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Interview with Ellis Dye, DeWitt Wallace Professor of German

Ellis Dye

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Interview with: **R. Ellis Dye**
DeWitt Wallace Professor of German, 1966-2006

Date: **Wednesday, May 16th, 2007, 9:00a.m.**

Place: Home of Ellis Dye, St. Paul, Minnesota
Interviewer: Laura Zeccardi, Class of 2007

**Edited interview
run time:** 1:13:20 minutes

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Interview with R. Ellis Dye

Laura Zeccardi, Interviewer

May 16, 2007

Home of R. Ellis Dye, St. Paul, Minnesota

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 Wednesday May 16th, 2007 and I am interviewing R. Ellis Dye, Professor of German at his home in St. Paul. So if you'd just like to start by starting your name, and where you're originally from, and how old you were when you first came to Macalester.

ED: My name is Ellis Dye, that is full name Robert Ellis Dye. I was born in Spring City, Utah—a town in the center of Utah, population seven hundred, then and now [laughter]. When I came to Macalester, which was in 1966, I was thirty years old.

[00:45]

LZ: If you could start by giving a background of your education and then kind of what you were doing prior to coming to Macalester.

ED: I'll try to keep this short. It's a long background of course. I went to little schools, a high school in a neighboring town to Spring City, taught no foreign languages of any kind. I was the president of every class from the seventh grade up through the twelfth, and in the twelfth grade was the student body president of the high school. Went from there to the University of Utah,

where I studied for a couple of years and then I interrupted my studies to go on a Mormon mission to Germany, after having taken one year of German at the University, from 1956 until 1959. And then I came back and completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Utah in German and Philosophy, and went on to graduate school at Rutgers University, where I stayed for six years, completing an M.A. after three years and then three years later a Ph.D. My first teaching—well, I had several teaching jobs, including one while I was still an undergraduate at the University of Utah. But at Rutgers I had several. My first tenure-track teaching job was at the women's college of Rutgers, which is Douglass College in New Brunswick, New Jersey. At that time it was a seller's market, not a buyer's market, so I had opportunities. And I left Douglass after two years to come to Macalester. I came to Macalester in 1966 and have been there ever since.

[02:50]

LZ: Can you kind of describe the hiring process, and how you even...were you approached by Macalester or was that something...?

ED: Everything's complicated of course. One of my friends at Rutgers had been looking for a job and had flown out to St. Paul because there was an opening in German, in the German Department. But he didn't have his Ph.D. yet, and the college and he didn't come to terms. So he said to me, "You ought to look into this". And I wrote a letter to the department chair at the time, who was on sabbatical. The provost somehow got the letter. And he contacted me, flew me out to Macalester and we did come to terms. And so that's how I ended up at Macalester.

[03:39]

LZ: Was there anything in particular that drew you to the school?

ED: Yes, the international orientation. Macalester at that time had a bunch of international programs and was known as an international school. It had the Student Work Abroad Project, SWAP, for instance. It had a SPAN—which is not just peculiar to Macalester, other schools had that too—the Student Project for Amity among Nations, and other things like that. The World Press Institute was going already. They even instituted for a while something—let me see if I can come up with this acronym—I always can, but I'm struggling now...um...FOCUSED, Foreign on the Scene Confrontation with Unusually Significant Developments [laughter]. So that they would say, send a single student off to—then already in the mid-'60s—to study the Arab-Israeli conflict, something that is still going. Students who were usually entirely unprepared to study anything like that. But there was this international focus, and I thought this is a place where you could start a study abroad program in German. I proceeded to do that when I came here. OK.

[05:16]

LZ: What was your first impression of the campus as a whole, and then more specifically your department.

ED: Well...the hiring process at the time—I was hired by a provost by the name of Lucius Garvin. You will have heard of him, as were a lot of people. I think the entering class of new faculty of 1965 was the largest in the history of the college. And 1966 was the second largest.

So, he was hiring people all over the place. He hired full-time, and that meant that you had sort of two kinds of citizenship in the faculty. Macalester faculty up until that time, with notable exceptions of course, but to quite a large extent the faculty was staffed by—to some extent even by Macalester graduates with M.A.'s from the University of Minnesota. The college was a regional college for the children of teachers and preachers, closely linked with the Presbyterian Church at that time. You may know that Macalester and the House of Hope Presbyterian Church were founded by the same person, Edward Duffield Neill. The tie was very close at that time, and Lucius Garvin went out and hired all these mercenaries like myself—people who had better degrees but no particular ties to the Upper Midwest or the Presbyterian Church. And that created a fair amount of friction, not to say conflict, later it became serious conflict. We weren't always welcomed, we mercenaries, and to some extent we were hired over the heads of the existing members of given departments, and lots of them were let go. A notable example was the English Department. That is, they hired—Lucius Garvin hired—a man by the name of Bill Hunter to chair the—he was not a young man, middle aged I guess at the time—to chair the English Department, and with the charge of upgrading the English Department. And he proceeded to do that, so that a lot of the members of the English Department were let go and new Ph.D.'s were brought in as part of this big hiring project. And that happened all over the college to some extent. Then there's a lot of history that follows as a result of that. A lot of Macalester—I won't tell you more than you want to hear—but a lot of Macalester's history has a lot to do with the demographic fact that a lot, that a huge number of new faculty were hired in the '60s. That's different from most institutions of higher education because in most cases faculty were hired gradually. As somebody left, somebody new was hired, and they were absorbed into an existing culture. In the case of Macalester, so many new people were hired all at once that it was like a

basketball going through the neck of a giraffe, and the existing culture was more or less overthrown in the late '60s and early '70s. I can tell you as much as you want to hear about the crisis at the end of the '60s and early '70s. I don't want to get into more detail than you want.

