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Interview with Roger Mosvick

Laura Zeccardi, Interviewer

**July 30th, 2007
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 30th, 2007 and I am interviewing Roger Mosvick, Class of 1952 and Professor of Communication and Media Studies. All right, well, to begin I'll just have you state your name and where you're originally from, and then what year you came to Macalester.

RM: Okay, I'm Roger Mosvick and I was born in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and did high school in Minot, North Dakota and came here in 1948.

[01:03]

LZ: When you were applying to colleges, was Mac one of the only schools that you were considering—

RM: University of Wisconsin was in the running, but I was persuaded by a junior high school principal who was a graduate of Macalester. And he was very persuasive, and again, it was the influence of certain teachers on him. And they gave me a little scholarship too [laughter].

LZ: Did you really know anything about Macalester? Had you visited the campus?

RM: Not really, not really. Just simply what I'd been told. I did take a visit to it before I came and was impressed, you know, so. But I was quite open at that point.

[01:45]

LZ: What was your first impression of the campus and, I guess, students?

RM: Well, I knew I didn't want to go to a party school, which there were a lot of them around at that time. And impression of the campus was, you know, that it was a relatively small, integrated campus and I kind of liked that.

LZ: Um-hm. So when you came in the fall did you live on campus then?

RM: I lived off-campus.

LZ: Oh, you lived off-campus?

RM: Yeah, yeah, um-hm. The thing that you sort of have to remember about Mac is there are two spurts in Macalester in which we had a huge number of students. One was right after the war, about 1948, and filled with all of the veterans, and et cetera. And the other was in the 1970s when the baby boomers were hitting. And I think they had over two thousand-some students at

that time. And they were both very lively times at Macalester, as I look back over the ages, you know. We had a lot of very bright students then, and in '70, as well as now, of course. And somehow the larger enrollment made for more vigorous discussions, all sorts of issues, and a more vigorous campus, you know.

[02:59]

LZ: So the veterans were a pretty large campus?

RM: Vets were a large part of the campus at that time. And they brought with them a—of course, you know, for many of us who hadn't been in the service at that time, we were in awe of these people. They had been all over the world; they had defeated Nazi Germany and Japan. Some of them, you find out later, had engaged in very heroic personal sacrifices, which you never knew it at the time. But they brought a sort of seriousness of purpose and a balance to the campus that a regular student like myself would not know about. For example, some of the very best intellectual bull sessions at Kirk Hall were led by people who were three or four years older than us, and had been in Vienna and Berlin, and served in Japan, et cetera. Slogged their way all up through the Philippines against Japan, and who had been in the Battle of the Bulge, and so on. But at the same time, they didn't let this interfere with their weekly drinking [laughs]. So, there were many, many examples of that—that was just a normal part of their life, of course. Some of us who were underage couldn't partake at that, but we learned a lot of things in the process [laughter]. So it was an interesting, very lively time.

[04:30]

LZ: Was campus, I guess, was it kind of a more strict place in terms of hours you could be out and things like that?

RM: Oh sure, yeah. Well, there were all the old historical, legendary lectures of Dean Doty about, “Don’t wear black patent leather shoes.” And there were strict enforcements of curfews, you had to be in at eleven o’clock or twelve o’clock—I’ve never figured this out. And there was a major fishbowl in Wallace Hall in which you had all of the great lovers kissing passionately five minutes before the end of the curfew. So it was, you know, it was very much like your notion of the fifties would be. Or earlier. It was circumscribed by a lot of quasi-religious customs, it was Presbyterian-oriented, you know. I look back at the kind of divisions in terms of sects, and Presbyterians were number one, Lutherans were number two, and then you had a bunch of other Protestants. Very few Catholics. Virtually—very few Jewish students, et cetera, at that time. It was a typical, you know, mid-centered college campus that was religiously-oriented. And they were all over, all sorts of them in the United States at that time. That really didn’t change much until 1960s. But it’s still a very, very lively time. Had excellent professors, and that’s the thing that really had me fall in love with Macalester, the wonderful...we were blessed at that time by having a number of international professors. They had come from Germany, G.T. Mitau had lost his whole family in the Holocaust in Berlin and Dupre had served in the Red Cross after World War I, and all of them had international experience. Yahya Armajani was a leading Persian scholar and so on. And our president at the time was a guy named Charlie Turck, he was really a Kentucky colonel. And he had a great inquisitive mind; he was always engaging what were then the equivalent of public intellectuals to come and speak on the campus. And he was a social conscious do-gooder at that time, even though he had his own

limitations in terms of—for example, not seeing the need for a broad invigoration of the campus by minorities who had no possible capacity to come to Mac financially. That really didn't happen until the late '60s.

[07:33]

But I must say, he was a liberal of the time, and one of the teachers of the campus at that time—part of the curriculum of course was required chapel and convocation, which meant that you got the whole of Macalester locked up in the gymnasium or in the Macalester Church down here, which is now Plymouth, or whatever it is, Church. And we heard the truth [laughs] as bespoken by various ministers and various politicians and statesmen and academics and so on. And it gave a kind of a common core curriculum to the college, which we haven't had since that time. Even partaking in agonizing speakers, the agonizing experience of listening to those people, presented a kind of commonality that could be shared. But very once and a while, every once and a while, we were given a nugget of information we hadn't heard, something that was stimulating and so on. And the common theme was of course—in fact, the most basic theme of Macalester always has been social consciousness and a concern for doing for others less fortunate than ourselves. And at that time it was religiously oriented and driven by the many, many church societies on campus, et cetera. But it was deeper than that, it infused the whole campus. And we were light years ahead of any of our other competitive colleges here. I think right now the St. Thomases, and Hamlines, and Carletons, and St. Olafs have caught up to us in terms of such things as the number of participants that engage in outreach activities in the community, but that was not the case then. We were light years ahead of them and we are still doing very, very well; it's just that the rest have sort of realized this is the sensible thing to do. But we, for example, we had two weeks: one was Religion-in-Life Week, in which they shortened the classes, and they

brought in theologians and priests and rabbis from all sorts of varieties of religion and then you had seminars in the afternoon where you could talk with them and exchange dialogue with them, interact and all sorts of—and this was stimulating, I think particularly to younger-period people like myself who hadn't gone through this. We also had a Political Emphasis Week in which various simulated assemblies, whether they were state legislature, or Congress, or the United Nations, people acted as delegates, debated motions, et cetera, and it was all keynoted by a national speaker which was brought in. All that raised the political awareness and the religious awareness of the campus, particularly in the area of social consciousness and the need for social justice, so. That theme was more important than intellectual excellence at the time. And it was more important than any of the other kind of criteria that we have today that kind of earmark Mac.

[11:07]

LZ: Did you have other kind of graduation requirements, like the chapel would have been, that...?

