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Oral History Project

Interview with:	**Jerry Fisher** Class of 1959, Professor of Humanities and Media and Cultural Studies and History, 1969-2006
Date:	**Monday, July 9th, 2007, 9:00 a.m.** Second of two interviews; first interview on June 21st, 2007
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Interviewer:	Laura Zeccardi, Class of 2007
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Interview with Jerry Fisher

Laura Zeccardi, Interviewer

July 9th, 2007
Interview 2 of 2
Macalester College
DeWitt Wallace Library
Harmon Room

[00:00]

LZ: My name is Laura Zeccardi and I am a new graduate of Macalester College, conducting interviews for the Macalester Oral History Project. Today is Monday, July 9th, 2007, and I am interviewing Jerry Fisher, Macalester alum Class of 1959, and Professor of Humanities, Media and Cultural Studies and History, in the Harmon Room in the DeWitt Wallace Library. All right, so last time we, in our last session, we talked about your time as a student and so today we'll focus on your time teaching at Macalester. So maybe just as a reminder, we could start with when you graduated from Mac and then what your degree was and then what you did afterwards to lead you back to Macalester.

JF: Certainly. I graduated in '59. Actually, the alumni group has me at '58, which is kind of my class. I was a transfer here, so I came in at an odd time of the year and as a result it took me a little bit longer to graduate, to fulfill my requirements. I graduated with a joint major in History and International Relations. And at that time, Macalester didn't do very much of a job in terms of counseling people for graduate school or anything like that. Individually they would; I mean, the people in the science area, I think, were a little bit better off. Obviously, if you were pre-med you were going to going to medical school. And Dr. Walters, who everybody looks at as just a

huge factor in their life, took care of that type of thing pretty well. Or else, maybe if you were going into 3M or something like this, had a kind of pre-engineering background. In History, we didn't get a lot of counseling, but there was only one place I wanted to go. I only applied to one school and I just assumed I'd get in, which is kind of naïve but…and that was Union Theological Seminary. I didn't want to get a degree there necessarily; well, I wasn't thinking of that at all. But it was the last year for a very famous 20th century philosopher/theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, it was the last year of his teaching there. And I wanted to go to New York City. It was in New York City, right at the corner of everything; they called it the Acropolis of the New World. On one corner was Union Seminary, the other was Columbia University, where I also studied. Another corner was Jewish Theological Seminary, and the other corner used to be Juilliard School of Music, so it was a very exciting place to be. And it also was—this was 1959. Later when I did an article for a Japanese magazine on Bob Dylan—another part of my background is I got involved in doing quite a bit of writing for major Japanese weeklies and monthlies and such. And that has a Macalester connection too, because I got into that because of the friends I had that I knew from World Press Institute, and they had positions in Japan and they wanted me to give them, on a lot of occasions, kind of a Midwest, Middle America view on things. And then when certain things would happen, such as Bob Dylan's first concerts in Japan, they asked me to do something on Dylan and his Minnesota background. But at any rate, I found out later when I was doing research there that we hit—well, he hit it more than I did—but hit New York within about a month of each other. And before I got really bogged down in studies…although I wasn't completely studying. It wasn't an easy—both Union and Columbia were quite demanding, but I spent a fair amount of time in Greenwich Village and other places. So, I realized that we went to some of the same haunts and I saw him actually performing. So it was an interesting time,

fascinating time in New York at that—1959. It also was a time when the civil rights movement was really gearing up. And when people picketed—what was it? It wasn't Walgreens, but any rate, some chain store thing. We lived only two blocks—the seminary and our housing was only two blocks, three blocks from the main street of Harlem, 125th Street. So we picketed; I guess it was Woolworth's, I guess. We picketed the store in Harlem, which was kind of interesting. And also I used to go to the corner of 7th Avenue and 125th Street, where Malcolm X spoke. And I had grown up in a background, strange background in Wisconsin, with a lot of—very mixed background, a lot of black kids, so I didn't feel anything particularly strange. But at one time when I was listening—he was a wonderful orator—I realized I was the only white face in the whole crowd [laughter], which didn't scare me but it was just kind of an interesting thing. But it was a very exciting time to be in New York. There wasn't anywhere in the world that was like New York in 1959.

[06:43]

So at any rate I went one year to Union, which is all I planned to do originally, and I considered going to Japan. Well, I hadn't considered exactly what I would do right after that. But some of the courses I took at Columbia with really top teachers in my field—the one famous expert on Japanese literature, and translator, Donald Keene, counseled me and said that it's important to go to Japan soon and to really learn Japanese. I'd only had a chance to study a little Japanese. One of the reasons that I came to Macalester is that I was hoping I could take Japanese at the University of Minnesota, but that didn't work out because we were in different systems. Macalester had semester systems, the university had quarters, and I could never work it out. Plus, I didn't realize even then, you know, there was a huge parking problem at the university [laughter] and it just wasn't easy to arrange. So, I took one semester, is all I did. At any rate, so

I decided to go to Japan. And it didn't have a… I'd already decided to go to Japan, but there, also studying that year, was a very small and attractive Japanese woman by the name of Aiko Hiraiwa who I got to know. So, actually I went to Japan to study Japanese, and I say she followed me to Japan. She was only there a year, she took a little bit longer, but then she came later and we reconnected there and that's who I married. But at any rate, when I went to Japan I studied Japanese intensively, which was quite demanding—the course. But in a year and a half I could function like international students have to function here, be able to listen to lectures—there it would be Japanese, here in English, of course—and take notes. Fortunately, I didn't have to—I already had graduated from college, but after a year and a half I entered seminary in Japan to study Japanese religion. Again, there was one teacher there that I took most of my courses from who was an expert in Japanese religions. And, fortunately, had no other students. Nobody was interested in studying Japanese religions at a Christian seminary. And he was quite renowned, and very well—well, he literally wrote the books and the dictionaries on Japanese religions. So, I spent all of my time with him and we traveled and traveled all over the country to different places, particularly studying new religions in Japan. But I was able to function. Fortunately, I didn't have to take my tests in Japanese, I don't think. And also—well, of course when I was reading Japanese religion, most of the books were in Japanese, but some of the other courses I was taking, like Ethics and things like that, actually, it was easier for me than the Japanese students because I could read it in English. And the teachers were happy to let me write my tests and papers in English, and they'd all gone to seminaries abroad so they could read that. Any rate, so that was—graduate school's a lot easier than studying undergraduate in general, but particularly if you've got a language disadvantage, because you can just specialize in the things that you're interested in and you know the most about. Well, I finished the year-and-

