful. In fact, Arne Holtz was in the Education Department, finally called me aside one time and said "We really have been doing a pretty good job here at Macalester, it's not as if suddenly Macalester was inventing itself in 1966." But, I really did, I mean, there were a number of old timers here that were tremendous, tremendous people. But all of a sudden the college had decided to shift its focus. And it was a debate that continued actually for several years after I got here. We, during the Depression and when it was hard to get students here, the college had tried what St. Thomas has done now and other schools have tried in this area. That is, they branch out, they provide vocational opportunities and programs to try to attract as many students as possible. And so the last one that hung on for a long time and is still a part of our curriculum, although we no longer have a degree in it—that is certified teachers—was the education program. But after I got here, for a while there we debated seriously adding a nursing program. Finally it was decided that Macalester was going to be exclusively a liberal arts college. At any rate, when I came in '66 that was the direction to which we had decided to move. But then when the crisis came in the '70s then it was reexamined, and ultimately reaffirmed that that's what we were going to do. We voted down the nursing

program. When I look back on it, I don't regard the fact that there were so many of us new as a...it wasn't a problem. It may have been hard for the people, the faculty who were here before, because they had to adjust to a tremendous influx of new people. I don't know that there's been any period in the history of the college where we've had that kind of rapid change.

[25:20]

LZ: You referred to the crisis in the 70's and I guess that was kind of leading up to my next question—kind of the overall climate of Macalester as you were here in the late '60's and into the '70s, just kind of, what issues students were concerned about and faculty were concerned about, and how that came about.

WD: Well, I think the students were primarily concerned with the Vietnam War. I think that's the major issue that threatened everyone. The faculty, what had happened—when I came here, one of the plusses, I mean one of the reasons that I could come here, was that Garvin had access to funds. That a) he could pay my way to Greece to dig in '66. He could provide a substitute for a sabbatical in 1968. There was money available, and it came from DeWitt Wallace. And these funds were, it was a very poor way to fund a college. Because what the college would do, they would go to Mister Wallace and say "We think it would be great if we did X." And Mister Wallace would then write a check for seventy thousand dollars or whatever the program was to be, for so many years. Then the money would disappear. And it was always on top of, it never supported the general budget. So when I got my sabbatical, for example, it wasn't a sabbatical of the college, it was under a Wallace-funded program called "The Great Teachers" program. The idea was that one would go off and sit at the feet of a great teacher. Well, as a matter of fact,

what the college actually used the money for was, as in my case, providing a substitute sabbatical. They brought Bachman in physical education here. I mean, presumably, to do something in, great teaching in phys ed. It was that kind of program which could be used elastically. They had, I mean, the Wallaces funded a babysitting fund so that new faculty could get their babysitting paid for. There was a book purchase plan—a faculty member could go to the bookstore and order any book he wanted and pay a dollar. It was this very strange... Well, in the beginning of the 70's, Wallace became disenchanted, and pulled all that. At which point of course, we had done a lot of thing foolishly. Our funding, our financial base was not secure. We had expanded—the student body had grown to something like two thousand students, and the faculty had grown correspondingly. And all of a sudden the bottom fell out. Faculty had to be let go. The programs had to be diminished. We had to tighten our belts. At the same time, we had a president who had a wonderful new program, the EEO [Expanded Educational Opportunities Program. And I was on the Faculty Advisory Council when that program was discussed and approved. And I thought it was a great program, I still do. But it was an expensive program. So all of these factors together produced a crisis for the faculty in the early '70s. And a number of faculty had to be let go, and programs trimmed, and for a number of years it was touch-and-go financially. That was, I think, for the faculty, that was as, maybe it was a more immediate crisis for them, because many were losing their jobs. And it's dangerous to build, because if you have to cut back then human lives are on the line.

[29:54]

LZ: Can you further describe the EEO program?

WD: Well, as I said, the idea—Arthur Fleming, the president who replaced Harvey Rice...and I remember when we hired him. He had been in the Cabinet of Eisenhower. And after the Eisenhower administration, he had become President of the University of Oregon. And I had a good friend in the Classics Department at Oregon, who wrote me when Macalester hired him. He said "Look out, he bankrupted us, he'll bankrupt you." Arthur Fleming was just full of good ideas, but absolutely no idea of how one has to go about funding them. So, his idea was that one of the reasons why African-Americans in particular, people of color, find it difficult to come to a college like this is two-fold. One, the financial obligations that are not just tuition, but all the aspects of supporting one's self for higher education: the room, the board, the books, all these things. The other aspect was, in many cases, they were not as well prepared. So the idea of the program was first of all to completely fund these students, and secondly to provide all the necessary academic support to enable them to succeed. And I think both those goals were wonderful. And I think we had some significant successes as a result. We had a number of wonderful African American students that added to the college and ended up going on and have done wonderful things since. It did not touch us in classics very much. It's very rare to find an African American who wants to study Latin or Greek. So, my immediate problem at that time of course, was that Classics has been in a situation for, long before other departments reached this stage. In the old days, curriculums were driven by tradition, and students were put into the program by requirements. Well, by the time you reached the 1960s, a) students no longer trust traditions, and the colleges were busily dropping all requirements. Classics had faced that long before because it had already begun after World War II. But the response of Classics was then to find other things that would interest students. And of course one of these things was mythology. So every classics department started trotting out courses in mythology because students are