RM: Well, yeah. Yeah, they were—I've seen the ebb and flow of the requirements through the years, and I guess I'd have to say that the thing that characterized the early '50s was the lack of restraints. You could take from four to seven courses, perhaps even more. A number of times I took six courses. I didn't do as well as I would have liked [laughter] on some of them, but no one told us at that time that grades really mattered, see? And they really didn't that much. So I ended up with two majors and about six minors, which was wonderful, I could—most of these were in the social sciences, but history—I was political science and communication majors, and

history, and English, and philosophy, and economics, and so on. But as a future teacher it was a very good broadening background, you get to know a little bit of a lot of stuff. So there was that kind of freedom, but I don't remember [laughs]—probably my own limitations at the time, but I don't remember the emphasis upon the grades. I kind of was vaguely aware that there were people who were valedictorians and salutatorians of the class and so on, but they really didn't seem to matter all that much. And I kind of understood that they *may* have had a leg up, but at that time—and this is a terrible thing to say, but at that time if you'd asked me, “Are you going on to graduate school?” I would have said, “Well, I don't think I want to be a lawyer or a doctor.” Not understanding, of course, that those were professional schools and graduate school is something completely different. But that showed, a little bit, my orientation. And I was certainly into enough things to kind of figure it out by myself, but I didn't. And I don't know, in terms of the curriculum, there was certain specific things you had to take too. You had to take religion at that time, and as my great, great wonderful boss would say—Mary Gwen Owen—the Bible people. [laughter] So you had to take Old Testament or New Testament and so on, and it was usually pretty boring and not very interesting. But in the '60s there was a complete, major upgrade of everything at Macalester.

[13:40]

LZ: Was Mary Gwen Owen a professor of yours as well?

RM: Yes, she was a professor and she was like—I mentioned before that we were blessed to have all of these outstanding, internationally-oriented and liberally-tinged individuals at that time. But Gwen was...she was a force apart. She had a big red smock and she'd come sweeping out of

her office in the Little Theater, and she'd take editorials from the *New York Times* and any other place—she read, you know, voraciously—and she'd pin them on a board with the conclusions underlined in red, the things that you should believe. And even Dean Dupre, bless his beautiful, wonderful heart, walking to Old Main would stop and study each one of those editorials. And so it became kind of like a news post for the campus. And she was just larger than life. And I know as a student, and working under her as my boss for many years, we were quite unlike, but I certainly respected everything she did. She introduced a thing called Drama Choros, which we haven't seen before or since. It was about sixty, seventy people who were engaged in simultaneous oral interpretation of various great works. And those works were works that were challenging to the audience, you know? She used some of the very first black writing and so on. And they went on national tour, and international tour, and there was just nothing like it before or since. It's a wonderful new art form, really. But she was like many of them at that time, very gifted, great teacher; and, one of the things I remembered, she was not above chastising the whole faculty. We produced plays, and various interesting plays, and did a pretty good job of it, and a lot of the faculty didn't come to the plays. So she would stand up in the faculty meetings and, "You people think you are a liberal arts campus, you should be interested in all of these wonderful ideas. And we're just doing *Antigone* now, it's a wonderful play, and not one of you have been to the play. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" And, of course, the next night they'd all dutifully [laughter] walk into the play. But she, you know, she was a propagandist, and a persuader; she was one of these people that knew she was right about everything and made no bones about it. So she was wonderful, but I could say the same thing about Dean Dupre, and G.T. Mitau, Yahya Armajani. And our chaplain at the time was a guy named Adams, and he is Joan Adams's father, Fritz Mondale's wife. And so, you know, they had a great impression on a

lot of people. And, of course, the classes were a little smaller there, in most cases. And even though we had a large number of students, we seemed to have smaller class—there were some large ones, but it was intimate and very engaging.

[17:15]

LZ: Were most of your classes in Old Main at that time?

RM: Old Main, the science hall at the time, and what was the Little Theater, which was a complex of the arts. It had a theater in it, it had English, the humanities were there, and art was there. Yeah, yeah. But mostly those three buildings, um-hm.

LZ: Was the library in Old Main at that time or had it been moved?

RM: The library was the administrative house.

LZ: Oh, was Weyerhaeuser.

RM: Yeah. That was owned—I can't remember, I worked at it, so did my wife, but that was the library, which is now the administrative center. For the president's office and so on.

[18:00]

LZ: Did you act in any of the plays that Mary Gwen...?

RM: Yes, I did. I was a wonderful Mark Anthony [laughter]. And...oh, I don't know, I was some lead in *She Stoops to Conquer*, and there were a few other plays here. We also had plays we did with the other campuses, and I was in some of those as well.

[18:24]

LZ: Oh, okay. Did you have other extracurricular activities?

RM: Yeah, I played in the jazz band here and, it was not a [constituted? unclear] one, we just got together and blew. We did have jazz concerts in what was the old gym, and they were well attended. Besides that I did student government, I was vice president of the student council, and I was head of World Student Service Fund, which was another do-good operation, which really raised quite a bit of money. They raised money for other campuses overseas, which after the war there were a lot of campuses and universities that needed help. So we would have fund drives and various events. I can remember vividly—and I was chair two years of that event, and one year I was *so* happy because we'd raised thirty thousand dollars for the Free University of Berlin, which was just starting. And, of course, I thought we'd saved the Free University, until about a week later, I read that the Ford Foundation had kicked in about ten million [laughter] to put things in perspective. But our hearts were in the right places and we were doing what we thought was correct and so on.

[19:47]

LZ: Has that service and kind of volunteer aspect, was that even big, I guess—

RM: Yeah, it was very big at the time. There were troops that went out and acted in various nursing homes and children's gatherings. There was a band of readers, I remember, oral interpreters that really had been under Gwen's direction, Mary Gwen, and who started up on their own doing these things. There were musical folk that did that. And it seemed to me that we had a lot of religious-oriented clubs at the time, about fifteen, and then there were also certain sororities and fraternities at the time. I never got—I was a member of one of them and I never got the impression that they did much, other than meet and have a dinner and tell jokes, but... And that went away in the '60s, of course. But they were not fraternities and sororities in our normal assumption of this at all; they were just kind of clubs that met together. But there was a club for everything you wanted to do: there was a Mac skiing club, we had hockey at that time, there was a Macalester fliers club who taught you how to fly, and et cetera. Scotsmen, I think, Scots...

LZ: Yeah, I think the Flying Scotsmen...

RM: Yeah, yeah. So there was just a lot of activities. Anything you wanted to do you could find an option there, so.

[21:17]

LZ: Were there kind of all-campus, big kind of social events?

RM: Yeah, sure. There were the typical dances and they were fairly regular. I think they're typical of any campus, you know. There was a Snow Ball, there was—I can't remember all of them, but they were well attended. They were the big outlet here, you know.

[21:43]

LZ: On the weekends, did students tend to kind of have their activities on campus or was there venturing off...?

RM: Well, I was just thinking about this. I don't think things have changed a heck of a lot. See, the rap on you guys is that you come here and you don't go any place. You don't go to see the Guthrie, you don't go to the Minneapolis Symphony—you don't do anything but sit in your rooms and talk on the weekends. And I think that has been true to Macalester for as long as I've been here. And that, in one sense, is sort of a backhanded compliment, the fact that you have got together a bunch of interesting people that you want to spend time with rather than going to some other bar in Minneapolis or so on. So, most of the time was on-campus, as I say except for the vets who would wander down to O'Gara's bar and various other places. A lot of them, you must remember about—I think, I can't tell you for sure, but I think about fifty percent of the students lived off-campus around here. Yeah, and some of them lived in South St. Paul and commuted and so forth. So, they perhaps had other things to do on the weekends too. But we, you know, young fresh people who [laughs]—we would go in our rooms and study most of the weekend, with a few exceptions, yeah.

[23:10]

LZ: Was there a divide between those that lived on-campus and those that didn't, since...?

RM: Yeah, of course the off-campus people miss out on some of the activities. But they went out of their way to try to include them. They had an off-campus lounge for many, many years around here, just for the students who lived off-campus, commuter students.

[23:33]

LZ: Did you have meals on-campus then?

RM: Yeah. Yeah.