LZ: No, that would be great if you could.

[08:54]

ED: OK. Well, one of the first things that happened was that the curriculum got totally overhauled. That is, all kinds of requirements were thrown out. For instance, graduation requirements, the religion requirement, the Phy Ed requirement. It used to be that everybody had to take Phy Ed courses at Macalester. And eventually in '68 the language requirement, which affected those of us who were teaching languages of course. And this was at the time of the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights revolution, and those were two great big factors in all of these developments. Students were being drafted to serve in Vietnam, and they were drafted—their draft status was affected by their status otherwise. I mean by the, there was a number system, but it mattered of course whether you stayed in school and had good grades or not. So it caused a bit of a crisis of conscience for the faculty when it came to grading. I mean, "if I flunk this guy will he get sent to Vietnam?"...was a question. You will know about Tim O'Brien, do you know who Tim O'Brien is?

[10:15]

ED: Tim O'Brien is a successful author now, but he was the student body president of Macalester I believe in 1968. A political science major. When Tim O'Brien graduated from Macalester, he

did not go to Canada, as a lot of students did to avoid the draft. He was drafted. Tim O'Brien was sent to Vietnam and fought in heavy combat. Then he wrote a book about that called, *If I Die in a Combat Zone Box Me Up and Send Me Home*, which was a chant that was used in the Army. It was the sound-off chant, do you know that, "sound off 1-2, sound off, if-I-die-in-a-combat-zone-box-me-up-and-send-me-home". That was Tim O'Brien's first book as a result of his having been drafted and sent to Vietnam. He wrote two more about Vietnam and he's written other books since. But the conflict caused a polarization in the faculty. A conflict over political matters, over the Vietnam War, for instance. The faculty was split down the middle and I once said that if Macalester should become extinct, which it was in danger of doing, it would be a casualty of the Vietnam War. Now, another thing was the Civil Rights revolution, and the pertinent aspect of that is that Macalester adopted a program called the Expanded Educational Opportunities program—EEO—which tried to raise the percentage of minority students in one fell swoop, to ten percent. A college that had been largely populated by white middle-class Protestant children suddenly acquired—without appropriate preparations, necessary preparations having been made—ten percent minority students, many of whom were simply recruited on the streets of Chicago. That is, these were not—all the colleges were trying to do this at that time, and so there was a lot of competition for able minority students—well-prepared minority students, students who were ready for college. And Macalester, under the guidance of Arthur Flemming, who was the president at the time, decided not to enter into that competition. Instead of trying to compete for the well-prepared student, they went after the ones who had had no preparation for college. Now, this is a very long story, but it led to awful friction and conflict at the college and indirectly probably—although this is speculation because I don't think they ever publicly announced their reasons—that led to the abandonment of support of the college by

DeWitt and Lila Acheson Wallace, who withdrew their support, on which the college had heavily depended. The reason for all of this recruiting in the mid-'60s was that the Wallace's were trying to convert this sleepy regional college into the "Princeton of the Prairies"—these are all slogans—or the "Harvard of the Midwest". Lucius Garvin gave a famous speech called "Steeple of Excellence" and that's why they went out and hired all of these young Turks who were supposed to increase the quality of the college. But that led to a political upheaval, problems that were kind of characteristic at the time because other colleges had problems too. But the big difference between Macalester and the other colleges was this demographic fact that at other colleges, faculty were hired gradually and incorporated into an existing culture. Macalester—the Wallace's gave Macalester in the course of the '60s thirty-five million dollars. That's a lot more money than thirty-five million dollars sounds like now. But, even now it sounds like quite a lot of money. And that's why they were able to hire all of these people. Then they left the college high and dry and the consequence was that in 1971 there was a financial crisis—not technically financial exigency, the college never declared financial exigency—but a serious crisis and all the untenured faculty were let go. I happened to come into this situation with tenure after only three years, so I was not let go. But a friend and colleague who was hired in my department at the same time as I, with about the same credentials and achievements, was let go. And so, the rest of my career was determined by survivor's guilt [laughter]. That is, I spent gradually with a bunch of different kind of efforts, fifteen years trying to get him back, which succeeded gradually. He was brought back into the German Department, given tenure eventually while I was chair. Then he became chair, and stayed until he retired. That was Professor Sanford, David Sanford [laughter]. Let me just say that he's actually a year

younger than I am, he retired several years ago—I've hung on longer—but he's a little bit younger than I am.

[16:07]

LZ: How did these events impact the relationship between the faculty and the administration during this time?