always interested in those. So, we did that. We tried...I taught, because I wanted to, my courses in my own specialty—archaeology. I taught history in the History Department, I taught the archaeology course cross-listed in Anthropology. And we tried, we created a course with the Religion Department, Athens and Jerusalem, to try to get interest in that area. We tried various experiments. And during the great crisis in the '70s, Tony Caponi in the Art Department approached me and they had a crisis because they had a program and not enough faculty. So he, he knew that I had training in art history and taught art history at the university level, so he asked me if I would take on teaching two courses that would be cross listed in Classics in the Art Department. So I started teaching the first semester, the survey course in art history, and Roger Blakely in the English department taught the second semester. Then in the spring term I would always offer classical art, alternating with medieval art and renaissance art. So we had a specialized course in the spring term. So that's the way I justified two courses outside our department in the art department. And that's one of the ways in which we managed to maintain a healthy enrollment and our three positions. Of course the only way they would have been able to terminate us, because all three of us were tenured, would have been to declare a state of financial exigency which permits one to wipe a department out or reduce the size. And they didn't do that in the '70s, so the faculty that lost their position were nontenured. But, at any rate...

[35:31]

LZ: What was that like for you, to teach courses in so many different fields? Did you find you enjoyed that or was it...

WD: Well I can tell you, the greatest thing about Macalester from my perspective, in addition to the many very interesting students, was the faculty collaboration. Now, again, if students had a joint experience in "Man and His World" and "Confrontations" and all those things, the faculty at that time—we had a faculty lounge in the basement of Old Main. And right next to it were the mailboxes. And in those days, faculty from all across the campus would come over there, usually in the morning, to pick up their mail, have a cup of coffee and talk to each other. So there in that faculty coffee room there was a tremendous amount of interchange. And of course, faculties are always fighting each other over one topic or another. So, one would come to see what professor X had written and mimeographed on his mimeograph machine, was handing out his position paper on this topic or that topic. So there was that aspect. But the most important thing for me were the many ways in which I continued to be a student. The most recent was David Lanegran, this was the freshman seminar program, and David Lanegran in geography and I decided to offer a joint freshmen seminar. We would have our own students who would do their writing for us. But we would meet together and have a common sort of program and classes and field trips and that sort. And I learned a tremendous amount from David. I hope and expect he probably did from me as well. But the idea was I would bring my archaeological background to an analysis of our urban setting here. So, for example, why are there sidewalks on Macalester campus, you see. Students would come on, to keep people's feet dry, so they wouldn't get muddy feet or whatever, never realizing from the social scientist perspective, from an archaeologist's point of view, sidewalks indicate that someone wants people to walk in a certain place. The evidence is right here because if students start to make a path somewhere, the college will immediately pave it to make sure that they continue to walk the way that the college wants them to walk. So it was that kind of experience, and David and I had a lot of fun. We

taught that freshmen seminar for a number of years. That was the most recent. Then, before that, and coexisting with that, I joined a quite informal faculty seminar, on artificial intelligence. Molnar, Walt Mink, Chuck Green, I mean there were a number of us involved in that program. We would meet usually once a week. We would pick a book that we were going to read, all of us. And it was absolutely fascinating. One of the most exciting things I've ever participated in. Learning something about artificial intelligence, cognitive science, and of course one of my interests is the development of writing. So, all of these things sort of work together, so that went for a number of years. Before that, after I had been teaching art history for a while, in a department which is made up of studio artists, we really didn't have an art historian in that department. So, all of a sudden I realize here I'm teaching art history, I've never been an artist. So I got the college to fund me by giving me release time and I took every studio course that the department offers, and that was absolutely wonderful. And I can't help but think that it helped me in the teaching of Art History as well, because it gave me a much greater understanding of the technical processes involved in work. But, it was an experience. And then this led to my team teaching with Jerry Rudquist—we had a course on the human figure. I would lecture on the use of the human figure as a subject in art in art history, and then every afternoon we'd adjourn to the studio. And we had models, and all of us would then draw or paint or whatever, sculpt, from the models. That was a wonderful experience. So it is the ongoing education that I have enjoyed here that has been I think, my greatest memory of Macalester, and the thing I value the most about it.