a-half course, went for a year of graduate work, and then, in the meantime, I got married and had a child, and I didn't have any money to get back home. So, I went to work for a Japanese company, machinery company, for a while, which was very interesting. I won't go into all that. But in the meantime, I had started a business right after my first year at Union Seminary and before I went to Japan, started a business in downtown St. Paul. Actually, the address is the same as—what's Macy's now? Dayton's has become Macy's, I guess. It was 400 Wabasha. Actually, Dayton's used to be across the street and then they moved. We didn't have the whole block, we just had one store, but that was in partnership with Dr. Armajani's brother, older brother, and Sia's father, and then Dr. Armajani was a ten percent owner of that. It was gift store, everything made was handmade, and I utilized my—well, we had a lot of stuff coming from Iran, but also my connections with international students here, and they started to bring things from their countries to make arrangements and so on and so forth. And then the idea was for me to go to Japan and study and Sia's father would run the place. Unfortunately, tragically, within six months that I was in Japan, Sia's father died very suddenly of a heart attack. So I had to decide whether to come home and not finish studying Japanese and be a businessman, or continue my studies. So, I decided to continue my studies. And, of course, I didn't have any money to get back to the United States, so I worked for a Japanese machinery company, which was very interesting work. I won't get into all of that, but… At any rate, eventually, we came back after a couple years, we came back to the United States, and they'd given me full credit for my work at Tokyo Theological Seminary at Union, and so I just had one more year to graduate.

[13:56]

So, I decided to finish that and get a degree at Union, which was…I don't know whether it was the right decision or not, but it was really tough, because I was married then, and I hadn't taken

all of the really cruncher required courses that I was supposed to take. And I had to take all of those in my senior year. And I came close to flunking out, it was very close. But at any rate, I made it. And in the meantime, they used to give you a bachelor's degree when you graduated from seminaries. Three years of graduate school. Now they've changed it to M.A. And then—later, years later, they said, "Okay, we recognize this as a master's degree." But at that time, they had a very famous graduate fellowship program to encourage people to go on for their Ph.D., it was the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. The only thing is, you couldn't go to graduate school first. And since the B.D. was actually a bachelor's degree, I was qualified. So I applied for that. The day before the deadline. I just was walking by an office and I saw this thing announcing it, and I went in and talked to the guy who was the official person at Union for the scholarship stuff, and he said, "Sure, go ahead." At any rate, I won it, which was very helpful; prestigious, but also very, more important than that, when you've got a family, very important. So, then I decided I wanted, by that time I realized that I wanted to teach at a liberal arts college. And I had a good background in Japanese: language and history and everything. I took a lot of stuff on my own, I'd taken courses—not towards a degree, but taken courses at Columbia, and I was pretty well-prepared there. But I realized if I wanted to teach at a liberal arts college, I would have to teach also Chinese history, and some other fields, because I couldn't just specialize in it. So I looked around. By that time I was very interested in a certain kind of history, intellectual history, and I was particularly interested in what was happening in China. So I looked around and I found a young professor who was the top person, really, in the United States in this field. In the life of the modern Chinese intellectual history, particularly the thought of Mao Zedong. And he was at the University of Virginia. So I hadn't even heard of the University of Virginia, it's a pretty good school, but I didn't know anything about it. Someone who lived across the hall

from us knew it very well and encouraged me to go down there, and I applied and I got in that program there. So, again, I just specialized pretty much in one person. And I was only there for one year and two summers, because they allowed me to have my thesis at Union to count for like a master's degree. Even though it wasn't a master's degree, it was still a thesis. So all I had to do was put in two years in order to sit for my exams, for my Ph.D. [candidate? unclear] you had to be there two years. But I didn't have any courses to take the second year, because I'd already finished everything. I did take Chinese, but other than that… So I taught. All together I had about seven jobs. Teaching in tele—I had a fifteen program long television series, public television, East Asian history, half hour each. And taught at various schools, night schools, and so on and so forth. And I had to work very hard, but it was the best preparation you could possibly have for sitting in the Ph.D. oral. Because having taught it, it's a lot different than studying it. So at any rate, that part was great. I had a wonderful time; our family and my advisor's family had kids the same age so we just became kind of like the faculty there. There weren't too many interested in Asia. And so that worked out, that was terrific. And then I got a Fulbright to do my dissertation in Japan.

[19:12]

At any rate, eventually I got back—well, I was working on my dissertation, and at that time you could usually get, almost anybody would get two years for Fulbright. Initially you get one year, obviously, and then you reapply. But that was just when the government was running out of money because of the Vietnam War, so all those were slashed. So here I was in Japan, I'd studied for a year on my thesis, I hadn't started writing at all, and all of a sudden I had to go home, had to find a job. Well, I was able to get a three months extension and I put together a bunch of jobs in Japan. And then, fortunately—I hadn't sent out anything for job applications,