LZ: Okay, you did. Where were they?

RM: Well, they had a kitchen in Kirk Hall if you can imagine. Then they were kitchened in Wally Hall. And, I don't know, some other places. It was pretty segregated, men would eat in Kirk Hall and the women would eat in Wally, and once in a while they'd exchange so you could recognize what the other sex looked like. But those were the two—plus the Campus Grille which sits now right about here [gesturing to the area outside of the Harmon Room]. Right about here it used to sit, as part of the Old Main, over there. And that was a hotbed of smoking and coffee—endless coffee and endless discussion. I can remember vividly that I met W.H. Auden there. He was here speaking, and one of my English faculty was good enough to invite me along to coffee. I didn't say a thing, but I listened [laughter]. But that was a real center of campus life too.

[24:50]

LZ: What were relationships like between students and faculty; would you say that it was less, I guess, more formal than it was?

RM: Very personal, very intimate. Of course it differs with each professor. I mean, some professors were unapproachable then as now. But by and large, I have to say that it was very personal and intimate. Well, one story, I can remember vividly—I was going to go to Germany for six months on what was then called Student Project for Amity Among Nations. And in the interim I had instead married, and so I had to approach my professor, my advisor, who was a little abrupt at the time. But then Dean Dupre, who was not dean, he was then professor of history, is catching this dialogue out of his earshot there, and he said, “What is that, you’re not going to Germany?” And I said, “Well, no, I have other priorities.” And he said, “Well, why don’t we talk about it.” So, he had a list of about eighteen people to register, and he took me, abandoned his post, we went and sat right now where the chapel is sitting and he planned out my life. For a whole hour and a half he discussed what I should do, and what should be. And of course when I got my PhD at the University of Minnesota, that was the first place I went after I passed my oral examination—to Dean Dupre’s home. Because he was really kind of a spiritual godfather to me, academically. So we had a little French wine and, you know... But I think this is true, students are close to so many of their professors, and naturally respected them a great deal, and to this day are indebted for what they’ve given, you know, them in terms of orientation, et cetera. Which is not unlike any small campus, anywhere [laughter]. But again as I say we

seem to have a core of socially conscious, dedicated, committed, do-gooder professors who had had a lot of experience and that brushed off.

[27:08]

LZ: Was it typical for students to pursue study abroad opportunities?

RM: To what?

LZ: To pursue study abroad opportunities?

RM: Yeah, although they were quite limited at the time. There was, as I say, a Student Project for Amity Among Nations, which underwrote students going to France and England, various places, but not much. There was a Mexican Caravan that went down for three weeks to Mexico. And there were international conferences with a college in Winnipeg, a Canadian-American conference. We'd go up there one year, they'd come down here the next, and they'd discuss common topics and so on. And there may have been other international-oriented programs that I'm not aware of.

[27:58]

LZ: Did you have a job while working at Macalester?

RM: Yeah, I worked in the library. And then I was Dr. Mitau's assistant for two years. I learned a lot about giving tests [laughter]. My poor students probably don't appreciate what I

learned from Dr. Mitau, but... He ran things in a typical European fashion, he lectured a lot and he had two assistants. And he gave an examination every two weeks, and the assistants corrected them. So he really—once and a while he'd look over a question, but his job was to lecture and ours was to correct the exams and so on. But he was very fair.

[28:48]

LZ: Was this still the era of the more vocational-focused kind of programs?

RM: Yeah, it was. You know, I mean we had secretarial studies taught here as a major. And we also had journalism taught, and we also had medical technology and a nursing program. And the reason for that was, I think the secretarial program had been here for a while, but the main reason was that Mac was going broke. After the war, we lost the stream of the vets, the income stream from the vets, and there was lower birth, or numbers of freshmen entering and so on. So, Mac was in trouble in the '50s as well as in the '70s financially, and so they opened up these new programs to bring in income. And, of course, they brought a variety of different people to the campus, but the nursing program never integrated with the rest of the campus very well at all. They had a Miss Woods elementary school too, that was a top-notch school for teaching elementary teachers. And all of that added—well, if you strike out those that I've mentioned that would be half the campus gone, and we probably would not have been able to continue. So in the 1960s—you're all aware of this, but if anyone were to ask me over the forty-seven years that I've been associated—fifty-some years as a student and teacher, associated with Mac—what's the most significant influence, it's the intervention of Wallace in the campus. Because he came in and he gave us *immense* amounts of money. For forty million dollars he built the whole fine

arts complex, and numerous other buildings around and so on. And even though he was, I have to say, very conservative, right-wing Republican who published the Reader's Digest and so on, in most cases he didn't intervene...he did not intervene politically in terms of the emphasis of the college. There were a couple times he did, but by and large his influences were quite benign, and quite personal. He would write to individual professors, he asked me to meet him in New York City because my debaters were doing so very well and he wanted to know about that. For some reason, I was so dumb I didn't meet him. I don't know if I was intimidated, or I was busy with other important things. I didn't understand how important this philanthropist was to Macalester College [laughter].

[31:36]

Because what he did, you know, was to give us an immense amount of money, and the main thing he did was to get students like you two [points to Laura Zeccardi]. One of the little understood but most important influences of Macalester was, overnight, in about 1964, '65, '66, he—we had a National Merit scholarship program at that time too, but if your father and mother made over a certain amount of money, even though you had qualified for a National Merit Scholarship, you couldn't get any money from the government. Wallace said, "We've got a place for you! Come to Macalester College!" And he underwrote hundreds of scholarships. In fact, the story that I thought was apocryphal turns out to be true, and that is that Harvard University at the time said, "What the hell is going on here? We see that Macalester has a hundred and ninety-seven National Merit scholars, that's more than us! Does anyone know where Macalester is?" [laughter] And that's true, because our present vice president of recruitment was there at the time. But of course now, all campuses, all colleges and universities are doing exactly the same thing. You ask yourself or any of the other students why they came

to Mac and, yeah, there were some things you liked about it, et cetera, but the main thing is they gave you the best financial deal that you could get. And, at that time, nobody talked about this, and it was very hush-hush for about three years. And we had an infusion of students that were just so bright and so driven and so on that they were challenges to all of the faculty. And then, of course, the other thing he did was to put in a huge amount of money so we could recruit top-notch faculty too. And so you had a sea change overnight in the '60s, in which I was blessed with some of the best debaters I've ever had, and the whole student body was just sort of upgraded, along with the faculty upgraded. And the students pushed the faculty that were here, such as myself, to do better, you know. So, when you ask what was the biggest influence, that's it. Particularly, and you know, he underwrote my post-doctorate work in England. Yeah, he would do that. After you finish your PhD, I spent a whole year in England supported by him, which broadened my horizons considerably, and got to meet my English cousins, and so, visited the Continent for the first time, so on. You know, this is the kind of broadening that all faculty need, and some of us who were, you know, not in a position to have.

[34:43]

LZ: So, you graduated from Macalester in 1952.

RM: I did, yeah.

LZ: When you graduated, where—did you know what you were going to do after you left?