[41:10]

LZ: This might be a nice time to talk about your personal research, especially in archaeology. I know that the digs in Greece are still very popular at Macalester, and kind of your involvement with that program here.

WD: Well, as I said, the University Messenia Expedition was what I was involved with. And it started in 1969, and our last field season was '73. And then we had a study season in '74, and then for years we worked on the publication of that—that's now complete. I forget how many volumes. The current excavation, that's come far more recently. I didn't have anything to do with that one. I was, you see, I was engaged both on the level of field work in Greece, but also on the level of the field of archaeology as a whole. So, Macalester was a supporting institution for the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. I was on the Executive Committee of that body. I was a...became involved in Washington, D.C. in funding grants for archaeological research—I had to review grant applications and things of that sort. So I was participating at both levels, both in the field myself and also at the level of academic, institutional support for this kind of work. The problem with field work in archaeology in Greece in particular, is it's gotten very expensive. It is heavily regulated by the Greek government. And there are very few permits that are granted for excavations that Americans can do. People wait for years and years to get a permit because usually there are only two excavating permits per year. So, I figured after I finished with Nichoria, our excavation in '74 or 5, I was not going to try to get on another one at that point. So that really was the end of my actual field. I continued, in 1980 I led the summer program again. I participated, I gave papers at international meetings as late as '87 or something like that. I think that was the year.

[44:25]

LZ: Did student accompany you on these excavations in the '70s?

WD: Um, it was hard because, again...you see, the way a Greek excavation works is you hire local people to do the actual field work. So the only positions that, where students are involved is if they can assist in supervising field work, or they have some particular expertise. In other words, one can always use people who are wonderful artists, because one has to draw the finds that are being uncovered. Or do the architectural planning. You have to have people who can do the surveying and photographers. So, it's very hard to place students in a dig in those days. So, we did, Mark Ketchum, from our department, an undergraduate—I did have him come with us in '69. And he helped me supervise the opening of trenches. That was an exploratory year, we were digging trial trenches. I don't think we had a place for a Macalester student in the subsequent years because all the places were taken by graduate students. This began to change. After we finished our dig, why all of a sudden excavations in Greece discovered that they didn't have the money to hire local labor. So they began to use undergraduates as the actual field laborers—the ones who had to go out there and sweat. So our son, who was in his senior year here at Macalester, he applied. They were taking students, student volunteers at the excavations in the Agora of Athens, right in downtown Athens. So our son got a position working there on that excavation the summer he graduated from Mac. I don't know if any other Mac students went to that one or not. But our son did. Fell in love, had a wonderful summer, I don't know what else he learned. Oh well.

[47:08]

LZ: To shift gears, I know that you've been involved with the religious life aspect of Macalester and if you could kind of elaborate about that experience.

WD: Well, it so happened that for whatever reason, I found the church when I came to Macalester. I found Macalester and the church at the same time practically. The Sunday after I arrived here... I'd never been to church. I wasn't raised in any religious denomination. My father was Roman Catholic, and my mother was decidedly anti-religion. And so I had never had any experience. My wife was Roman Catholic, and she had been faithful right up until the time we moved up here. And the Sunday after we got here, I told my wife "I'm going to the Episcopal Church across the street from Mac," and she said "I'm coming, too." So, we joined the Episcopal St. Paul's Church on the Hill across the street. Now I know one of the reasons why I did that. When I was an undergraduate, I was a debater. I was on the debate squad at Washington University. A wonderful squad, and my colleague who went on to become a lawyer with the large St. Louis law firm of Lewis, Rice, Tucker, Allen and Chubb, he and I were, became very close. We had a wonderful, oh absolutely irrefutable position on nationalizing industries, socialism, which we were in favor of. So at any rate, he happened to be a very devout Episcopalian. And he kept dragging me to various lectures and talks and things of that sort. And he kept saying, "you really ought to think about this," and I said "I'm too busy, I don't have time to think about things like that." I said "I know one day I will." So it happened that I happened to think about it when I came here. So I joined the church. And, one thing sort of led to another. I discovered that St. Paul on the Hill was financially in dire straits and they had a fairly elaborate program. And so they were thinking how in the world could they afford the help they needed. And it occurred to me, here I have Greek and can read the New Testament in Greek and all that,