ED: Well, you have to talk about administration in the plural because there were so many. There was such rapid turnover in the administration. That is, Lucius Garvin hired us, and then the president at the time was Harvey Rice. OK? But by '68 there was a new president—that was Arthur Flemming, who had been a favorite of the Wallaces, and the President of the University of Oregon. He fell into disfavor for reasons that you know, if you have another couple of days I could say more about [laughter]. But um, he was let go in '71. That is, let go, he resigned let us say. But I remember a faculty meeting in 1971 in the concert hall in which he said "Rest assured, the Wallaces are still good friends of Macalester College. I have full confidence—they had full confidence in me, and I in them." And you've heard this before and recently, this same sort of rhetoric about the Attorney General of the United States. That was that same kind of scene. And the next day he was gone and the Wallaces were gone. They no longer supported the college. So, that led to another president being hired—that was Jimmy Robinson, from Ohio State University. He was a political scientist at Ohio State. He brought along with him a man by the name of Chuck McLarnan. And Robinson didn't last long, and when he left Chuck McLarnan became interim President. And I hope I'm not leaving anybody out, but in 1975 John Davis was brought on the scene, and everybody knows who John Davis is. John Davis had been

the Superintendent of schools in Minneapolis, so not a higher education academic in the usual sense. He was kind of running scared, I know—I know John pretty well. But he righted the ship, and he succeeded in balancing the budget, and got the Wallaces, eventually, to promise to donate two hundred thousand dollars a year to Macalester each year that the budget was in the black. This two hundred thousand was restricted money and could be used only for student financial aid. So, but he, the Wallaces came back and contributed two hundred thousand and he got the college in the black every year. So the college always got this two hundred thousand dedicated to financial aid. No other, no faculty salaries or equipment or buildings or anything like that. But, eventually they contributed more. And as you I'm sure know, Macalester became one of the heirs of the Wallace Foundation, that is, one of six institutions who shared in the Reader's Digest fund.

[19:44]

LZ: You mentioned the EEO program and Macalester's work to incorporate more minority students, but did you also see a change in just the students that were from the Midwest once Macalester kind of dropped its vocational focus and started to try to bring itself more into an international perspective?

ED: Well, the international perspective had always been there, kind of. I mean an earlier president, I think it was actually James Wallace—if I've got his name right, DeWitt's father—who brought a bunch of Chinese students to Macalester in the I think in the '30s already, maybe the '40s. So there was always this international orientation. The big changes were that the quality, average quality of the student body declined precipitously after all these events in the

late '60s and early '70s. Macalester was written up in the underground guide for American colleges as the drug center of the Midwest, for instance. And because of political events on campus, speakers at commencement and all kinds of things, acquired a very bad reputation. Especially—not nationally so much, where the college wasn't even known that well, but in the five state area, and that meant that it became far less selective. So, prior to this Macalester had awarded, with Wallace money again, a lot of Merit Scholarships, so that the college had extraordinarily good students—many Merit Scholars. Until a couple, three years ago, the graduating class of 1972 had the highest SAT scores in the history of the college. You know, it went up like this to '72, then a precipitous decline like this and then gradually it inched upward again. And I think the average SAT scores now are higher than they were in 1972, but not for a long, it took a couple of decades before they recovered from this. That was the big thing you noticed, in addition to the fact that everybody was so rebellious in the late '60s. I mean, students demonstrating and acting out like...you could imagine this, I wouldn't even have to describe it to you, but trash-talking to professors, all kinds of demonstrations, self-assertion of the freedom to come barefooted to class and call the professors by their first names and wear funny clothes and anything to be offensive. Swear—you wouldn't believe the language we heard in class.

[Laughter]

[22:44]

LZ: How did that affect you as a fairly young professor at a college?

ED: Well, I was mostly sympathetic because a lot of we newcomers were rebels too. I was on the side that was strongly opposed to the Vietnam War. I participated in all the marches. I think

I was written up in the student newspaper as the flaming liberal on the Macalester faculty [laughter]. So I was, I was...I spoke in faculty meeting against requirements. I later changed my opinion about that. I was one of the agitators in the abolition of graduation requirements.

[23:28]

LZ: That's a good way to lead into...I know you had been, or there had been an active campaign to sort of add this diversity requirement and to add requirements, and just kind of where you stood in that whole debate and how that played out.

ED: On, in the case of the diversity requirement I have been a non-participant, actually. I'm in favor of the objective of that requirement. I'm not sure that the means that have been adopted to achieve it are very effective. But I haven't...I have become narrower and narrower and tended to mind my business a little bit more than I'm used to [laughter].

[24:10]

LZ: During that time though, were you, like in the '60s, '70s when that was brought up, were you in favor?

ED: The diversity requirement is much newer than that.

LZ: Ok.

ED: It didn't come up in the '60s and '70s at all. I mean this EEO program did of course, and lasted until '74 I believe. Then it was reduced. If I've got my dates right, and you would want to check this, but it was when that was reduced that minority students occupied 77 Macalester for two weeks. Have you heard about this event? You know about that? Well, they—I mean the students—invaded and occupied the administration building across from what was the old Library, 77 Macalester, and occupied it for two weeks. So, Macalester was on the news every night for two weeks running, on the TV news. Celebrities like Dennis [Banks] Russell Means and others came to town in support of the students occupying that building. So, it was a wild scene. But nevertheless the college did cut back on the EEO program. They simply couldn't afford what they had done. The results had not been good, either. One financial Vice-President said that all we do here is bring people to the campus who alienate the people who pay the bills [laughter]. There was, there was truth to that, the bills weren't getting paid. Moreover, I mean there were all kinds of scandalous things—there was a Registrar who embezzled money. Oh, I mean, nobody was in charge, it was a bad scene.

[26:06]

LZ: If you'd like to talk a little bit about your more personal teaching experience and your time in the German Department and kind of what that department was like.