RM: Yeah, Dean Dupre had laid it out for me. I was going into education, I was going to produce a salary [laughter]. No, I was very vague, I really didn't even have a job when I graduated, it was just the fact that my wife was teaching in South St. Paul and the superintendent wanted to keep her. So he called up the superintendent of a new high school and said, "I've got a guy that you've got to hire." So I just walked into a job there, which is not unlike a lot of choices at the time. One of my funniest stories is, one of our finest graduates, Bruce Mobberly, graduated '58 or '56, I don't know. He was from Winnipeg and he just finished his service in the Canadian Army in Berlin, and came back and he decided to go to school here, he went down to University of Minnesota. And even though he'd been all over Europe, et cetera, the University of Minnesota intimidated people as one of the largest in the world, you know? And so he said, "Aren't there some small colleges around here that are a little less intimidating than this?" And they said, "There are some down the road here, you go down University Avenue and you get to Snelling and on the left is one named Hamline and on the right is one named Macalester." So, he happened to be in the right lane [laughter] and turned on Snelling and became one of our fine graduates.

[36:18]

LZ: Have you kept in touch?

RM: What?

LZ: After you graduated did you keep in touch with a lot of students that you had graduated with?

RM: Oh, yeah...well, you know. I guess the usual reunions help bring you together, but you keep in touch, particularly in the cities, if there are other graduates here, and so on. Mostly I've kept in touch with my students, since I've started teaching here. Because they're just magnificent people, you know. And they went on to great achievements and make you proud, very proud.

[36:53]

LZ: So you, after graduation you were teaching in the public school system?

RM: I went to public school over in West St. Paul for four years and had a number of wonderful students there. In fact, at my retirement dinner in 2004 I had my first class there, ten members of my first class in West St. Paul, and ten members of my last class at Macalester attended. So, most of them were international students too. Yeah, you do keep in touch with them, but like everything, you know, you lose track.

LZ: So how then did you come back to Macalester to teach?

RM: '56 I came back. We had some good success in winning state titles in various speech events and so on. Mary Gwen hired me back—but Gwen was funny. She didn't want me to do what I wanted to do at the time, which was to teach debate. Instead she made me head of costumes [laughter]. Yeah, and of course I couldn't sew to save my soul, but I blundered

through that for a year and then I finally ended up in the other side of communication, argumentation, debate, and small group and so on.

[38:14]

LZ: So, had you had any affiliation with the college in those four years that you had been gone?

RM: Yeah, as a matter of fact I used to come back to a seminar run by Dave White in mysticism, in which they studied the mystical, really dedicated religious expressions of Catholicism, and Protestantism, and Sufism, and Hinduism, et cetera. And one of the guys that was in that seminar was the famous author of *Zen and the Motorcycle...what is it? Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*; yeah, Robert Pirsig. So, it was very interesting that some of these professors kept their retention students, even after they graduated. It's not unusual; it's just probably unusual for Americans.

LZ: Had you planned on returning to Macalester? Was that part of the ultimate plan?

RM: No, no, I just felt I needed...it was a period of spiritual exploration, let's put it that way. And I also felt intellectually challenged by the seminar, you know, at a greater level than teaching in high school.

LZ: So, you returned and you were teaching—

RM: '56 I returned, in '56, the fall of '56. Yeah, and I taught basic speech communication courses.

[39:48]

LZ: Okay. And this is where—because now you're officially, what, Communication and Media Studies, but then it would have, what's it called?

RM: Well, yeah, what happened evolutionarily, it was called Speech and Theatre at one time. But the fact is, Mary Gwen was dominant in the area of drama and drama choros, oral interpretation, national reputation in that. So there was very little emphasis upon debate, very little emphasis on what I consider to be the core of communication. We were mainly drama and so on. So, I was hired and I worked very hard, both on extracurricular debate and speech activities and on teaching. And then we hired another person so that you had some balance in the department. And so, slowly, we developed courses in communications to balance those in drama, and so on. But the fact is that that joining of speech communication, which is social science and scientific study, with dramatic arts, which is arts and humanities oriented, was always—was never a good fit. There was a historical reason for this, years ago, that I could go into but it's irrelevant. They're both thought of as personal expressions, aspects of personal expressiveness and so on. But all over the nation these two departments drifted apart then. And ours hung together until about 1985, and then they split. And we were still in the same building, which DeWitt Wallace built for us there, but we really had two different departments. Then the speech communication all over the nation dropped the term "speech," which was too limiting. And because we—for example, I had introduced a course in small group communication, a

course in persuasion, a course in intercultural communication, a course in organizational communication, and seminars in research methodology and communication. Those are five courses, six courses we never had previously, but they represented the more scientific way the whole field was going. So the whole field then changed their name to Communications Studies. And that was just fine until I retired and then they didn't renew my position, and they ended one half of the department. They just cut it off, and then what we have now is a remnant of it, which is media. See in 1963, they killed the journalism department, because it's thought to be too vocational. If you're a liberal arts—this is one of the more interesting aspects of the liberal arts that you've undoubtedly thought about—we pretend that we are a liberal arts institution. As does all of the, so many of the top-notch institutions. But if you look at the transcript of the graduate of today, especially those that are heavy in science and so on, you'll see very little other than just requirements in the areas of arts, humanities, and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And social sciences. You'll see a very heavy focus in their area. And so they go through chemistry and they get a degree and they take the degree and they go to 3M and said, "I'm a chemist." And they say, "Okay, you're hired." You go through humanities and get a degree in English or in classics, or some of these other areas, and you say, "I have a degree." And they say, "Yes, you can tend bar for a number of years." The point is there's very strong vocational emphasis within some of these so-called liberal arts. If my good chemist friends were here, and my good biology friends they'd say, "Yes, but we teach it completely differently." I'd say, "Yeah. You do a wonderful job, I respect what you're doing, et cetera, but let's not call it liberal arts." So the liberal arts curriculum has changed. Right now we're back insisting on more broad curricular emphases, which is dead right if you want to call yourself a liberal arts college. For example, the

emphasis upon critical thinking, the requirement in quantitative, which everybody should have, that was hard fought, but is going to be good for the college.

[44:26]

LZ: So in your first couple years then, you weren't teaching some of these courses that came later, what were you specifically...?

RM: I was teaching speech fundamentals, and I was teaching argumentation, and doing extracurricular debate and forensics and that was about it. I mean, there was just one person in that whole area, so. But then we developed so that it was equal number of people in speech and drama and then finally, when we cut off—the division was really, when we cut off between what I would call applied communication and media communication, see? They cut off journalism then, but then they decided that they were going to—since media had become a big thing in the Eastern colleges, we wanted to be like them, so emphasis on media.

[45:14]

LZ: How big was the department in kind of the '50s and '60s?

RM: Our department was at its heyday, which was about 2000 when I stepped down as chair, we were about the fifth largest in terms of enrollment. That was the top—normally around the tenth or in the middle there. So they really cut off one half of it and are just are left with a combination of media studies and now, the new thing, cultural studies. It's not new to, you know, the rest of the academic world, but it was relatively new here.

[45:54]

LZ: Who were some of the other professors in that department with you, or maybe some of the more—

RM: Yeah, you mean currently?

LZ: I guess maybe ones that stand out in your mind from when you first started and currently too?