and it would take me virtually no preparation to train for the ministry and then I could volunteer and help out. So, I came to the Macalester chaplain, Max Adams, to see what he would think of the idea. My Bishop here in the Episcopal Church said "no way." And Max thought it sounded like it might be a good idea. Both the bishop and Max and everybody that I talked to really had the wrong idea. They thought somehow, they thought I would become a missionary on the Macalester campus. I had no idea of doing that. What I was thinking of was helping a local church that needed some help as a volunteer in my spare time. So, I discovered I did have to go to seminary after all. The Bishop insisted I go to Luther Seminary here. Had a wonderful course in systematic theology there. Then I decided, because I liked church music, that I wanted to go where there was good church music. So I went to Cambridge University in England, and went to a Church of England training college at Cambridge University, called Westcott House. That was a wonderful experience, too. Got introduced to the English tutorial system, which I really think is fantastic. If you've got the faculty that can do it, and a small enough student load that you can devote that kind of time to it—basically, what it means is, I go in to meet my tutor, he'd give me a list of books, and say "come back next week with an essay you've written on topic x." And then you have to read it to him, and then he would tear it to pieces, and give you another one, and so it would go. So what you're really doing is you're teaching yourself. I mean, basically is what it is. But it works. At any rate, so I got my training there. Then I had to go back and take twelve written and oral examinations here for the Episcopal Church. It turned out it took me longer than I thought. So I was finally ordained in 1971 here in the Macalester Chapel. Let's see, I brought the pictures of that ordination that someone took. This was the Bishop of Minnesota at that time, Bishop Philip McNairy. And this was an Episcopal priest who was on the faculty of religion visiting here that year—he preached the sermon. He went back to Rutgers

in the religion department. There's Al Currier who was the assistant chaplain when I was ordained. And a whole host of—there's my daughter, there—and a whole host of folks were there, including, there's Georgiana Palmer. Her father was an Episcopal priest, so she came to the ordination. I was presented with a communion set that Gail Kristensen in the Art Department made. Bob Bunting in the, he was an Episcopal laymen in the Economics Department. So it was a...Ernie Sandeen, and Roger Blakely. So it was a fun time. I was ordained then in the Chapel in May '71. But I never thought of the college as my primary area where I would exercise my ministry. Despite all this expectation that I'd be this missionary. In fact, it made life more difficult, really. I mean I was much more suspicious as an ordained minister here, by other faculty and by students, than I would have been had I not been ordained. But, we had a small group of Episcopal students. We had a regular weekly service in the Chapel. Max Adams permitted that after he read carefully our liturgy, and decided that we were offering a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, because Presbyterians don't like the idea of the mass or the Eucharist as a renewed sacrifice. So Max said "ok, you can do that." We had some members of staff, some students, one of whom has gone on to be ordained—Lucy Lynn Hogan. And so we did that for a number of years. Then, the Chaplain's office here got into all sorts of difficulties. And in 1974 they asked me if I would serve as Acting Chaplain between Presbyterians. So I did, again as a volunteer in addition to my academic role. That was fun, I enjoyed the time. I'm glad I don't oh, the thing I hated was the weddings.

[55:19]

This is a place where people drive down Grand Avenue and say "oh, that's a nice chapel, that'd be a wonderful place to have a wedding, let's go in there." So, you get people off the street who want weddings. You get all sorts of bizarre ceremonies. Then the Macalester students, typically

Macalester students, who get married there. I had one couple, they arrived ready for the wedding, everything was set. The parents were there, everybody was there for the wedding. And they showed up, and he had forgotten to get the wedding license. So, I, strictly illegally, I hope this does not go out, but I married them anyway; told them you've got to bring me a wedding license now. So, at any rate, the weddings, that was the bad part being Acting Chaplain. I didn't like that. But, it gave me the chance to do a few things. I'm the only chaplain at Macalester I think that managed to twist the arm of the Music Department into providing music at our chapel by the choirs here. Dale Warland brought his choir over, and would sing for the services. And probably the only chaplain here who also would bring in all the faculty. So, I remember that, I think I brought a copy of the program that we ran that year. In fall term we ran a series of services called, based on ultimate questions. And I got Jerry Weiss, who's an atheist, from the Psychology Department. Davie Hopper from religion. Bud Thurston who was a priest from off campus, and Claude Welsh the head of the Biology Department, for example to participate in those. Then we did a varieties of religious heritage in the spring term. Cal Roetzel, who's a Methodist by his ordination, and then Max Adams, of course, did the Presbyterian. But we got Peter Weisensel to talk about the Orthodox tradition, and Ellis Dye the Mormon tradition, and Ernie Sandeen the Pentecostal. So, we got faculty involved. And that was lots of fun. I think it was, it really wasn't where students were. But I enjoyed it. And I think the other faculty who participated enjoyed it. And some students obviously did, as well. But, the....Russ Wigfield, when he came on, he provided the kind of Chaplaincy which I think students value the most, and what's probably most important—that is primarily pastoral, devoted to the student counseling. I was more interested in the history of religion, and the theology, and the academic intellectual side of things. At that time, that was not where students were. I think

it was a good idea, and the college—one of the things they wanted to do, of course they wanted to use religion. So they came to me and said we've got to have a big all college Thanksgiving, with all the traditional Thanksgiving hymns and so forth, and so on, to try to build school spirit. So, that went alright. But I was not happy with it. So, that was really my involvement. And the chaplain who came next, Bodo, before Wigfield, he put the kibosh on the religious program here by insisting that all students sign a pledge to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Of course that did not go over at Macalester at all.

