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DeWitt Wallace Memorial Service 4/2/1981

John B. Davis

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Mac Weekly

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Mac mourns Wallace death

by Leon Lazaroff

A Commemoration service was held yesterday in honor of DeWitt Wallace, creator of *Reader's Digest* magazine and major financial contributor to Macalester College for over fifty years. Wallace, 91, died of pneumonia at his home in Mt. Kisco, N.Y. Monday night.

Administrators, faculty, friends and students gathered to commemorate Wallace's life in an afternoon memorial service.

A few years ago, Wallace was the largest individual contributor to any college or university in the country. During his lifetime he gave approximately \$50 million to Macalester College.

Born on the grounds of the campus, Wallace spent much of his childhood watching his father, James, the college's founder, build an educational institution which would rival the Eastern colleges of the day.

Macalester suffered through a troublesome beginning in which the future existence of the college often seemed doubtful. In honor of his father's work, Wallace



Ken Gyori sets up flowers for DeWitt Wallace memorial service

Photo/Michael Dregni

pledged that such hardships would not have been in vain.

President John B. Davis said, "DeWitt Wallace was a man of direct conversation. Strongly committed to a solid liberal arts education, he was strong, tough and most surely generous--truly one of the nation's unique

people."

Davis first met Mr. Wallace in 1975 during his first year as president. The two continued to meet at least twice a year at Wallace's home estate, High Winds. They last met during November of 1980. Wallace was last officially at

Macalester in 1965 for the commemoration of the Janet Wallace Fine Arts Center, named after his mother.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, Wallace's involvement with the college began to seriously diminish as a result of the school's inability to function within its yearly

budget. By 1975 Macalester has amassed a debt large enough to force a turnover in the college presidency. Confident of a brighter future, Wallace single-handedly wiped out the financial burden in hope that the incoming president would have the opportunity to begin with a fresh start.

"His continued generosity throughout the years has made Macalester what it is today," said Sandy Hill, vice president of development. "Many of his donations were some form of matching funds. He felt it very important that the school not depend on any one single benefactor."

Wallace founded the *Reader's Digest* during the 1930s in an effort to condense the news of the day and educate a wide range of people. Today the magazine has over thirty million subscribers in sixteen different countries. Toward the end of his life he was not involved in the magazine's weekly operations, but did occasionally meet with his successors to discuss the future of the publication.