but the University of Virginia had sent out things, candidates. So I got actually quite a few offers then. And I took a position then, my first position, at Carroll College. It's a Presbyterian school in Wisconsin, which I knew of, and wasn't too far from my home down in Beloit. So that's where I went the first year. That was exciting. That was 1958 [sic 1968]. And just for the National Convention in Chicago, and Wisconsin was really—actually much more radical than Berkeley was, even, in the anti-war movement. I mean, they actually blew up *buildings* in the University of Wisconsin. And my teacher that had been in Virginia had just come to Wisconsin. So this was another connection that we had, and he and I together had been involved in a lot of anti-war movement stuff—some of the earliest ones going into Washington and things like that together. So, I had that connection, and then had a lot of fun at Carroll College. Quite an education. It was a new thing to—the chairman of the Board of Trustees at Carroll College had been one of the three co-founders of the John Birch Society. So it had a very conservative leaning and yet, you know, our position on the war and everything like this was much more radical. So, it was a very interesting situation there. But after a year, I was—Dr. Armajani called me, he said there was an opening here at Macalester, and that he's going to be retiring pretty soon, was I interested? And so, I had seen a television program with Hubert Humphrey teaching at Macalester. And that really interested me, because he had just been hired here, and he was giving his usual talk about how you've got to be involved, and this and that, so on and so forth. And there's some kid standing in the back of the room, later—I didn't meet him, he graduated that year, so I didn't get to see him, but I understood he was a philosophy major—and when Humphrey got finished with the whole thing, this kid said, raised his hand, and Hubert said, "What question do you have?" And he said, "Well," he said, "I can't figure this out." He said, "Here you're telling us to get involved and how we can change the world, and as vice president

you couldn't do a goddamn thing about Vietnam and all the mess that we're in. Now, how does this figure?" And Hubert was actually just speechless [laughs] which didn't happen very often to him, and caught on camera this way. And I thought, "Boy, that's the kind of school I want to go to! Where we have students that would be that challenging!" And sure enough, when I came for the interviews, everything went smooth, but the most interesting—the only thing I really remember—is at that time students were very involved, and they were on the committee to select new faculty members. And I met with, I think, four students, all of which had votes, actually, with the History department. And the first question that this guy, kid asked me was, "You graduated ten years ago. And now it's ten years later. Why in the hell do you want to come back?" [laughter] And again, it caught me by surprise, but I was able to answer that, and got their support. But that was the only really relevant question, you know, that anyone asked me in the interviews. Which is, of course, important! The college had changed radically, and why would you want to come back when it was so different? Because they were well aware of that. But the first years that I taught were really exciting. I'll stop now and let you ask some of your questions, but it was that kind of student that were—not only were they very bright, but they also were really asking questions about their life and such. So it was a *really* exciting time to start teaching.

[25:31]

LZ: Let's maybe just talk about some of the specific changes that you noticed ten years later, and then we can go on to talking about—

JF: Well, as I said, students were very much more involved. The college had—well, there were some things that stayed the same. They were still trying…there was some aspect of the college

that was still trying to be like Carleton, or see if they *could* be like Carleton. And be more prestigious and stuff like that. There was more of a contrast, actually, between Carroll College and Macalester. And in some respects Macalester was less interesting. In some respects. Because the administration at Macalester was very wise. They, instead of confronting the students when the students did various things, they kind of…acquiesced, or they were a step ahead, they kind of sucked them in. So, there wasn't a challenge, particularly, here on campus like there was at Carroll College. And as a result, Macalester became rather famous because it became kind of a central place for the Twin Cities. That was before you had Xerox machines even, this was mimeographs and stuff like that, but the Macalester student body, because of the administration, had their own full-time organizer that the college paid. And they had their own, you know, office and all kinds of stuff. So this became kind of a central place for the student movement in the Twin Cities, a focal point for organizing stuff. So, that was different. Of course, you know, people were very active in a lot of things. America had changed. And it wasn't just Macalester. America had changed. And there were a few, not a lot, but there were a few—particularly younger professors, colleagues of mine, that were very tremendous teachers, and very much into being active in society. My situation was a little bit different than most because, with all the turmoil going on, a lot of classes—kids didn't go to classes or classes were cut, or so on and so forth. In my case it was just the opposite. Instead of having—you know, it was interesting because originally, one of the reasons I wanted to teach at a college like this and stuff is I kind of pictured one of my mentors, David White. We used to have classes at his home, and there'd be four or five people, and I thought, "Gee, how neat to have four or five people, you know, and have them in your home, and this and that." Well, I had some classes in my home, but this was only upper echelon stuff. I was getting, you know, fifty, sixty kids in my class, and a lot

of kids who didn't even take the class were coming. And it was because they wanted to find out more about what's going on in Asia and China, and stuff like that in particular. So we had huge, you know, huge classes. And also because of my ties particularly with China scholars, the young China scholars, through my mentor, who was now at the University of Wisconsin, we got—all the top people in the field came through here at virtually no cost at all and spoke. I mean, very well-known folks, kind of cutting-edge of scholarship and knowledge about Vietnam and stuff at the time. One of them, Orville Schell, who now is the head of the journalism school at Berkeley, was here, many, many times. And he had dropped out—a lot, a few of these people had dropped out of school. He never got his Ph.D., he dropped out. He was involved in the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars and our campus, the group we had on campus, the CCAS—Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars—was the largest undergraduate group of students in that organization in the United States. We were a real center for that, and that's why two of my students were selected in CCAS's second group, actually, to go to China in 1972. Two hundred undergraduates, they were only—I think they were the first undergraduates to be in China after the revolution. And they were there for five weeks, traveled all around, and towards the end of their stay, they were in Beijing and they got a call. There was a call to their hotel where they were staying, at about one a.m. And it said that Zhou Enlai has just finished his day, his work day, and has time to talk with the students, or with the delegation, if they're interested. So, they were interested, and they actually had a three-hour talk with Zhou Enlai. And interestingly enough, Craig Cox was one of the students here, who later went on to Environmental Studies and end up with the Department of Natural Resources, I think. Here he was very interested, at that time, in ecology. When Zhou Enlai went around the room talking to each one of them, he asked Craig, he said, "What are you interested in?" and he told him, and he said, "Have you noticed the

problems that we have?" And he said, no, he hadn't been in the countryside quite a bit, and various things. He said, "That's the biggest problem China's going to have in the next twenty or thirty years." He said, "It's just terrible what's happening, and we've got to focus on that." So, at any rate, it was a very interesting kind of reflection on Zhou Enlai and where he was at, at that time.

[33:18]

LZ: So did you have both of those students at—did you have them in class then?