[59:15]

LZ: So we had just finished up talking about your kind of religious experience, both at Macalester, and I guess I'm just curious about what, how Macalester students viewed religion at this time and how you've seen that evolve over your tenure at Mac.

WD: Well, I think all you have to do is look at the curriculum in the Religion Department to see how things have shifted. And in a sense they're responding to student interest, as we all have. And what is interesting is the interests have shifted to all sorts of religious traditions and experiences. So many of the people, when I first came here, students... Students at Macalester then—and I don't know what the tradition is now, I suspect probably there's still a fair degree of similarity—most Macalester students tended towards careers, positions after graduation in service, in one way or another: teaching, and ministry was one. So, when I first came here we had a number of students who would then go on to the ministry. And not just Presbyterian, but a number of people did go on to the Presbyterian ministry. Now that...I don't know what the situation is—there was an article just recently, just this spring, of a young woman who decided to

go on and pursue ordination as a Unitarian. So it's still here, still that tradition, I suppose is here, but what happened in the turmoil of the late '60s and early '70s was a far greater emphasis not on traditional patterns of worship, traditional denominations and their concerns. I mean I can remember a chapel service where funny tobacco was obviously prevalent, and psychedelic lights and music that those of us of my age would hardly bear to listen to, and people sitting up on the top of the divisions in the Chapel. So it was a time when all the traditions were being challenged. And of course the religious ones were important in that. I don't know where things are at the moment, because I don't follow, since I stopped teaching in '92. I don't see many students. But I know from my grandchildren what they're interested in. My grandchildren are members of the Episcopal Church, but very unwilling, you know, they're dragged. But what...my grandson, my one grandson, is exceedingly interested. In fact, both, my two older grandsons are extremely interested. One wrote me an email and asked me every question under the face of the earth about religious questions that he wanted me to expound on. And my other grandson is involved in a group of students that are interested in Buddhism and this/that or the other thing, you know. So the kinds of interests are still there, it's just they're more broadly expressed, and not as narrowly expressed as they once were.

[1:03:07]

LZ: Moving on to your later years at Mac in the '80s and '90s, we talked, everyone talks a lot about the issues in the '60s and the '70s, but what were some of the major issues that you found students to be concerned with at that time, just kind of general things that were going on with campus life.

WD: It's hard for me to answer that question. There have always been at Macalester a cause du jour. Since they follow one another, I no longer remember. Is it Coca-Cola this year, or divestment another year. Or in particular what the issue might happen to be, so it's very hard for me to say. There always is something. You know, just... And again, I think the tradition of Macalester being a liberal school with students who are politically active and sensitive is a fairly accurate picture. Now again in Classics, we often attracted quite conservative students. I had one wonderful boy, Sam Adams. His father was a professor at the U, in archaeology, but in Mayan archaeology. Sam came and he took courses in classics and he always dressed in a suit with a vest and a tie, and he was the epitome of the conservative. So we've had them, and they've been a valuable part of our constituency as well. I just don't, I can't think, in terms of the faculty, one thing—a major issue in the latter part of my years here was as the seventy that added in '66 and '67 were reaching retirement, the question of distribution of faculty positions became a major concern. And again I was president of the, Chair of the advisory counsel for a couple of years there in the '80s. And that was our...we spent all our time on trying to figure out the allocation of vacant positions, or impending vacant positions, so that was a major concern. Then for faculty, the curriculum. The curriculum is always a good ground because one always thinks it's not—"if only we made these changes why students would get better educated"—and the truth of the matter is, no matter what the curriculum is, the end result is always the same. So, we went through the debates for dropping requirements, and then we debated putting requirements back in. And it's the great pendulum that's swung back and forth on that one. So, those issues have constantly aggravated the faculty. There have been some strong political divisions because the faculty, too, is— I would suspect that probably the faculty has more conservatives in it by proportion than does the student body. And sometimes that difference, the liberal-conservative

difference in the faculty has created issues and conflicts. I can remember one year, one of the tasks of the advisory—EPAG it is now—but then it was just the Faculty Advisory Council. One of the tasks of the Faculty Advisory Council is to present slates of nominees for election to faculty offices. And we were between presidents, so we were going to select faculty representatives for the search committee. And the Faculty Advisory Council at that time submitted a slate of candidates for that position. A group of conservative faculty submitted an alternate slate, which was elected. So it was an all conservative group of faculty members that were elected to represent the faculty in the selection of the next president of the college. We ended up with a conservative president. I don't know if there's any correlation between those two, but that's, you know, these are the sorts of things that rumble through faculty.