ED: Well, when I first came, there was a bigger concentration of course on things European than there is now. At its peak, the German Department, which was not linked with Russian at the time, had six and a half FTE's. So there were six and a half people teaching German alone at Macalester probably in 1968. Now, the department was split by these same political tensions

that the whole college was split by, and we had our problems. I had problems with... I was in a way, I was, I had seniority over some of my seniors, if I may put it that way. That is, I was hired in '66, but in '67 another professor more senior than I was hired. Then there were the old-timers who had been there all along. Then in '68 yet another professor was hired as department chair, and I didn't get along politically with him—a veteran in this case—who eventually, whom I became good friends with, and stayed good friends with for a long time. But it took some years, because we had so much political conflict. When I first came I wasn't welcomed in the department at all. He had nothing to do with that—he wasn't there yet—but the old timers were. I had an office in the music building [laughter]. So, but eventually, as I say... I gave a speech once at Macalester that got published in a student publication called "Provocateur," that's Provo short for provocateur. I don't know if you've heard of "Provocateur", but there are, no doubt, copies of this still around. My speech was against the idea of *in local parentis* and requirements. So I gave this speech and my colleague—senior colleague in terms of rank—attended and walked out in the middle of it. And when he saw it in writing he said, "Oh, you cleaned it up for print, huh?" [laughter]. Well I hadn't cleaned it up at all. It was printed just the way it was given. But it shows the kind of tensions that were there. But eventually I became department chair—while he was still in the department too incidentally—and we were on the best of terms. He'd call me chief, in an ironic kind of way. I'd find off and on... Over my forty years at Macalester I've probably been department chair for about fourteen years, or fifteen, something like that. And we hired new people, too. Then there were always struggles to avoid getting cut back. I would say that my biggest lament about my years at Macalester is that I have had to spend such an enormous amount of time and energy protecting the program. It would be an exaggeration to say I've spent as much time on that as I have on teaching or research, but not too

big an exaggeration. I mean, instead of being able to do what I was hired to do, I was always involved in some way protecting the program in a larger more peripheral sense too... I served on an enormous number of committees that had nothing to do with my department, but one of the reasons I did it was because I cared about the program. I told you about the colleague that got fired. I used to sometimes negotiate things. I would say, they'd want me to serve on a committee. Some of these were elected, I got elected to a lot of these committees. Some of them were ad hoc committees, and you'd get appointed or something. Sometimes I would say "Well, if you'll let David teach another course in the German Department, I'll do it." [laughter] Or something like that, so that's how that worked. I went on to, as I say, to become narrower. I found out after a while, I mean I published something early on, but then because of a lot of things didn't publish anything for a while. But got back into it a bit and found out that I could do it, surprised me actually [laughter]—that I could get accepted somewhere, in prestigious academic journals, some of them very selective. And I proceeded along with that and along with my teaching. I liked teaching, and I've done alright at it I think, too.

[31:28]

LZ: Was the German department one of the only departments that seemed to have to protect itself, or was that just because of financial...

ED: No, that's all the language departments. Lately, not Spanish, but early on Spanish was as vulnerable as any of the others. So that was all of the language departments. Other departments too. I mean even Physics, for instance. Chemistry and Biology have always been ok because of pre-med preparation programs. But physics doesn't do much for pre-med, so physics was always

vulnerable. Political science has always been very popular and trendy and fun and it's pre-law, kind of, so that's been ok. The Religion Department was vulnerable, philosophy—some of my courses have been cross-listed over the years as Philosophy. I've taught—because of the way the Philosophy Department at Macalester thinks of itself, they haven't gotten into real philosophy. That's the way I would put it to them. They're linguistic and Anglo-Saxon, insular provincial stuff. [Laughter]. They don't do anything with continental philosophy, which continental is—I'm not talking out of school, I argue with them about things like this. Continental philosophy is a misnomer because continental philosophy is philosophy, and that stuff over there in that island across the channel is narrow and provincial. So, I would teach some of the continental things, things like Nietzsche or Heidegger. The Philosophy Department has taught Emanuel Kant and others. I'm doing them an awful injustice in the way I describe it.

[33:32]

LZ: To kind of continue on that same line, what type of courses would you have typically taught, or the ones that you enjoyed?

ED: All kinds. All kinds, including Elementary German, always. An intermediate German, courses in German conversation, composition, and then all of the literature courses. That is, I've taught everything in German literature from the Middle Ages down to the twentieth century, twentieth century literature. But I've specialized in the age of Goethe let me put it that way—that is romanticism, enlightenment, romanticism. Eventually I took over the nineteenth century courses: poetic realism and naturalism, that sort of thing. I'm using these ancient epic designations they—you can challenge all of those—they're not...they're kind of a useful short

hand sometimes. I...we changed the names of the courses so that just last Spring I taught a course on Nietzsche, and one on Modernism and the Avant-garde. Now, Modernism and the Avant-garde is sort of a reincarnation of what we used to call our twentieth century German literature course.

[34:45]

LZ: Is this where your personal work and research...

ED: Goethe is where my personal work...I'm now the, right now, the president of the Goethe Society of North America [laughter]. I'm doing some work in this capacity. Just yesterday I did work in this capacity [laughter].

[35:06]

LZ: I know that you were very instrumental in getting the German study abroad program started, and if you could just elaborate on that.