RM: Well, as I said, Mary Gwen was by far the exceptional, and after there I don't recall too much in drama. In our area we hired another guy, whose name is Scott Nobles, who did a very good job with debate even though we had disagreements—he took over the debate program from me. But he was a brilliant guy, and he was a wonderful teacher of the relatively few courses he taught—not much change [laughter]. But, to give him his due, he went on to win a couple national championships in debate. But we had a great difference in philosophy. I believed that we should have forty people debating, and I really didn't care who won. He sort of believed that we should concentrate on two to four to five, six people. So there was, let's say, an educational difference on that. He was very political and—but I think made a contribution, no question about it. The other people are recent: Clay Steinman and Leola Johnson. I had been trying for about twenty years—I was chair of both the Speech and Drama Department and the Communications Studies Department two different times for a total of about twenty years, and I had been trying for some long time to get a significant minority in there. And we finally were

able to do it with Leola. And she brought with her an emphasis on critical theory as well as cultural studies and media that really has contributed significantly to the department. And what Clay brought was he was a Ph.D. in film, and he brought real emphasis on the media and a criticism of the media. Now, in back of both of that, in both of them, was a strong belief in cultural studies, which was introduced through the department, then became the major emphasis in the department right now. And even though I have some difficulties with that emphasis, nonetheless I think that the department now is... I lament the fact that the applied communication part of it is gone, and as a result we've lost about five hundred alumni that made contributions because they cut out their department. But we now have the remnants of one, and they have a little journalism in there too, even though one of the courses is—basic journalism is called “News Writing.” I don't know if that's sufficiently liberal arts or not [laughter].

[49:23]

LZ: Have communications and journalism been kind of the two big either areas or departments that Mac has chosen to drop?

RM: Yeah, it's really media studies, cultural studies, and a little bit of journalism, that's what it is right now. But they've been growing and Leola has been very good in terms of—we had one of our Rhodes Scholars who did his work under her, and so she's made a major contribution too. It's one thing to recognize that, it's another thing to really understand it and appreciate it, you know, et cetera. And I still have problems with cultural studies, so.

[End of Disc 1, 50:06]

[Start of Disc 2]

[00:32]

LZ: This is tape number two of the interview with Roger Mosvick. So now I wanted to talk to you about your experience with the speech and the debate team, because I know that you had quite a bit of success with that.

RM: Well, when I first took over the debate team, after Mary Gwen Owen let me out of my costuming job [laughter] it was a matter of building people. And I had a good compatriot in G.T. Mitau, who said that you can't major in political science unless you take argumentation. And so I was teaching argumentation, so I had an influx of bright poli sci students, see? And then I had a requirement, you couldn't take argumentation unless you debated intercollegiately. So everybody that took the course had to debate, and so the problem was I had too many people. And so the question is, what are you going to do to have a venue or a forum for them to debate intercollegiately? So we organized a Twin City debate league, and that entailed about eighteen colleges and the University of Minnesota, from Fargo over to Eau Claire, down to Iowa and so on. And we would have four tournaments of three hours each, in which they'd come in on a Tuesday, let's say, and debate from three o'clock until seven-thirty. And it became very efficient and allowed us to get—everyone wanted debate in the region to have access to this. So that was a part of the feeder program that made the debate program a success. I had no help at all at first, and I finally got somebody who would help me as an assistant to be an instructor and so on. And I used a lot of former students like yourself who graduated to come back and help. Like Rollin

Crawford, who was an assistant with me for two, three years while he was finishing law school. So this allowed everybody to debate. And we had an A Division and B Division tournaments, and so you could take your top eight people and put them in the A Division and take—in our case we had over forty people debating. And that was larger than anyone in the United States at the time, other than a couple big universities. But they all got access. And it's very interesting—everyone had trepidation and fear the first debate, of course. But then they won and won and won and won! And, to this day, for example, I can recall one of our graduates there is chairman of the board of trustees at Mac at the time. And he points to the fact that he never made the A team, but the one thing he remembers was winning the B Division debate tournament at Hamline University in 1962 [laughter]. And he can describe every round, and he can describe the strategies and so on, and he said, "It was the best single experience. It gave me confidence and led me to do well in law school and mock trial," and so on.

[04:03]

So it's that kind of satisfying thing, all of the kids that went through it came out of it with a tremendous amount of confidence. Some of them, of course, went on to exceptional—we won our first nationally recognized tournament the very day President Kennedy was assassinated. November 11th, 1961. And we did that by fielding a broad team of—we must have had about eight squads of debaters, and we had another twenty people in oral interpretation, and after dinner speaking, and discussion, and a number of those other extracurricular events. So the emphasis was on a lot of people. And I never knew who would win, but I knew that everyone would do pretty well because they honed themselves on the competition with one another. And the other thing we used to take was debate tours, which was the killer for me. We would take three station wagons and pack them full of twenty kids—this is part of the Interim program, so

we studied here for two weeks, then we'd get into the wagons and go way out to California or down to Florida or anyplace where it was warm. And I remember vividly one of them we took to Florida. We drove, like fools, twenty-four hours straight to Hattiesburg, Mississippi. And then we debated at Hattiesburg, and engaged in various speaking at the University of Georgia, where one of my students was running the program there. And then we went to Tallahassee and then up to South Carolina, stopping at each place, debating, et cetera. And then we split out, and I sent six people to Johns Hopkins, they were having a tournament, four people to William & Mary, having a tournament that weekend, four people to King's, and four to Harvard. And so we all joined together at the end of this in Pennsylvania on our trek home. And I talked to the guys from William & Mary. I had two debaters who were so good, God, they went a hundred and thirty-two debates and lost seven. You know. And I said, "Well, how'd you do?" And they said, "Oh, we did as well as we could." And I said, "Look, I know, whatever, you know, you did as well as could possibly be expected. Don't worry about it. What did you go? Three-two or three-three? Or what?" And they said, "Well, we're not too sure but we have this." And then they brought out the trophy—they won the whole thing. And one of those guys is a guy named Dave Bell who just last couple months ago won an outstanding award as one of the top national advertisers in New York City. And the other one was Dave Schmidt, who is an outstanding lawyer in Cleveland, who married one of my third, second, first best debaters [laughter] who I see at all the reunions. And she is now, she's head of the speech, communication, drama department at a college in Cleveland. And those two were, you know, just typically representative of the tremendous kind of students that I had at that time. You never really knew who was going to win, you know, but somebody would. They were wonderful.

[07:50]

LZ: Is it true that Kofi was in...

RM: What's that?

LZ: Kofi Annan.

RM: Yeah, Kofi [laughs]—long story and I don't want to overdo it, you know. This is my only claim to fame, practically [laughter]! And I've said it so many times on National Public Radio, and on CNN, et cetera. But I had two wonderful debaters. One guy in particular, Jack Mason, who was chairman of the board here and who unfortunately—both of them died far too young—but Jack was a very bright guy and always had a tremendous sense of humor. And he was always pulling pranks on me, always. And one time he had sent me—he told me that we had two tremendous possible recruits from South America, or Central America, and I just had to talk to them because they were excellent debaters and I should recruit them. So they came in and I effusively welcomed them and they were very bright-eyed and smiling, and I asked them various things and went on and on in my usual fashion [laughs]. And then I asked a few questions and apparently they couldn't speak a word of English [laughter]. And my Spanish was halting. So, anyways, I had been hit by Mason already. So, two weeks later he said, "Geez, we've got a guy here that's an outstanding speaker and, you know, you've got listen to him." And I said, "Yeah, yeah." [laughter] I thought, okay, I will. And so, Kofi was very reserved, you know, very reserved, very respectful of anyone in age or any kind of prominence and so on. And so at first I thought, "Here's another one of Jack's jokes," you know. But then he opened his mouth and it

was very clear that he was a gem. And I said, “Well, you can enter the local contest.” I’d been working with about eight other people, and holding their speeches, and I didn’t think he had a snowball’s chance. But I said, “I’m going to have to listen to your speech.” And he said all right, and he showed up and so he stood up in that Little Theater there at four o’clock one afternoon and delivered this wonderful speech. I mean, there was very little I could do to help him—it was just such a beautiful speech. And it was, you know, light years ahead of its time talking about the debt owed the colonial nations to the African nations, and the need to continue, you know, helping and repaying that debt for not just a few years but for fifty years in the future and it was a very prescient speech. That a guy that young could understand this and see this so well. So anyways, he went on to win our local contest and he went on to win the Minnesota state oratory. Yeah. He was a wonderful, and still is of course, a wonderful person.