[1:07:58]

LZ: We haven't talked a lot about the relationship between faculty and the administration throughout your time at Macalester, if you have any views or thoughts on that issue?

WD: Well, it's been checkered, checkered. Because, again, with almost any faculty—any president of the college, there are those faculty that thinks that president is wonderful, and those that disagree. At one point, with Flemming for example—a great many faculty liked Flemming a great deal, and a great many just couldn't stand him. He did cause such a division that at one point there was an attempt by the faculty to introduce a motion of no confidence in the president. I don't remember whatever happened to that. I remember Flemming called me in to his office and said that he felt he deserved a chance to make his case or something of the sort, and tried to talk me out of—because as Faculty Advisory Council Chair at that time, I felt I had to present

what the Faculty Advisory Council wanted to do. And I think they were, Council was prepared to introduce because they thought fiscally that things were becoming unglued, as they were. So, it's been interesting, too, the variations in our administration. We've had, right at the start with Garvin and the Dean, Ken Goodrich from the Psychology Department, I thought we had an absolutely wonderful team. And it's too bad we couldn't keep Goodrich, and Garvin retired. So we lost that team. And they were just wonderful. I don't know that I've ever felt that we've had a comparable, as effective administration in my years at Macalester. John Davis' great gift to this college was to try to heal wounds that had resulted from the '70s debacle. He brought the faculty together, he healed the wounds with DeWitt Wallace. So, in that sense, John was needed at the time and he did a wonderful job. Much less effective, I feel, in terms of the faculty's concerns, in the curriculum, in the internal life of dealing with the nuts and bolts of our ongoing operation. John was too busy handling the other issues. I always thought that Betty Ivey was a wonderful Provost. And I think that was one of the great tragedies of my final years here was the way in which she and Gavin, President Gavin, fell out and she was relieved of her position. But, well she went on to other things. And the college muddles on, so... We've had a varied experience with our administrators and a constant love-hate relationship with faculty.

[1:11:50]

LZ: During your time at Mac did you see the relationship between students and the faculty shift in any...through you know, different eras in Macalester's history?

WD: I don't think so. I mean, if you come to teach at a place like this, there are exceptions. But one really does have to place teaching as a fairly high priority. So, it's not a research institution,

and there are no graduate students. And, um, one's day-to-day activity is working with students. So...I think most people who stay here, and who thrive here, are people who are genuinely interested in working with students. So I don't really see that there's been any significant... If you ask the question what changes when an institution like this goes from a basically rather sleepy parochial local institution into one with a national prominence, to have a national prominence means you have to have a faculty who has national prominence. You have to have faculty who are known outside of the institution. That means you have to have faculty who are also devoting their time and attention to their disciplines outside of Mac. And that does, or can cause some significant problems. More for faculty than for students, because it makes the faculty under greater tension. They can't just devote themselves entirely to their teaching tasks. And if they are scholars, and productive, it also creates a greater demand on them for their time. Because the teaching load here and so on has always been—up until recently, I don't know what it is now—has been fairly demanding. Particularly, again, when I stop and think about the number of courses I taught, and had to prepare for, that's incredible. I mean no researcher at a major institution is going to teach, if any course outside his or her own specialty, more than one or two. You know, so, and every course you teach, if you're a decent teacher, means preparation. You can't just can a course and repeat it forever. So there are those tensions, which I think going to a college with a national reputation represent. I think on the whole, the college has managed fairly well because one tends to get—faculty's lives go through the same cyclical patterns as most people's lives do. There are times when they are creative scholars and times when they are more into their teaching opportunities, so one phases in and out—this works for a college life. So, usually it's the young faculty that are most active still because they are pursuing research they began as graduate students. And then as you go older and older and older and farther and

farther away from the on going research, you become more and more involved in the teaching aspect of things. I think this works fairly well for the college. We've always had a fair cadre of people who are nationally known. You'll also notice another very interesting phenomenon—a lot of research that is done by faculty at a college like Macalester is research in the method of teaching their discipline. So that's a way of combining both national prominence in research as well as the focus on the teaching.

[1:16:13]

LZ: What are some of your more memorable experiences working with students? Did you work closely with students on certain projects.