JF: Yeah. They were students of mine. And interestingly enough, each chapter—when the call went out, there were twenty people that could be in this group. And so they asked, the national organization asked for applications. And in our case, we didn't—we refused to send in individual applications. We had our own meeting and selected our two students and said, "We have two people that want to go, they're the ones that we think are most qualified, that we've selected. You should just give us two slots." So, not only were they the only undergraduates, [they were] the only ones that were not selected individually. They said, "Okay, you guys obviously know what you're doing." So they got selected. And Craig, in particular, was very interesting. He grew up just two blocks down here, away from here, and we saw him off at the airport. And Craig looked a little nervous. I said, "You're nervous about going to China?" He said, "No," he said, "but I've never been in an airplane before." [laughter] Here was this guy, flying off to China, and he'd never been in an airplane before. But the students, those days, they didn't—it was very different than later. I think, at least in my case, from what I hear, a lot of people's time in working with students these days is in counseling, and a lot has to do with

personal problems the students have. That wasn't the case then. And the other thing that wasn't the case is people didn't come complaining about grades. There may be people who didn't come, or didn't do well, or something like this and they could have. But they kind of thought that was their own business, and they didn't particularly bother you if they didn't get exactly the grade that they wanted. But it was very challenging, particularly for me, again with the kind of courses I was teaching. I can remember one class in particular. It was a Chinese history class, and I came in there, I had fifty students…well, actually, there were a number of people sitting in, maybe there were only about forty-five or forty-some actual students. But, Tom Copeland—who you should definitely interview, very fascinating guy—Tom Copeland, he got as an undergraduate, he won a national humanities grant for working on this biography, which he eventually published, by the University of Washington Press, I think. On a very interesting figure, a lawyer who worked with some of the labor unions in the twenties, and he graduated from William Mitchell School of Law. Any rate, Tom Copeland had an independent—then you could have individually constructed majors. There was a program where you work with an advisor, you set up the courses you're going to take, and so on and so forth. And his major was in Anarchy. And so he was doing a lot of study, but he also was practicing anarchy. Now, you've got realize that anarchy isn't just throwing bombs and stuff, and he was non-violent. It's not kowtowing to authority. So for instance, what he would do, is he would come into a course—first I'll tell you about somebody else's course. He came in, it was actually Ernie Sandeen's course, who was chairman [of the History department] at the time. And Tom is a very good student, but he refused to take a test, because that was coming from above. I mean, he would take it, but he refused to be graded or something. And finally, Ernie said, Ernie…anyway, I won't speak ill or say anything about Ernie, but it was driving Ernie nuts. And he said, "Well,

you've got to take the final. If you don't take the final, you're going to flunk." So Tom came in, sat down, wrote his name, turned in his paper, nothing in it [laughter]. So, Ernie had to figure out—I mean, he was the best student in the class, what's he going to do. But that's what Tom would do. Well, he came into one of my classes and after the first couple sessions, I, you know, I passed out the syllabus and stuff like this. He got up and he said, "There's a few of us," and he had some, "who think that this class shouldn't be run this way. It should be run by the students. We should decide things." And I said, "Well, that's interesting. That's all right with me. However, we've got to do what the class wants to do, so why don't you guys discuss things and I can make adjustments." So, any rate, it took them two class sessions to figure out what they wanted to do. And they decided to break the classes into three parts. There was one group of students, probably twenty of them, who were obviously the least interesting students that all wanted to go *exactly* the way the syllabus said and *exactly* the way I planned it. They thought that was the *right* thing to do. And then there was another one that kind of wanted a halfway type of thing. And then there was Tom's group of about four or five, who not only wanted to construct their own thing, but wanted to grade themselves, et cetera, et cetera. So, I ended up by teaching three classes. And of course, Tom's group was the best. There was no question. I mean, they were bright, they were into things, they were, you know, doing far more than what anybody else did. But that was a real challenge.

[40:43]

I had another—I used to, each year, in those years, I tried to think of—we had freshman seminars then. And, I think they probably still have them now, freshman classes and stuff, but that was…they were just starting that. And so we'd have, I think ten students…I think it was ten, maybe it was twelve. And they would be our freshman advisees, and we'd construct a course.

And I tried to think, "Well, now, what title, what course can I teach that would get me the ten most interesting students on campus?" So each year, I used that as a challenge, and for several years had classes—one year, I had this class. Two of the kids in the class had had perfect SATs. I mean, these guys are really bright. The average, you know, was, I don't know, much higher than even now. Recently the SATs, I guess which don't really correlate with grades or anything else, but the president still likes to talk about how good the SATs are, average SATs of students now. Well, it's only recently that they came up to what they were at that time as far as average. But these guys are really bright. And one of the first questions I asked this group was, "How many of you have been in jail?" *Six people* turned up their hands! [laughs] I couldn't believe it! One guy had been busted, he was a delegate to the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. And he was still a teenager, of course, and so the Chicago police wouldn't let him in. He had his credentials and everything, they said, these have to be fake credentials. And he objected and he eventually ended up in jail that night. He was an official delegate from Colorado. Any rate, very interesting group of students. And they decided, I gave them reading lists and stuff and we worked with them, it was a very special group. And they decided that they wanted, towards the end, they said, "You know, I think we should practice—we don't have anything against you grading us, but we think it would be a good experiment for us to grade ourselves as a class, not individually." And I said, "Well, that's possible. How are you going to go about it?" They said, "But we want to be sure you don't get into trouble." Which was really, you know, touching, almost. And I said, "Well, I don't know. I've done so many things, that's not particularly bothering me." So at any rate, that's what they did. And I couldn't believe when they went around, I mean, I could have easily given them all A's because they all worked hard and they worked together, not individually, they worked together on stuff. And there was one

international student there, whose English was good, but wasn't up to—unlike today, because most of the international students are as good or better than the American students [laughs]. But then, that was not the case, they were bright and able people but they didn't have that kind of English background. Well, they went around the class and the various, you know, gave themselves different grades. There was two kids that had been boyfriend and girlfriend at the same school from high school and stuff, I don't think they ended up getting married, but…when I came around to them, they said that they were talking quite a bit, and that they'd never gotten less than an A in all of their schooling. But they thought it would be good for their parents if they got B's in the course [laughter]. So they gave themselves B's, believe it or not. And there was another student who said, "Well, you know, I think I've done A work but," and then he turned to this international student, "I'm sure that"—I can't even remember where the kid was from—"has done the same work, but had to work a lot harder than me. So I want to give my A to him." It's amazing! You know, nothing like that would happen today, you can imagine, and not too often then. But it was an amazing group of kids.