ED: Well, I said that when I came, there was no German study abroad program when I came to the campus. So I thought we should start one. And I began to agitate for that, and make plans, and I got some support in the department. In January of 1968 I was sent by the college to the German speaking countries in Europe—Germany, Switzerland, and Austria—to try to set up an affiliation for our study abroad program. So I went to twenty-one universities in these three countries, and talked to people and made tentative arrangements for a cooperation between Macalester and all twenty-one. Then wrote up a big report and came back, and presented it to

my colleagues in the German Department. We discussed the arrangements that I had set up, the locations in general, what are the pros and cons of Berlin versus Vienna or Hamburg versus Zurich, or something like that. And as it happened, we had a visiting professor from Vienna. And it came down to a—in the department for one year—it came to a sort of a tie between Berlin and Vienna. And we allowed this Viennese guy to vote, so Vienna won [laughter]. And we've been in Vienna ever since. Now as far as the actual design of the program is concerned—that is the curriculum and sort of thing—Professor Sanford, the man who was later let go, just a couple of years later, had a bigger hand in that than I did, although we worked together. He lived with someone who had already been heavily involved in study abroad. That was Professor Frank Hirschbach at the University of Minnesota. Professor Hirschbach had established a program—not based at the University of Minnesota, just an independent one, it was a business almost—called "Classrooms Abroad". But he'd had a lot of experience and so he knew a lot about that. And Professor Sanford got ideas from him and I got idea from him too, until he died last year. He and I were friends, too. The actual design of the program was strongly influenced by "Classrooms Abroad" and Professor Hirschbach's program at the University of Minnesota. Then Professor Sanford, David—I'll refer to him by his first name—actually took the first group abroad, the first group of Macalester students in 1969. So he was the first one to actually conduct the program on the site in Vienna. I took the second group then in 1970. He was single, I have a big family, and a dog, and all kinds of baggage. But I took my whole family, and we directed the program in 1970, and I've directed it several times since.

[38:48]

LZ: How did that program enhance the German Department just back at Macalester?

ED: Well, it did wonders. For one thing, it led to... Everything is complicated. I'm trying to simplify it. But it led to a lot of our graduates winning Fulbright Fellowships to study in German-speaking lands thereafter. I don't know what the statistics are right now, but for a long time, the great majority of Fulbright winners—I saw the recent announcement about the winners this year. There are about four Fulbright winners this year at Macalester, not one of them is a German major. But for a long time at least, the great majority of Fulbright students who graduated from Macalester, and won Fulbright Fellowships were returnees from our study abroad program. Something...one time 56 out of 75 of the total, for instance. It meant, more importantly maybe, that the students we had in our classes were fluent in German. So that if I taught—I taught these literature courses entirely in German—and that was easy to do because the students could do it. It was just an enormous advantage.

[40:08]

LZ: Were other departments sending students abroad, or was this program one of the first?

ED: Others did too. When we got it going, we had a back-to-back arrangement with French so that the same number of students were off-campus in opposite semesters, so to speak. So that you didn't have empty dormitories. One semester we had it fixed up so that the same number were gone roughly. Spanish had one too. Eventually Russian had, and has one, in cooperation with the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. But before too long most of these other programs stopped running them within their department. That is, they got into cooperative arrangements and didn't send a faculty advisor along, as we always did in German. Still strongly believe in

doing. That's another day's conversation, but it's awfully important to have a member of the faculty along. The big difference between the German program—and the difference accounting for its greater success—is that we have always had a faculty member teaching and advising on site, a resident director. So that's the big difference. I mean there are still lots of opportunities for students to study abroad, as you know, but the German program is really, I believe, the only Macalester program abroad. The only one sponsored by Macalester College.

[41:55]

LZ: Has that brought up problems in the history of the program in terms of it being separate from the rest of—

ED: I think you know something. [Laughter]

LZ: Well just, I mean, has that brought up problems with how students are selected and how that becomes...

ED: Yes it has. Especially lately it has. So that there's a college committee—I can't think of the name of the committee, a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee—now that has its own...guidelines for selecting students to study abroad and ignores, to quite a great extent, that the German program is a Macalester program, and that in all other cases we're exporting students, often to commercial programs. You can tell that I object to that. Sometimes, to make a very long story short, in recent years, but only in recent years—this committee didn't used to exist at all—but in the last, oh, it's probably existed now for close to ten years. But, in recent

years there have been times when worthy Macalester students have been denied participation in the German program—after we had accepted them—by this subcommittee. Maybe I should write the name of it to you when I think of it later. I have protested that and gone to bat for the students in question. Even ended up in the courthouse once in defense of a student who had been denied participation.

[43:46]

LZ: You had said that you had tenure before coming to Macalester, but if you could kind of...

ED: I didn't have tenure before I came. I did have tenure before the crisis.

LZ: Before the crisis. Ok, so if you could just kind of elaborate on the tenure process at Macalester, both kind of in general terms and then specifically.

ED: Well, it's changed a lot, of course and it's got a lot better. It was, at the time I got tenure, it was kind of fast and loose—like the hiring process itself. Lucius Garvin hired people by himself, without any oversight from any committee or anything—at conventions, even on trains. The people that he met [laughter]. He hired whomever he wanted to hire, ok? That's really how he hired me. Not on a train, but still, with not a lot of participation by the members of the German Department. Now all hiring is more regularized. The rules are clearer and good. I think the hiring these days is yielding quite good results; the same with tenure. I mean the names of the committee have changed, it used to be the Personnel Committee, I guess EPAG is the committee now that rules on tenure decisions. There's a lot of consultation. And you have to make a case,