WD: Oh yes, I mean, honors projects, always. And then the ones that sear you, that you'll never get over—the student who committed suicide, whose work I was directing. Why one didn't see it, why one didn't anticipate that was coming... But, I had a number of wonderful student honors projects. The great disappointment in teaching at a school like this is, again, when you're teaching graduate students who go on in your own discipline, your life goes on with them, as well. I have students that I have worked with in the summer programs in Greece that I still know and still communicate with and follow, who have come back to Mac to lecture from time to time, and things of this sort. But with undergraduate students who don't go on in your own discipline, what happens usually is one loses track. They go on, their lives change. After all, four years of undergraduate experience here is just a momentary blip for a student's experience. And not the most formative educationally. It's what happens after you leave here that's where the education really becomes serious. Here, it's a wonderful interlude, where one can play at education and

enjoy it, and enjoy all the side aspects of it, as I did as an undergraduate. I mean, I had an absolute wonderful undergraduate experience. But the classroom was the least part of my interest and experience. I mean I was in student government, I was on the debate squad, I was president of the fraternity, I traveled, national students association, I went to meetings at the University of Michigan where all the students got together and raised cane. It was a wonderful four years. And then when I started graduate school I really had to sit down and start doing stuff. So...but I, what I regret most is that so many students that I worked with, I haven't any idea where they are, what they are doing. Occasionally, I mean, I had a student from my very first year, 1966, suddenly email me the other day. I hadn't talked to her in years, so that's fun. But that's a regret I have. It's very hard to have any sense of the students with whom one has worked. On the other hand, one of the things that I'm terribly concerned about as a teacher is the way teachers can distort students' lives. If we establish too close a bond with students as undergraduates, we can distort what they then go on to do, because they have had such a good time with one in the courses where they become enthusiastic, that then they think they are going to go on in that field. And fortunately for me, that hasn't happened very often. I've had students they're going to go on in archaeology, and then they are smart enough, thank the lord, when they get started, they realize that it's not what they really should be doing. But, that's a danger, because it's too easy to think that a charismatic teacher in one's undergraduate, in the field that that teacher has turned you on to, is really what's going to match your own talents and skills and interests ten years down the pike. And so I've had students who've left this field, gone on to law for example, other disciplines entirely, or gone into work, found various jobs in business, which is where they should have gone. They had their fun playing around with archaeology or art history here, but, there's too few positions. Of course, what happens with faculty is, one comes

in thinking "I did this and this and this" and so students I work with are going to do this and this and this in just the same way. So one tends to focus on students you think are going to go on to graduate school in your field. Both my son and daughter graduated from here. And my son is in business. He was an art major and a biology major. My daughter was a Russian and chemistry major. Now, she is in science still, but in science for which she was not steered by any of her science programs here at Macalester. She's a vice-president at Medtronic in biosciences. But this was not an area where she really did any work here. So, it's not that there aren't undergraduate things that help prepare for careers, but I'm very leery of teachers who use their influence on students to sort of push students in a given direction.

[1:22:20]

LZ: Did you see changes in kind of the backgrounds of students, or just kind of the quality of students from when you first started teaching, or is that...once you said "students are students," but...

WD: Uh, I really haven't. I mean, again, characteristically, all teachers, all fuddy-duddies like me will say "of course the new ones aren't anywhere near as well prepared" or "they don't do this" or "they don't do that." I don't notice that. I mean, it is true to say, I think, because of the way the changes—students nowadays have less a grasp on the principles of grammar of any language, than when I was growing up. But, they write just as well. They may need more help in editing, but... The biggest difference that I see is what's happened to both faculty and students as a result of technological changes. As I say, I don't know what...how the faculty interacts today, compared to the way it was when I started here, where we met each other face-

to-face. And when we wanted to talk to each other we went to the other person's office or we picked up the telephone. I suspect now people sit in their cubicles and email each other.

And...so, I would think that, to me, that's not a very good progression. I don't know to what extent that's true.

[1:24:02]

LZ: Were there any major policy changes at Macalester while you were here?

WD: What do you mean by policy changes?

LZ: Curriculum, or just, I know they got rid of the Interim program. Things where there were major changes that you saw, in terms of course loads, or diversity requirements, I know...

WD: As I say, we've gone—when I came there was a very rigorous set of requirements. Then we dropped almost all of them. And then gradually the college has been putting more and more back in again, which I think personally is a mistake. To me, it would make—that's just a personal opinion—I think it makes much more sense to have a general course, like "Man and His World" under a new heading, something like that. And require all students to do that—maybe one course at the beginning of their freshman experience here. And then say the heck with it. Anymore requirements. Because of course what happens is you get requirements that are imposed from outside. If you want to go on in a given discipline, you're going to have to have the courses that that discipline requires as entry level. If you want to go on to medical school, you're going to have to be trained and prepared to take the aptitude tests. And Graduate Record