[45:57]

So, at any rate, I'm still very close to the people who graduated in 1970. 1971 too. There's among some of the best friends of the family, and my kids got—we had classes at my house, so they know my kids and stuff and get together with them, and they're in various parts of the world but we keep very close. And I had two students who ended up being physicians, and one was in a class of seventy…I think both of them were in a class of seventy, and I was quite close to both of them. And they've been—I've been ill for the last few years, and they've been amazingly helpful. One of them ended up at Mayo in Jacksonville, the other was head of the department at Mayo here in Rochester and now head of the department at the University of Minnesota hospitals.

But again one of the values of teaching [at] a liberal arts college, you have pre-med kids—well, one of them was a physics major, he wasn't pre-med at the time. Later, he went into medicine, much later. But they've been, you know, tremendously helpful to me. So, that was the best group of kids that I had, and the most exciting. And then there were years after that. I think, this group here—I gave you the program of the Vietnam symposium? We were the first in the country, and by far the biggest that's ever been done, a retrospective on Vietnam. It was a ten day program and we had everybody, virtually everybody, who'd been involved in Vietnam, one way or the other, pro/con, from completely different groups. We had Daniel Berrigan, who was a priest who was involved in a lot of anti-war movement things. We had Ted Sorenson, the Pulitzer Prize winner who was with the administrations and the pro-Vietnam position. We had Richard Barnet, who was a diplomat and also one of the main framers of the Vietnam policy. We had Tim O'Brien who had just started writing—it was before he won the National Book Award. We had Jim Webb. When Tim was here for the alumni gathering a month ago, I talked with him a bit and we talked about when we had this. And he said, "Yeah! And Jim Webb was there, too, and now he's a senator!" The senator from Virginia. We had Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., was here, another architect. At any rate, it was pretty amazing. We had programs all day long and school pretty much shut down. And it was interesting, this was 1978, I believe…'79, spring of '79. It was very much like the Vietnam era, we had huge crowds in the chapel. It was so crowded people would sit up above the walls, or something like this. Kids were—boyfriend and girlfriend were breaking up over arguments about this, and people were wondering whether or not they should continue studying what they were and stuff. It was very interesting, quite a catharsis. And the interesting thing—it was great for the people that came here too. And what really struck me is, for everybody—we had Vietnamese, we had veterans against the war, we had

people who were pro-war still, et cetera et cetera. And for everybody it was *their* war, which is very interesting. It was all personalized, and their experience was *the* war experience. So, that was a real highlight of what I feel that I could, you know, contribute. I was involved, there was another person—Fred Brown—who had been the State Department's spokesman for the U.S. government in Vietnam. He would give the daily briefings and stuff. And he was on—he'd had that experience before Cotting Harter [?] took that position. And then he was here for two years, it was a State Department program where you could do this, you know. And, of course, he had all the connections, and I had different connections than him, but we put this together and it was…but we couldn't have done anything without the help of two very, very able students, both of whom distinguished themselves afterwards. There were two students that worked around the clock on this stuff and it was terrific. I mean, I still can remember sitting at—the chaplain, Ken Currier…Ken? [Al Currier] I'm not sure—any rate, at his home. And there was Gene McCarthy and Daniel Berrigan and myself and the chaplain, and we must have talked until three in the morning, or something. It was quite an experience. So, those were the two big things that I did. [53:04]

The final thing was just recently that I got involved in, that didn't impact as many people on campus, unfortunately, not a lot of people. I mean, we had a decent crowd. But a couple years ago, we had a "Looking at a Hundred and Fifty Years of U.S.-Japanese Relations." And we were able to bring all the top people, experts, on Japan here for—actually, it was two days. And including a very close friend of mine who just recently won a Pulitzer Prize for his history on the post-war era in Japan. And some other people. A lot of people that were involved with the CCAS [Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars], many years ago. Plus artists, et cetera et cetera. And that was great for them to get together. And Fritz Mondale came as well, he'd been

ambassador to Japan, so that was a real highlight too. But one of the things that I've…my involvement in Macalester has been, obviously as a teacher and working with students, particularly with study abroad programs in Japan. And then doing a few of these; actually, these two big symposiums, I was involved in.

[54:47]

LZ: So, we've talked a lot about kind of the time in the seventies. One more thing I just wanted to comment on was, this was also the time of the financial crisis for the college, and I was wondering if you had any kind of perspective on that, or how it maybe played out in your experience at Mac?

JF: Yeah, it was pretty dramatic, because when I was hired, it was in the era where we were supposed to have a lot of money. And I was hired, for instance, with—one of the things that they said is that I'd be able to go to Japan every summer to do research, they had enough money to support me for that. They also said that I'd be able to teach a course at the University of Minnesota every year. Well, fortunately, I got the first summer [laughs], but after that, that was gone. And as far as the University of Minnesota was concerned, I didn't realize from the beginning that, yeah, they'd count this as a Macalester course, but I had to make the arrangements myself. Which, later, I did, and by that time they wouldn't pay for it, but I had good relations with my person at the university that is in the same field as I am. We had joint classes, actually. I mean, they were still on the quarter and we were on semester, we're in 4:1:4. But we worked out arrangements so that we had classes at various places, and the students that wanted to do a paper with me could do it with me, and students that wanted to do a paper with

him could do it with him. So, for instance, my students were all independent studies, they couldn't sign up for the university course, but… So, any rate, we worked that out, but I should also mention we had—when I came, when I was a student, I was involved in the Area Studies program. And that's one of the reasons I came here, because they had very strong area studies in Japan, or in China, Japan and the Middle East, et cetera et cetera. Each year they'd focus on one. That program was still going to some degree, at least the cooperation between the—by that time it became five colleges, so I was very much involved in that cooperation. And, as a result, I had a chance to teach at St. Catherine's, actually, with one the teachers that I'd had from St. Catherine's, one of the sisters that had been my teacher when I was a student, which was a great pleasure. She was a great, great person, too. And I also taught courses—well, Dr. Armajani was teaching here, we didn't actually teach together, but he was here for a while. And, oh, I'd lecture in David White's class. He was my other, you know, main mentor and stuff, so I enjoyed that. And, what was the original question you were asking?