[11:06]

LZ: So how long then did you stay with the coaching the speech?

RM: I coached ten years here. And then—from about ’58 to ’69, something like that. And then I just had—I’d finished my Ph.D. and I just wanted—it burns you out, coaching burns you out. And you live with the students and you drive with them and you are with them constantly, et cetera. And they’re wonderful people and they’re highly driven and competitive, but it just takes it out of you. And all of those ten years I should have been writing articles, and I couldn’t. Not just because of that, but also because I developed consulting outside of the college. But my first love was here, of course, and my first indebtedness was here, teaching.

LZ: You received tenure within those first ten years though.

RM: Yeah, tenure. Yeah, I don't know when I received tenure. At that time, I just assumed I'd get tenure and I did. There wasn't the emphasis upon it that you have now. Although I must say that salaries were very, very poor at the time too, and continued so for a long time. Very long time.

[12:29]

LZ: Well, I wanted to talk now about kind of the climate that developed at Macalester in the late '60s and '70s, and I know you were also a big advocate of the EEO program?

RM: Yeah. We have, you know, we have wonderful, brilliant professors here and many of them with a good strong dose of social consciousness—which I might add, has become less so, I think, in the professorate than it was. But I don't know when this struck me. I guess I'm going to say that if there's one thing I did at Mac that was kind of a unique contribution was to recognize the need for a program which is open to minorities that really did not have the money to afford a top-notch educational program. And I started this—I cofounded the very first one, which is never really remembered, but you can find evidence of it in the *Mac Weekly*, in 1964. I cofounded it with Earl Bowman, who is a black, African-American, top athlete who went on to become assistant to the president here and then president of a community college in Minneapolis. And at that time, James Baldwin was very influential. He was writing at that time, *The Fire Next Time* and so on. And I started reading much of this literature. But mainly, the main influence was that I was influenced by two people. One was Earl and another was a top-notch student who was

rooming with one of my best debaters—she also went on to win the Minnesota state too, in oratory. But I got to meet her family in Chicago and... See, we were a lily-white institution here for a very long time. I counted in the class of '51 or '52, I think, two African Americans and about three Asians graduating. And this is from a college that had great social consciousness. And so this all began dawning and I began speaking on the campus. And I remember, I spoke to student government about it, and after I got through they said, "But, what is the issue?" They didn't understand. And it was slow going with the faculty, too. But finally we got the president, who was Rice then, to find a multi-millionaire who gave us a couple million and that enabled us—at the time I interpreted this only in terms of African Americans. I had, you know, the vaguest naïve notion of the complexities of the issue of minorities in general. But we were able then to get about twelve new African American students and that was like a shot in the arm. And they did very well, all of those folks.

[15:45]

And then in 1969, '70, when we had President Flemming here, we all jumped on him immediately and said, "We've got to move to expand this Educational Opportunities Program for minorities." And I was on the Faculty Advisory Council advising Flemming at that time. And Flemming had a notorious career at Macalester. He was here three years and we had enormous change and we had this huge EEO program and, eventually, he spent us almost into bankruptcy and so he was fired, frankly. But he was a gifted visionary, and the faculty—at least the advising council faculty, and most of the faculty—were in favor of this. So, we had volatile period, some of the most exciting period at Macalester in the 1970s. Because we had the Vietnam War, and all of the horror of that incredibly stupid encounter. And secondly we had the onset of drugs on campus. And thirdly we had one of the largest EEO programs in the nation. Particularly for a

college of our size. And we had made mistakes, no question about it. We were all quite naïve and we had recruited people who were not capable of meeting the standards of Mac at the time. And there were some very difficult times. The faculty split right down, conservative and liberal, on this issue. And it all sort of came to a head when he got fired. But I will say this: they have always maintained a minorities program and an opportunity. And you know, the thought that we're trying to get across of course is not only are we magnanimously giving students the opportunity for a top-notch education at Mac, but far more importantly—and it took a long time for this to dawn on everybody—we are ourselves bringing to the campus the kind of reality and the kind of diversity of the world in which our graduates are going to live. And I can't tell you how many of the wonderful discussions in which we may be discussing such things as the need for national socialized medicine or a national medical system, and there will be the usual polite arguments, et cetera, whereas somebody who has spent the time in, let's say, a black community trying to get medical aid and so on will stand up and give you that powerful anecdotal and true segment. And at those moments you begin to see how freeing up the system would enable the rest of the sheltered, very white-oriented vote to understand that there are issues that must be addressed and so on. I went to Dean Dupre, who was a leader in social consciousness and international outreach and so on, and I said, "Huntley, how in God's name did we miss this?" And he looked out at the UN flag, he says, "I have no idea." You know? But we were just blithely going along with the assumption that we were doing all the right things and there's this huge, huge educational gap in our country, so. Anyway, despite our errors in the larger program that took place in the '70s, we were dead right, absolutely right. And that has maintained itself, both as a part of our attempt to attract the very best students of minorities and also the international students as well, although it's a little different with the international students.

[20:01]

LZ: When was that program then, was it gradually phased out or was it...? The EEO program.

RM: No it wasn't. We have always maintained something in the budget for the EEO program. Now it is just part of the whole admissions program. You know, very, very difficult to get students of the quality that can meet Mac's...but this is certainly not new to Mac, this is a problem that all the universities and et cetera have. It's a generic problem of education, but nonetheless we've always had that as a strong component of our recruiting. And if you look at the reports they'll send, we have X number of international, X number of domestic minorities, et cetera, et cetera, as some kind of measure that we haven't dropped the ball on this. And it's been a powerful aspect of our intellectual climate here.

[21:05]

LZ: So at the same time were Vietnam protests going on on-campus that these kind of debates—?

RM: Oh sure. Yeah, Mac was known as the center of it, even to a larger extent than the University of Minnesota. And we had an Abbie Hoffman and some of the top revolutionaries of that period. Some of them who became stockbrokers, of course, later [laughter]. But we had those speakers here, and it was a very—one year in particular it was very difficult, some of us very nearly quit teaching. Because students would not come to class, and when they did they'd usually have a sunflower in their hand, which they stared at. A lot of drugs. And a loosening of the curriculum too at that particular time, in terms of what's required and what's not. You could

pretty much take whatever you wanted or persuade a teacher to teach whatever you wanted, you know? So it lacked the rigor academically of the time. But it was a transitional phase that we were all going through. But I guess I have to say the drivers are the concern for social justice and individual rights and so on. I can remember going to a tea. And at that time we had a group which was sort of business people aligned at Mac, and one of them spoke in this tea. And he said, "Well, you heard the latest on Kent State? Kent State four, students zero." That's when they killed four Kent State students. And I couldn't believe my ears, but immediately one woman who was on the board just took him apart for stating that, you know. Taking glory in the fact that we'd killed four students as some indication of the rightness of their particular program. But there were elements of that. And, of course, we had a falling out of the alumni at the time too, who felt that we were moving too quickly in many of these areas. Everything got confused. Drugs, Vietnam, EEO program, see? And it was very hard. We were also trying to broaden our student body, and I would get calls from some of my older colleagues who say, "Look, what the hell is going on at Mac? My daughter is salutatorian at Sleepy Eye or some other place, and she can't get into Mac. And yet you're going to let some kid from the ghetto in New York in here who can't pass the exams." Well, there's not much I could say at that point, you know? It is difficult. But that was all part of our attempt to get out of this notion that we're an enclosed, lily-white, Midwestern environment. And to do that you have to make choices, you know, like every other college, university, you have to make choices of how do you want to enrich your whole student environment by the kind of people you bring into it. So it was a necessary growing pain that we had to go through. So you lose some alumni and hopefully you gain some of the younger alumni in the process. Every college goes through this.