and you solicit evaluations of candidate's scholarship from people outside of the institution. I get requests like that from other institutions, too. It's a big job. You have to go out and read all the publications of somebody if you don't know them. Well even if you do, you sort of have to read and carefully recommend. All that's very good. I got tenure by accident [laughter]. I had been at the college for only three years and the Provost—if he was called that at the time—Ken Goodrich, and another officer whose title I'm not sure of, but he might have been something like Academic Dean—his name was Jack Armstrong—decided that they would like to ask me to be something like Associate Academic Dean. I'm not sure about these titles anymore. And they approached me about that, and I said I wouldn't consider it without tenure. They said "we can get you tenure." And they did [laughter]. Now, this never came off, they never did—I think they got acquainted with me and found out what a nuisance I was, what a burr under the saddle—and they never hired me for this position. They never hired anybody else for it either, they never filled the position. I don't think the position ever came into existence. But I came out of this with tenure after three years at the college, which protected me later when all the untenured faculty were fired. That's how I got tenure. You can see it's a lot better now [laughter]

[47:09]

LZ: Just in general, what were some of, um, you talked a lot about events in the '60s and '70s. But I guess in the last twenty years, what have been the major controversial issues that you've seen, that both the faculty and the students have kind of been aware of.

ED: Let me think. That's an excellent question. I'm not sure I can do justice to it. I don't think I can. I probably need time to think about that. On the whole, I think there's been less conflict in the last twenty years. Better cooperation within the faculty. I mean, it used to—it had been so polarized. There are dead bodies lying buried all over the place, and everybody knew where the dead bodies were. And everybody was scarred and injured and you knew whom to like and whom to hate. And it hasn't been that way so much. I think the college is a whole lot healthier than it used to be. I still think that it does a lot of dumb things, wastes a lot of money on frivolous things, I mean I thought...but it always did. When Lucius Garvin came back from High Winds, New York, the Wallace's estate, to announce FOCUSED—Foreign On the Scene Confrontation with Unusually Significant Developments, and so on, I said, “And what did you get for the library?” [Laughter] And they were always doing things like that, and there are things going on right now that I think cost enormous amounts of money and yield minimal educational results. So, I think the college is not as...has not learned to be as responsible as it could be. I still think it's too trendy and too political, too little interested in serious education. I've got a lot of criticisms of this college, in other words. But I still think the atmosphere is a lot better and the procedures are a lot better; that the cooperation is a lot better than it used to be.

[49:46]

LZ: Going back just a little, given that in the '60s there was such polarization is it surprising that there are so many now recently retired faculty that have been at Macalester for thirty or forty years?

ED: Is it surprising?

LZ: I mean did you ever feel there was a time that you would have left Macalester?

ED: By all means. That's true of a lot of others. The reason we didn't leave was because we couldn't. This again is a demographic fact. The—as I said, when we came to the college it was a seller's market. I could have gone somewhere else. But before long you couldn't have gone somewhere else, there were no positions. Even now, I mean, it's awfully—it's a buyer's market, it's awfully hard. So that the people who were once here—now some have left, you can probably think of examples—but by and large it's hard to leave. Even if you've distinguished yourself. Now, we have hired in the German Department a couple of times recently and got good people. One of the reasons I chose to retire when I did was because I saw a window of opportunity. I had a chance to be sure that I would be replaced. If I hadn't...I had a kind of gentlemen's agreement with the Provost that I would be. If I hadn't had that, I wouldn't have retired. I wouldn't be retired now, I would still be there. But when we have done these hirings we have hired especially—I'm thinking of two new accomplished, good, now tenured people in the German Department. When we conducted those searches we'd get two hundred and fifty applicants. And these were not shabby applicants. They're good people, and deserve to be hired. And we could pick the *crème de la crème*, and tried to do it [laughter]. So it's still very much in the entire world of academe in the United States—not just in the United States—a buyer's market. And that's why you have these graveyards, like me, still hanging around. They didn't have anywhere to go. [Laughter]

[52:21]

LZ: If it's alright with you I'd like to move on to some questions that deal with kind of more general changes that have occurred on the campus in general. Just starting with the student body and how you have seen that change up until what it is now?

ED: Well, you'll get different perspectives from other people, of course, especially people who have seen lots more students than I have. Compared with the late '60s and early '70s, the students are a lot nicer now [laughter]. A lot nicer. Their behavior is civil and decent. At the same time, one thing that doesn't change much in the eighteen to twenty-two year old age group is that everybody wants to be accepted by everybody else and everybody finds out what is trendy and gets on board and then there's the occasional maverick. But by definition they're only occasional. So, I don't think there is a lot of independent thinking in the student body. Not in their choice of subjects, not in their political persuasions or anything. With notable exceptions, there's always those who stand out and are different, and that has always been true. But as a group they're so much more decent and civilized than they used to be. I mean in the late '60s, prior to that... I'm sure when they were just the locals, I'm sure they were quite civilized.

[54:01]

LZ: Have you seen a change in the way that teaching styles, I guess, when you were teaching, did you see a change from when you first started but then more in general?

ED: Well sure. When I started we always addressed students by their last names you know Mister and Miss and so on. Now it's...we lectured more. I still think lectures have their place, but it's a lot more conversational now, and casual. Not such a bad thing, actually. I think

teaching styles have evolved to the benefit of everybody pretty much. I don't know if that's much of an answer.

[54:48]

LZ: Did you find yourself changing at all when you were there, I mean, you taught for a very long time.