[58:16]

LZ: Oh, just kind of about financial crisis in the seventies.

JF: Oh, yeah. And so, the second year I was there they had a freeze, I believe, the salary, and the third year they had a cut. So that was pretty dramatic. I mean, we didn't have the support that we thought we'd have for research and things like this. And they used to have tremendous programs, I'm sure you'll have somebody on this, before I came. At one point, somebody was talking to DeWitt Wallace and he asked how many—had the person, who was in History, had they ever been to Williamsburg. And they hadn't. He said, "Oh, well, everybody…" So, he

paid to have the History faculty and their wives spend a week in Williamsburg [laughter] or something like that. No, yeah, that was just before I came, but there were all kinds of things that were supposed to happen that never did. And that was very difficult because then we had to cut people in the History department, and we had a number of people who were not tenured yet. And the way that was handled, I won't go into details, but still bothered me very much as to who got cut and why, and so on and so forth. But that was a very difficult time. And then the college since then has done weird things, even when they were not having as big a crunch. For instance, for some reason, the group that—my group that was people that came in in '68, '69, you know, we were supposed to be *really* well-off then, and then all of a sudden it changed. So, it was kind of a special group of people that walked into something they didn't expect. Of course, the people before here thought that things would continue to be okay, but… We had a time, also, all kinds of special arrangements had been made for people. I mean, like mine to be able to teach over at the university and stuff, but we had people that had in their contract that they only had to teach two courses a year or something, and getting paid full-time, and that obviously caused—and that high salary caused a real tension and stuff. But, you know, we worked through that, eventually.

[1:01:18]

LZ: As your time at Macalester progressed I know you kind of branched off from the History department—

JF: Yeah, well, it's interesting because I was always doing more than one thing. When I was at—I was always teaching. Well I had to, financially; actually, particularly, to teach in night

school at Metro State, to teach in the summer, or to do summer institutes, and various things like this. Did grants for things. A lot of stuff with teaching, working with what's now Minnesota Institute for Talented Youth, my wife and I did programs with them. And I always liked teaching outside of just the regular classroom. In fact, one of the things I was going to mention about the earlier days, and I did this for a while, is we used to have, in the fall, we would have one week that was off. Originally, it was during the Vietnam era and allowed people to, you know, to do things, you know, go off to Washington or whatever. But for a long time they had one week in the fall, and I would usually take a group of students someplace, we'd travel. We went to Indiana to a big conference one year, and another time we went to North Dakota, and another time we went to western Minnesota to the Sioux reservation. So, that was a lot of fun. But, you know, eventually, we moved a little farther away from campus, which I think is something common now. I don't think that many teachers have classes in their houses anymore. This was something when I was a student we did and, particularly, when I first came here. We were in college housing on Vernon Street, and a lot of faculty did that. [President Brian] Rosenberg's continued, they're not too far away, but that became less and less something that was done. So that changed quite a bit. In addition to teaching and stuff, I'd always been involved a little bit in business. I started this business on my own, I'd—and also, I look back at it in media, I did these fifteen programs for educational television in Virginia when I was a graduate student. And I'd actually done some radio stuff and everything when I was in high school. And I worked for this machinery company in Japan. And I did interpreting with this interpreter a bit when business groups would come through or—particularly engineers, for some reason I ended up doing a lot of that type of thing. Of course, I had contacts in Japan too, but I also branched out into journalism. Actually, I was writing several—it wasn't particularly

lucrative, but they do pay well in Japan for articles and things, and so I was publishing a fair amount of things in major Japanese publications in Japan—initially, because of the WPI [World Press Institute] contacts. And they'd ask me to do stuff. I did one series on the rise of the New Left in the United States for a Japanese monthly. There were about six installments of that, it was pretty extensive. And I did television in Japan, it was…television programs there. So I had always been doing that, but then about twenty years ago I got hired by Hubbard Broadcasting, which is a family owned company in town that was just starting satellite broadcasting, and got involved in that, very much so, from the beginning. And for the last two decades, I've been more involved in media stuff than I have in teaching. For a long time, I taught one or two courses a semester, and then eventually just during January term here, but then worked the rest of the time with Hubbard Broadcasting. For quite a while I supervised a one-person news bureau in Tokyo, and on a couple occasions had former Macalester students, you know, take that position. They had to be excellent in Japanese and very bright, and we had some really top people doing that. And then I got involved—I was traveling to Asia about five times a year, Korea—again WPI contacts helped in a lot of places—Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and we did consulting work in digital broadcasting, in satellite broadcasting, in both Korea and Malaysia, which were really, you know, very interesting.

[1:07:38]

So, you know, I worked very hard to become finally a full professor of History, but overnight they decided to put me in the Communications department and they made me Professor of Media Studies, at that time that's what the department was. And actually, I taught, I think—to my knowledge it was the first course in the United States, at least undergraduate course, in kind of new media. It was, we called it Electronic Media in an International Age. Electronic media used

to refer to non-print, meaning television, radio and stuff. But, of course, everything's electronic now, so they don't say that. They say new media, or whatever. But that was a lot of fun, particularly the first years, because I'd have students from—a number of international students, but, again, students from lots of backgrounds. I'd have a couple computer science majors, and, the first course I taught, they were the only two people that ever heard of a pixel. So, I mean, it was, really, it wasn't that long ago. But it was a lot of fun. And I learned a lot, particularly from, you know, people would do various papers. People from different countries, they could do things on their own media and stuff. So it was a lot of fun. And I had friends from Hubbard Broadcasting that I was working with, top engineers, come in and explain, you know, digital, satellite news-gathering and stuff like this. And then we had, the head of the Physics department at that time was an expert; he's ret—all these, most of these guys are retired now. And fiber optics, he spent a class on that. Michael Schneider, who's an expert on the history of the internet, for instance, came in and explained all that. So it was a lot of fun to do. So that's basically what I did there.