[24:50]

LZ: So the financial crisis of the college would have come after, kind of later in the 1970s, or was that...?

RM: The financial crisis came in '74. My good friend Jack Mason had recruited a president named Davis, who was wonderful. You see, DeWitt Wallace cut us off, he wouldn't even meet with us. So Davis finally—and when you cut off a revenue stream like that, you know, that's something—but Davis met with Wallace and said yes, he could meet a budget and he could run the college without going millions of dollars in debt as Flemming had, et cetera. I will defend Flemming on other grounds. That is, he had reason to believe that he could have received lots of money from Washington that was not forthcoming, even though he was a former cabinet officer and his son was a member of the Nixon subcabinet, the money did not come. And it was a period of adjustment all throughout the nation. But Davis met with Wallace and straightened out the fact that he could administer the college well. But I'll repeat this story for you and I don't know, in fact, whether you—well, I don't know what ends you're going to use this story for, but the real saviors of the college were two board people who are still active in the college and so on. And they were top-notch trustees. And what they did was to go to White Plains, New York, and to meet with Wallace. And to try to persuade him to renew his contribution to the college again. And Wallace was adamant on this, and he wasn't going to do it. And apparently Wallace said—well, they said, “There's going to be a big problem here and, you know, we may go bankrupt completely, we may have to close the college,” et cetera. And Wallace said, “What are you going to do? Sue me?” And they said, “Well...” And Wallace said, “Well, who do you—,” he said, “You know, I've got hundreds of lawyers here.” And one of the trustees said, “Yes, but

who do you think is going to win that battle?” From a public relations standpoint. And that was the beginning of the renewal of Wallace’s contributions. So it’s an interesting kind of power play that our two trustees had enough courage to do, and they took a risk of course in doing it. But things came back together and with Davis’s good administration and so on, paved the way for a major reconciliation and a gift of huge amounts of monies in the ‘90s that made us the leader among small colleges in endowments. We’ve since lost that lead, but it’s only because of technical issues having to do with the nature of the stock. We couldn’t sell that *Reader’s Digest* stock to take advantage of the run-up of the market, ‘90s. But again, I have to say, those monies which Wallace gave are so instrumental to everything in this college. And I hate to be talking about a right-wing [laughter] individual like this, but from a philanthropic standpoint we owe him a lot. And his wife.

[28:56]

LZ: To switch gears, have you been involved in any sort of outside work or personal research of your own while teaching here and stuff?

RM: Yeah, yeah. I’ve been heavily involved as an outside consultant. One way to look at it is that I’ve had about five thousand students in my classes at Mac, and I’ve probably had another ten thousand to fifteen thousand in organizations like 3M and Honeywell and IBM and so forth. Both here in the nation and overseas—mainly Europe, but also South America and Australia. And I became a communication consultant through the invitation of one of my Macalester buddies at Honeywell. And this was at Honeywell during the heyday of the space exploration. And they said, “We have all these engineers and they can’t talk, so teach them how to talk.”

That was the simple mission. So I started devising presentation courses, so most of my life I have to say that at least sixty, seventy percent of the work has been teaching presentation courses and small group courses and organizational development courses in industry. And you'd give speeches sometimes to two thousand people and so on. But by and large it's been really an extension of the teaching here but in industry, and mainly the technical professional—the scientists, engineers, researchers, the marketing folk, and so on. But as a result of that I started a company on the side, and I always had kind of one foot in Macalester and another foot in outside. And had sixteen major corporations and about ten government—no, about five major government agencies in Washington to do this relatively simple-minded work, but which was absolutely necessary. And some of it became less simple-minded, much more complex, as I started analyzing what happened in decision-making in small-groups and teaching seminars in that. And out of that came my one book, which has had three editions and is in three languages, and I wish the Chinese would send me some royalties but they never do, you know. And some articles, but I was never, never a very heavy, scholarly researcher. And I'm working on one right now which is based on—the research was taken from these major agencies and industries, it was essentially survey work. I had them fill out an extensive questionnaire about their communication patterns. And so I've got a lot of data from about two thousand of these folks over twenty years that I'm working on. Some of it comes out, every once and awhile you stumble into a finding that you did not expect, you know?

[32:14]

LZ: Did that outside consultant work make an impact in the classroom for you in terms of...?

RM: Yeah, sure. And in fact it made my emphasis much more applied, but less theoretically; even though I was interested in theory, I was interested in producing a student who, when they went out, would understand how organizational communication works in a large-scale organization. Who would have the ability to present and persuade perfectly, and who could understand how decisions are made in small groups, and some of the intercultural communication factors and so on. So I often had speakers from industry and government in the classes, and I often would set up various relationships with people that I knew—students doing internships, for example. I just ran into one at the last reunion who, I had forgotten about the internship, but he said, “That really set me going.” You know? Internships are valuable. So, it was a mutually enforcing kind of—I learned very much from teaching in industry, which I took back into the classroom. I would send my students out to those industries to internships, and et cetera. So it was mutually enhancing. And the college was good enough to allow me to—most of this was done during the summertime anyway and didn’t infringe on work here.

[33:51]

LZ: So we’ve talked a little bit about changes, but as the interview kind of winds down I wanted to ask you, in your opinion as having been a student and then a professor, what are some of the biggest changes that Macalester has seen in terms of policies, student body, faculty, kind of really anything?

RM: Well, I think the single biggest change is that we have an increasingly brighter student body. And that is a powerful factor for the enhancement of the college and its reputation. I’m not suggesting that the students of ’50 were not that good. They went on to, you know,

tremendous accomplishments as well. One became the president of the University of Washington, and made it a first class institution. One became Acting Director of the CIA, a guy like Fritz Mondale became attorney general, and senator, and vice president, and presidential candidate and ambassador to Japan! And he's still the wonderful, wonderful person that he always has been. So it isn't that these people were not accomplishing and so on, but I can remember my own colleagues and I also remember my own limitations, obviously, and the students they had prior to this breakthrough. And it's really been night and day, and the student achievements, et cetera, has just gone up, up, up. And that drives the professors and drives the institution to be better. Secondly, of course, was there was that attention to getting a top-notch faculty, and I think that worked very well in the '60s through the '80s and right up to the retirement, those people were very instrumental to the whole development of Macalester, top-notch professors and so on, leading departments and so on. I think a third change has been, inevitably so, and that is we've become more research-oriented and less teaching-oriented. And that's the inevitable fallout when you decide that you're going to really emphasize research. At the very beginning, in '65, there were a lot of people that didn't have Ph.Ds. And so there's an emphasis on everyone getting their Ph.D., emphasis on post-doctorate work, emphasis upon research and publication. And I'm afraid it doesn't really matter Macalester or any other university. There are very, very few universities that can have a really top-notch scholar who publishes all the time, who is also a very, very good teacher, who takes interest in his students or her students. And President Gavin used to say, "Well, we can get that person, one who is really top-notch in research," and so on. And I think there are some good examples at Mac where we've done it, but we also have some examples of people that are totally into their own research, and students are pretty secondary to them. They know where the bread is buttered, they know

where the financial and academic rewards are, and they're not necessarily in teaching well. I think we do a pretty good job of it here at Mac, all things considered, but anyway that's a third kind of influence. I think that—well, and very clearly the composition of the student body is very changed too. As I said, we were heavily Protestant-oriented, very few Catholics. Now we got lots of Catholics, and we've got all sorts of Jewish students. And professors. And that's a major, major change. And both the professors and the students have brought with them a kind of perspective, both internationally and in terms of being more urbane and city-oriented and so on, that has broadened the college a great deal. Yeah, so yeah, that was a major, major change over the years and so on.