ED: Yeah. Sure. I never liked it when students presumed to call me by my first name, but I couldn't do anything about it so I simply accepted it. Even today I don't like it [laughter]. I got, in my approach to things...well I changed there are a lot of little ways in which you change things. Ways in which you design a class. Syllabi have become more important. Everybody has a syllabus for every class. In the beginning you didn't necessarily have one. You took as long as it took to deal with a subject, and if you thought two weeks and it turned out to be four that was ok. But now we have a syllabus that pretty much deals with things by date in an allocated time. And I've adopted, and other people have, different means of trying to inspire students and interest them in things, involved them more in research. Some programs have better opportunities than others at that. There are those programs that can arrange internships. We can't arrange internships, I mean, not really. The Russian program sometimes has arranged internships with émigrés from Russia, the Soviet Union formerly. But there's not much we can do with internships, so we're more traditional and academic. But still, within the classroom you think up provocative ways to engage student interest and also require them to do certain things.

[56:59]

LZ: In more recent years have you seen a change in the type of professors that have been added to the faculty, has there been a notable change there?

ED: I haven't seen any qualitative change. Now in some ways, maybe, there has never been a generation of faculty that was as obstreperous and difficult as those in the late '60s because of the Vietnam War. There's an enormous difference now that is caused by the fact that the United States doesn't have a draft. That is, neither the faculty nor the students are as upset about this invasion of Iraq as they ought to be, and would have been if the draft were there. Everybody knows...all historians know that countries that have a draft are far less adventurous in their foreign policy than countries that can just send somebody and not feel the difference, not even in their taxes. So I think the faculty, the members of the faculty now, and the members of the student body—although some of them are politically active and have their opinions, a lot of them would have persuasions that I would agree with—they are less active on the whole than in the late '60s. They are more sedate and comfortable, and they have more benefits, too. One thing you probably, from your other questions, probably want to know about is teaching load. We taught lots more courses than people teach now. And we had fewer... Do you think I ever had a junior faculty sabbatical? I mean, people who pass their third year review now get a sabbatical leave for a semester to do research. Never in my career did I have that kind of sabbatical. We taught six courses per year, one of which was the interim term. We had a four-one-four calendar as you may know. And the idea was that the course you taught during the month of January was equivalent to the courses that you taught during the regular semester except that you taught only one and the students took only one, so it was supposed to be—and it was only a month long—so

it was supposed to be four times as intensive as those courses with the standard handicap of three other courses. The students were taking three other courses and the faculty were teaching two other courses during the regular semester. That's a big change. There's no longer that kind of interim term.

[59:58]

LZ: So when we stopped we were talking about the interim program and that obviously no longer exists. Do you view that as a loss to students or in its later years was it no longer becoming a viable...

[1:00:11]

ED: It is a loss to students, but it was in its later years no longer viable, for bad reasons actually. Because...the reason it died was that it became Mickey Mouse in some quarters. That is, some people...members of the faculty—I blame the faculty, not the students for this—but the students reacted to it. The members of the faculty offered Mickey Mouse courses that didn't require much, or even set up a series of "independents," so-called. Now, the whole, I'm frankly—although I've sponsored some over the years, pretty much against the idea of independent study for most Macalester students. Most Macalester students are not capable of independent study. They're not prepared for it. They need direction. Tutorials are one thing, independents is something else. But a lot of faculty simply signed on to independent projects that were frivolous. Students didn't take them seriously, didn't do them. And other students who were taking serious courses said "why should I be killing myself working on this course when everyone else is

having a good time". And that led to a migration away from the serious courses, depletion of enrollments in the serious courses, and that's what killed the interim term.

[1:01:40]

LZ: Do you feel that that's true today of most students who pursue independent projects as well?

ED: Yes, I think most students are simply not prepared for independent study in the strict sense. If they have enough advice and help and direction from a faculty member, they can do it. There are those who can do it just because they are who they are and can do it. There are always the exceptions. But the number of independent study projects that are endorsed by faculty at Macalester, is excessive. I mean there are just way too many students claiming to be doing an independent when they're not really doing anything. Or, in better cases, when it's more of a tutorial, so that the faculty member is heavily involved. But then it's no longer quite independent in the same sense. So there are always students who could do an independent study, but they're always a small minority.

[1:02:36]

LZ: This might be a good time to talk about how have you seen student life change? In terms of just dorm life to sports to weekend activities—has that changed dramatically, or...

ED: I should say...articulate the caveat that I don't know enough about it. My four daughters, two of them graduated from Macalester. One of them only spent the latter part of her undergraduate career at Macalester. But one of my daughters was there for the full four years.

The one who was there for the full four years is now a Washington lawyer—used to tell me that I didn't know a thing about Macalester College. [Laughter] She didn't come around my office much either. And although we live this close and I've always lived right here, she didn't come home much. We did have a VCR and she didn't have one. Sometimes she would get her friends and they'd come over and watch a movie or something like that. But, I didn't, I don't know a lot about dormitory life. I think there's still too much partying. My eldest daughter, let me say, skipped her senior year in high school. Went to Macalester as a freshman, although she was a year younger than the other freshmen, did extremely well at Macalester, but did not like the place at all. This was a long time ago. And thought that it was nothing but a party school, and got herself admitted to Swarthmore, and transferred from Macalester to Swarthmore. So she started at Swarthmore with her peer group, so to speak. She had spent the one year at Macalester, got straight A's in courses like Latin and Calculus and thought that Macalester was a dumb party school where it was taboo to address an intellectual topic, say over lunch, in the dining commons, and wanted nothing to do with it and went for a better school, and graduated from Swarthmore. She's the one who was just quoted in *Newsweek*. She got her Ph.D. at Duke after Swarthmore, and now has her practice as a clinical psychologist. Macalester's better than it was then. I mean it's a lot better than it was then, and according to any kind of criteria you want to apply. It was...that was when it was still sort of down on its luck.