[1:10:07]

LZ: What year did you move over, kind of, to the more…

JF: It started when we were in Japan in 1976, or something like this. I wasn't full-time, but my wife and I were resident directors for the GLCA/ACM [Great Lakes Colleges Association/Associated Colleges of the Midwest] Japan Studies program at Waseda University [in Tokyo] and I started doing some stuff for Hubbard Broadcasting then. Not a lot, but that eventually morphed into a full-time job. Incrementally. But the highlight of that, you know, it

was interesting because my whole background in history and approach to scholarly studies in history really helped me as a businessman, in a lot of ways. And then, eventually, these two really meshed, because I just happened to be in a large city, about the size of the Twin Cities, outside of Tokyo—it's about two hours away—where the Fuji Television Network that we had a relationship with had an affiliate. And I used to, whenever I had time, I used to use my position to go around and visit the various affiliates, all over the country, which was all kinds of fun. I met a lot of the—usually, I knew someone there because when Fuji Television, every year they'd send a group of people from their affiliates to go to America and look around, they'd always drop by here. So I'd get to know them here. At any rate, dropped in and one thing led to another. We'd always go out at night, have a nice dinner, have a few drinks and stuff, and they said, "By the way"—and then they found out eventually that I was a historian. And they said, "Oh, we were going to do—we were talking about doing a documentary on some American who was here in the first part, the middle of the nineteenth century, what was his name?" And so I told them the name. [laughs] And they said, "Well, how do you know that?" And I said, "Well, I probably know about as much about him as anybody does, because he was a person who was the best foreign friend of the person I did a master's thesis about." And I said, "In fact, you know, there's all kinds of letters he wrote while he was in Shizuoka that are off into a corner in a pile at the university, at Rutgers University." And they hadn't heard about this, they were all excited. Eventually, they decided to do this project, so it took a couple years, they did a lot of research there and I spent a year doing research in the United States. And then they sent over a crew of—it was five of us all together, four people and myself. A very well-known actress who was kind of the narrator of this, and a producer, and a soundperson, and a camera guy. And so we travelled for five months on the itinerary that I'd set up, and we did this documentary, and we

won the Emmy! For that award, the top documentary in Japan for that year. And we also won another prize for Fuji Television that included about three hundred thousand dollars in cash, and our budget had been practically nothing. So, they were kind enough to use some of that money to do an English language production of this, just for me, and so I have that, which is kind of neat. And that's—I've given it to some of my friends and they've used it in their courses. Professor Tam [Yue-Him Tam, Professor of History] uses it here, once and while, I guess. I mean, I can't imagine it would be played in the United States for any particular reason, but it's become kind of a staple in late hour television in Japan and, all together, you know, it was on primetime, at one time. So, it was a pretty big deal, it was a lot of fun to do. And it brought all this, you know, together.

[1:15:13]

LZ: When did you kind of start phasing out your teaching at Macalester to…

JF: Well, probably fifteen years ago. I was only teaching, for a long time, one or two courses, and for the last five years I've been ill, so I wouldn't have been able to teach very much anyways. Actually not five; four years.

LZ: What was your last year teaching at Mac, officially?

JF: I officially retired at the end of August this last year, but about three years ago I got sick, right after, right at the same time as this Japanese symposium that we had about three or four years ago. So then I couldn't teach. Any rate, I mean, I still do some work for Hubbard

Broadcasting—I mean, they pay me something, but I don't do very much for them. Because they've got now—they started selling news-gathering, they originally invented it, they started it and they had the largest satellite news-gathering network in the world, at one time. They're not doing that anymore. And they also started digital satellite broadcasting, first in the world to do that, together with DirecTV. So we were involved in that, and that was plenty of work.

[1:16:54]

LZ: Well, let's move on and maybe just talk about a few changes. I know we're kind of moving in on time here. I guess, one thing I was thinking of when you were talking about students and how they really took an active part in developing courses, and when did you start to see students stop, I guess maybe, caring about choosing what they were going to be taught, or choosing their own grades, I guess. That seems to be…

JF: Well, that was a very—wanting to grade themselves and stuff like that was a very short window. I think, by the time you got to 1972 I think that was…you wouldn't run into that anymore, I don't think. So, it was just the first couple years, couple three years maybe. And then, one thing I might kind of—you'll want to ask my wife about this, but the students that were interested in Japan had changed over the years…the kinds of students. Initially, it was people that were interested in Zen Buddhism and stuff—she may have different opinions of me than this, so be sure to ask her. And then for a while there were a lot of people who were interested in business, and we had a few physics majors and stuff that would also major in, or also get good backgrounds in Japanese. And then it got to be anime. You know, that would bring them in. So, that's changed over the years. But one of the things that she and I were very much involved in is

trying…we had a lot of study abroad opportunities in Japan. And try to—and I worked on the China thing too, at that time it was really not PRC [People's Republic of China] but was Taiwan—but try to find the right program for the right student, because it really varied. We started—one thing I should mention is our sister relationship with Miyagi Kyoiku University and that's as much, as close to a liberal arts college in Japan as they have. Most of the people that go through that get certified in education, although I think less than half of them end up by teaching, but their curriculum is broad. And Japanese education is based more on the German model, particularly before the war, but even after the war. So they have faculties. When you get enrolled, when you [are] admitted to a college you don't get—or university—you don't get admitted to a university, you get admitted to a certain faculty. So, for instance, at Waseda University, which is one of the great universities, private universities, it's a lot harder to get into one school than it is to another within the university. And much more demanding, one than the other, and so on and so forth. But, Miyagi Kyoiku University is kind of a faculty by itself, meaning a school by itself, like a faculty at Waseda University. Faculty not meaning faculty-teacher, but school, like faculty of journalism or school of journalism, or something like that. But it focused on general education for people who theoretically would become teachers. And my mentor in Japan, the person that I learned so much from, was a philosopher, an educator in Japan. He was president of that university, at the time, when he suggested that we establish a relationship. And so, Macalester—it was a national university, it is still today—was the first U.S. college, U.S. school, period, to have an official relationship with a Japanese national university. And that grew for student exchanges, and to faculty exchanges. I think there are all together something like forty faculty, Macalester faculty, that have gone there over the years. They're not doing that anymore. I mean, Macalester decided they weren't that interested, they