Examination, and so on and so on and so on. There are all sorts of external requirements that are built in. So, and each department builds in requirements for its majors. So, I think that's plenty of requirements. But at any rate, that's been one of the ongoing shifts. And it's, as I say, it's just gone from rigorous—lots of them—none, and now we're gradually going back up. The biggest one I fought over personally has been the language requirement, which I've always felt is ridiculous because no one learns a language in two years. And to require people to take the foreign language and think therefore you're doing something about increasing our linguistic ability is, I think, the height of foolishness. And secondly, it locks departments, small departments that teach languages, into again a very limited curriculum. So I've never been happy with it. At first, I said "oh we've got to keep them" because I was worried about what would happen to my department if they disappeared. Because at that point, classics got lots of students who didn't want to speak a language, you see, so they could come take Latin and Greek and never have to speak a word of it and they could get through. We had students that only managed to get their degrees from Macalester because of Latin and Greek, because they could not possibly pronounce French or Spanish. That was that. So, I'm, you know, we've have that sort of ongoing, and I'm sure it will continue. Because the faculty always thinks that if we do something with the curriculum, we're going to suddenly produce a better educational product.

[1:27:21]

LZ: What is your involvement with Macalester today, and what kind of things have you been doing since retiring?

WD: Well, I continued as a volunteer in the church. So, I continue to teach for example. I'm going to be teaching art history in a way to an Episcopal church in Burnsville in the fall. I did a course in history at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in January—February, February this year. So I continue to do that. Basically at Mac, I'm not doing anything. After I retired in '92 for two years I worked at Macalester for the Provost in building projects, because I was the one in charge from the faculty's perspective in the remodeling of the Humanities building. And then I was asked by Betty Ivey to take the science building, so I did that one. Then when Dan Hornbach started as Provost we decided we were going to tackle the fine arts complex, so I worked on that one. But then of course there was no funding so it went in mothballs until it's now being pulled out again. So I did that for a couple of years. Also at the same time I was working on the allocation of space on campus. But since '94 I really haven't been active here. I keep my mailbox, I come to lectures, I do things like that... Which is too bad in a way. I think this is one of the ways in which retired faculty could be utilized far more than they are. But again one has to be asked. And in...I have mixed feelings about it. Obviously the place needs to go on without us, but it'll be fun to be at least pulled in now and again, even if just to have a discussion about a particular topic where we've had a history of dealing with a certain issue. I mean, the issues that created the biggest fuss, like Interim term—Interim term was always a problem, what to do with it, it was an added teaching responsibility. For me it was a real problem because it meant I had to create, just for four weeks, a course that I hadn't taught. So I had to generate an entire new course just for that January. That's a problem. Then we used to have a week's fall recess, and again, I probably had a lot to do with that. I thought it was a great idea. The whole idea of the college calendar, how we have spring term, then we take a week's break in the middle of that. I should think fall term would be the same way—we have a fall term, we have a week's

break in the middle of that. The problem of course is Thanksgiving. So I said, "hey, let's have Thanksgiving on campus, and then have a week in October where we have a holiday." We tried it. The first thing that happened was students took the week's vacation in October, and then cut all classes in Thanksgiving. So, they were gone both. Then, apparently—this was under John Davis. John Davis was getting heat because parents would deliver students early September and then they would come right back again in the middle of October. So, this was a big issue. John Davis, he was very smart. What he did was he waited until an interim or a vacation period when everyone was away, and he abolished the midterm vacation. So, it didn't create any tremendous riots or confrontations. But those were the—those calendar issues. And I don't know, I'm sure the faculty is probably happier with the current schedule. I think the students have lost something as well because there were plusses to that interim term. It was felt more by places like Art, because it's a wonderful time for a studio project. It's not a very good time for a lecture course, so depending on the nature... My son had a wonderful time with mud minnows as I recall one Interim. And different departments could utilize that time very productively. For internships, for all sorts of projects. Ultimately, the last few Interims that I taught, I used it as a time for students to do research for honors projects. They could take a project and work on it entirely for that month, and then I could have the time free to work with them on their projects in a way that I couldn't at other times.

[1:32:59]

LZ: Do you have a favorite memory of Macalester, a couple of favorites moments that you can think back on?

edited

WD: Oh, I have lots of favorite memories at Macalester. I mean, some of my own family. My

daughter's graduation was a wonderful time. Yeah, lots of fun times. Lots of fun times. Or the

studio course with Jerry Rudquist. He said to me he wanted an elderly model. So I said well I

knew a woman at church who was indeed elderly and I thought she might be willing to volunteer

as a model. So I went to her and I said to her "do you want to model for our life class?" And I

said to her "and you don't have to take off your clothes," and she said "you disappoint me."

[Laughter] So there are moments, lots of moments. No one.

[1:34:06]

LZ: Is there anything else that you want to talk about that we haven't covered?

WD: We've covered an awful lot. I don't think so, not unless you have some specific questions.

LZ: No, I think that's all there is.

WD: Alright. Very good.

[End of interview 1:34:20]