[1:05:09]

LZ: How has the political climate on campus changed if you compare, obviously the '60s were very turbulent, but do you see a decline in political involvement?

ED: There again, I don't quite know enough because I've been out too long. I mean, I have my little cubicle in the Lambert building. I go over there and do my work, but I don't go to faculty meetings. And I went on this MSFEO program five years ago now. So for five years I've had virtually no involvement. I just don't know enough.

[1:05:42]

LZ: What have you seen as the most significant policy changes during your time at Macalester?

ED: Well, the most significant ones are the ones that took place way back, and we're recovering from those [laughter]. I think there is a little more seriousness, maybe quite a lot more seriousness now, that the college is better now than it was for quite a long time, in terms of the academic purposes it tries to achieve. On the other hand, there is still way too much trendy crap. Lots of trendy crap. That's just all there is to it. So that for instance, I don't know how many courses you've taken in which the word "postmodernism" has come up. People who use the word postmodernism are talking nonsense. They don't...they don't have a definition in mind for this term. Some of them have vague notions. They think well "postmodern means everything is political" or something like that. Look, I know something about the history of literary theory, and the periodization and so on, and I know where these terms came from. I know about deconstruction. I know where that came from. I know a lot about this, and I know nonsense when I hear it. And there's a lot of nonsense. Trendy nonsense. Crap. OK? [Laughter]

[1:07:15]

LZ: As Macalester, especially in the last couple of years, has become more nationally recognized, and just in terms of you know becoming—if you're not going to go to Harvard, Yale, Macalester is the next best thing. How have you seen, have you seen that change the campus?

ED: There again, others will know more. But I do think that that has worked to the advantage of the college. I mean, to the quality of the student body. I think the college is able to be more selective. I've taught a couple times at the University of Minnesota and—which can't be nearly as selective of course—but you'll find in a class at the University of Minnesota that there are a couple of good students. At any institution you're going to find a couple of good ones. But the average at Macalester is much better, and it's getting better all the time. The fact that it's nationally recognized helps, of course. I mean my psychologist daughter, for instance, says that, in Maryland “everybody wants to go to Macalester”. It's prestigious. It used to be known, if it was known at all, as the Reader's Digest college, kind of. It seems now as a serious liberal arts college, and one of the better ones in the country. And I think that's very much to its advantage.

[1:08:42]

LZ: Today, what is, if any, do you besides your office, do you have any other involvement with Macalester even though you're not teaching?

ED: Not much. I see the other people in that same big room where we each have a cubicle. I have just a little bit of involvement with the Department because, largely because of my task as president of the Goethe society, I sometimes have to ask the Macalester secretary to receive a fax for me or something like that. And I see some faculty friends and talk to them and so.

[1:09:20]

LZ: Do you have a favorite memory or couple of favorite memories of your experience at Macalester?

ED: That's another one that I probably have to think about. I've had some satisfying experiences, with students. I have...I still have contact with some students that go way back, like to 1970, and others that are more recent. I never, in all the years when I was teaching regularly, failed to hand out those course evaluation forms at the end of the semester. Although the format has changed, sometimes they didn't get them out and you didn't have any to hand out, had to make up your own or something like that. But I collected a lot of those things over the years. And there are some comments on some of those that I'm pleased about, and a couple of publications that I'm pleased about. And again I'll go back, I'm glad for some student associations. I could give you examples. I mean, they're not numerous, like say those who know Chuck Green in the Political Science Department. But over the years, it's added up, and I still get letters [laughter]. But I don't know if that was what you meant.

LZ: No, no, that's definitely what I mean.

[1:10:56]

ED: I got a couple of awards at Macalester.

LZ: Would you like to elaborate on that for a bit?

ED: [Laughter] Well, if you want to be official about it. I mean I was a founding member of the Phi Beta Kappa chapter, ok? Macalester didn't have Phi Beta Kappa when I came to the college. I was given the Burlington Northern Award for Excellence in Teaching. I was made a DeWitt Wallace Professor, that's this chair right here. So for the last ten or fifteen years, I've had a little benefit from being a, having a named Chair. Won a lot of elections to faculty committees [laughter]. I only lost one election in my life. That was to Dan Hornbach for the Personnel Committee. He and I went head to head for the Personnel Committee. I lost. But, those things don't matter. I mean a couple of publications have been super satisfying. I'm still doing that. I'm on for, I'm writing a thing that I'm going to deliver at a conference in San Diego in the Fall, and I think it's good. And it's good to look back on things you wrote thirty years ago and be able to think, that's still good [laughter]. The student associations, I don't know how personal to get, but I do still have some nice contacts with students that I admire and have admired. Some of them I'll see writing letters to the editor of the news paper, even now. You know.

LZ: Is there anything that we haven't covered that you'd like to bring up before this sort of ends.

ED: As soon as you go I'll think of a lot of things. [Laughter]. Let me just say that it's been a pleasure talking to you.

LZ: Thank you.

ED: I think you've been very indulgent and kind [laughter] putting up with all these reminiscences.

LZ: Well, those are all the questions that I have so. OK. Thank you.

[End of Disc 1:13:20]