were interested in other things, and things move on. But at one point it was quite vibrant. And our students that would go there, there wouldn't be a lot of them, but we would work out independent study arrangements for them here, they would go there—that school had nothing in English, everything was in Japanese. They'd study some Japanese there and they'd be in regular classes and stuff, and then cooperating with the teachers there and our people here, they would get graded. Maybe they would do a paper for a certain project, or, you know, whatever. And then we'd evaluate their Japanese language progress when they came back here. That was the only way we could tell how much, because they didn't have official classes.

[1:23:03]

Well, that got to be too un-bureaucratic for the college to handle; they didn't want to do things that way. So, that fell by the wayside. But we had some terrific students that went there who ended up with wonderful careers as a result. It was the only school arrangement that anybody had with Japan where you'd go and actually have all your classes in Japanese and live in the Japanese dormitory in a national university and stuff. And some of the students, you know, that went through that—we even had a person who was a physics student, who was a physics major, but also was studying—I don't know if we had a Japanese major at that time, but any rate, a lot of Japanese—and went there and there was a physics course that he had to, when he was a senior, that he had to fulfill. So he was able to work out arrangements with the Physics department over there, and his teacher here, and he actually studied over there and took the test, they administered the test that he would have been given here for his final and so on and so forth. And of course he did very well. He had independent help there! I mean, for crying out loud, and doing all this stuff. So we had a lot of things like that, you know, that we were able to arrange. But eventually, it got to be…well, you get tired out. I mean, particularly when you battle [laughs] to try to keep

this stuff going and the college isn't supportive of it. And you can understand that, people change. It's…a new person will come in into a position, and they don't understand the background, they're wary of it, so I understand why this happens. But, the kinds of things I was involved in, that I got most of the enjoyment out of, kind of went by the wayside. So, actually the few courses that I started with the Media Studies were pretty exciting to me because again I could do something, you know, new, that was different, and I really enjoyed that. The other thing was, more recently, that I should definitely say—and everybody'll say this—is that the international students have really become terrific. I was against the way they were selected for a long time. Not for the students that—I shouldn't say that were, that came in here—but the students that weren't. Because many of our best international students were people who came here for one year, they were exchanges from top universities like Waseda University or Keio University. They'd just come for one year, and they were very bright and able. Their English might not be fantastic at first because they hadn't been in a completely English background, they didn't go to international schools and stuff as high school students, but they made up for that. We had a couple people from Tokyo University, and that's the hardest university to get into in Japan, in some respects. Well, one brilliant woman who was—she got all A's here. She was famous for partying all night and then studying for a few hours and then sleeping a bit in the morning and still getting all A's. She became a very famous newscaster in Japan. Brilliant student. But eventually the college didn't really want students like this. They'd much rather have a four year, someone come for four years. Which, personally, is fine, and nothing against those students. But not to have the one-year exchange students from Waseda, I think, is too bad. Because, if you look at it, four different people come for four years, they have much more impact on the student body than one person, you know, who goes all four years. But that was one of the

things—a lot of things like this, as you grow old and you get kind of crotchety. And you are less interested in doing stuff.

[1:28:02]

LZ: Well, I know we're running short on time, so maybe as a closing question since you have been a student and taught here for many years, do you kind of have a favorite time period, or a favorite memories of being at Mac?

JF: Well, definitely when I first came here was the best. No question whatsoever. The students were the most interesting, they were the most challenging, you had to be on your toes all the time. And then, along the way I had some really exciting things. I was most surprised, though, with one of the last courses I taught. Peter Rachleff and I did a senior seminar, they're required for history, and I was very impressed with the ability of the students. The one thing I should say that's really changed is, in the earlier years there were people who were here who, for one reason or another, shouldn't have been here, or shouldn't have been in college, or something like that. That's not the case now. You don't have anybody that's not able. And the college does a selection job, so basically this is where everybody should be. So in that way it's a lot easier. It's less interesting, but it's a lot easier. Students now are much more the same, one to another, than they used to be. But with that senior seminar, I was amazed; you'd have this kind of personality once in a while, but I was amazed at, you know, very, very able people, extremely able people, who were not able to follow the rules, so to speak. Or, if they didn't, they weren't interested in taking the consequences of not doing that. It used to be that there were a lot of people that just went on their own, but, you know, that was…they didn't bother you about it. But, I remember

particularly a couple students, one in particular, really bright student—had always gotten good grades in history. And I was surprised that a lot of the people hadn't learned to write very well, or hadn't really had demanding courses where they had to write a big paper. Because I knew the college was doing that kind of stuff, and they were all able and stuff. But we set it up because this was a course where they were supposed to do that, so that the final grade on the paper—the paper was the main thing. But we didn't have an examination, but the final paper only counted for like thirty percent. Along the way they had to do a bibliography, they had to do an outline, they had to do this and that, and so on and so forth and each of those were graded. Well, we had a couple students who decided at the last minute to change their topic and wrote about something completely different, didn't get it in. They were very well done. And they were *really* ticked-off when they got a C in the course. And in fact, I think one of the parents wanted to sue or something like that. You know, it was *all written down!* Exactly: this counts this percent, this counts this percent, the final paper you get hundred percent on it, but all the other things you didn't…but that's one difference, you know. That's kind of humorous, but a little bit difficult.

LZ: Well, those are all my questions—

JF: Good.

LZ: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

JF: No. I think we've done a job on this.

LZ: Well, thank you.

JF: Thank you.

[End of Interview, 1:32:41]