[38:17]

I think the last change I'd emphasize would be there has been somewhat of a split academically between those who are engaged in more traditional scientific analysis and those from the cultural studies area. And it is without any question that cultural studies has brought new insights, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. There's a conflict between the perspective of the faculty and their epistemological foundations of what is—how do we determine the relative truth of things and so on. And that has led to, I think, a greater degree of emphasis upon teaching one point of view. Now you get this a lot in the criticism from alumni and students, et cetera, that they feel the professors should teach both sides of the issue. Let me be very specific on this. I think it is true that over the years that some of our best professors have tried to teach both sides of the issues so far as they could. The position of many of the folks is that we are so overwhelmed by the establishment and the media which is so incredibly conservative that there's unwitting acceptance of all of these assumptions, post-structural, postmodern, the colonial assumptions, et cetera, that we just do not have any way to have a fresh insight into the enormity of the problem.

So their feeling is we're just going to teach the other side of it and the rest of the media and the establishment will continue to reinforce those conservative views. Now, I'm of two minds on this. I think they're dead right. I can't, you know...one single example, but I could give you thousands from the Iraq War, but the one that consist—I was debating national health insurance in 1962 with two of the best debaters that went to nationals, and took eighth place. We've been debating for so god-awful long and yet we're still subject to the same kinds of lies and distortions, et cetera, which are set up and fed by the media from CNN on. And so, you know, when you have a propagandist like Moore in *Sicko*, he's far more right, and yet we're not getting that particular point of view. And it's very hard to figure out why this is so, unless you buy some of the assumptions of my colleagues in critical theory and postmodernism, et cetera. But having said that, I still feel that those folks have an incumbent responsibility to teach criticism of their position. For example, I've said this to a lot of my postmodernist friends, that in 1995 Sokal, the physicist, wrote a paper which was published in *Social Forces*, then the big journal at Duke University for the postmodernists. In which he said, "There's still some folks in the area of science who are suffering under the illusion that there are certain scientific laws, such as gravity, that are beyond question. I mean to disabuse them of this notion." And then he went on, he had a wonderful article, filled with just a huge number of statistics and mathematical formulas and German and French intellectuals, which could not be understood, et cetera, and they published it. A month later, in the *MLS* journal, he said, "Remember that article that was published in *Social Force*? It was all a hoax." That is, these folks read that article and could not understand what they were reading and published it. So Sokal's Hoax, to my way of thinking, should be required reading of every introductory course of that kind, and we should obviously have the same thing on the other side of the issue. So, I'm of two minds about that. But there's a division, and

there's a division in the faculty here and all over the nation on this issue. I hope it's going away, I think it is. But when you do not have intellectual respect of the position of the other it's sometimes difficult. Have I babbled enough? [laughter]

[43:43]

LZ: It's great. So you've been retired from Macalester since 2004, you said?

RM: Yep, um-hm.

LZ: Have you had much affiliation with the college since then in terms of—was that when you started MSFEO or is that when, 2004, is that when you were finished with MSFEO?

RM: Yeah, well, they started that after I was here. No, it's a good program, and it's a good way to gently lead faculty out of their enclaves and to consider the fact that they're going to retire sometime and give them some kind of financial support. And Mac's been good in this respect; we have offices if we want them, and computers, et cetera. Some of the faculty continue to write and do things, others continue to play tennis. And I tend to be [laughter] one that tries to play a little more tennis than writing. But I've been very active in our band, the Generation Gap, recruiting. We play for various college functions, usually at the freshman orientation and at the senior dance; we played for your dance, you know, at the senior party. And we do, you know, a number of other engagements throughout the year for parents' week and so on. So that's been kind of fun, I have maintained the contacts with the faculty and so on. And I do some

development work whenever they want me to do anything, you know. Alumni work for reunions, things like that.

[45:16]

LZ: You've essentially grown up with the college from, you know, an eighteen year old now until—

RM: That's right.

LZ: And so you've seen it change and grow and so you're in touch with the college, but I guess when you come back to reunions do you have people that you graduated with say, "Oh, this isn't even a college I recognize anymore, can relate to."

RM: Yes, yes.

LZ: Or does Mac still kind of have the same kind of vibe?

RM: And sometimes they don't—sometimes it's the typical thing of anybody who's been away, it doesn't matter what college or university, been away for a while, things will change and so on. There are a lot of the more traditional graduates who feel the college has gone far too left in its orientation, and et cetera. And I get that a lot, and they just stop giving and so forth. I try to persuade them that, no, this is just an extension of the social consciousness that we *all* held at a time. And at that time it was more religiously oriented, as kind of debt to repay society and so

on. Now it has just been broadened intellectually, and suffuses a whole number of issues with the need for social justice. And so you try to persuade them as best you can, but there are a lot of them that feel that way. Of course, as I say, there are a lot of our Communication Studies students that say, “Gee, we thought that we had a really great major, and we have wonderful graduates that have done wonderful things, and you’ve cut it because you want to look like the eastern colleges and for no other damn good reason.” Which I tried to point out at some length in a letter to the faculty before they voted on it finally. And I think I did a successful job of it. [laughter] It was clear that they were making the decision based upon the fact that I was retiring, that they didn’t want to replace this, that there was some other people in the department had issues and this was the best way to conveniently get by. But it changed the whole nature of the department, so. Any rate, there’s a group of those folks that are disabused of the college so... I think there was a period in the ‘80s—‘80s? When it seemed that all of the graduates became stockbrokers. And that there was a great feeling on the part of the development [office] that finally we’d get some alumni who could contribute some real money, you know [laughter]. But you go back historically and a lot of our graduates, particularly the early ones, were in the do-good professions that don’t make a dime. They went into education, they went into churches, and they went into various nonprofits. Mac’s always been a very big in sending people in nonprofits. And so when you start that base you’re not going to make a whole lot of money, you’re not going to have a huge estate, and it’s going to be difficult for you to drop a million on the college. Maybe that will change when all our stockbrokers and guys like Dave Bell finally kick in and so on. We’ll see.

[48:40]

LZ: Well, I have one last question and I was curious if you have a favorite time, or memory, class, moment, anything that kind of stands out in your mind when you reflect back on the college.

RM: Well, I was very proud of the fact that in 1960, whenever, one half—one half? *Three-fourths* of my class in “American Public Address” just got up and left for two weeks to go to Selma, Alabama, and to march and to take part in that. And as we look back on it now, we were all very naïve, but you can’t deny the rightness of what they did. I was *so* proud of those kids, and there have just been a number of instances like that in which people have fought the good fight for social justice. They’ve—even though, you know, it may not burn as brightly as it once did, their commitment’s still there. And some of them, of course, are continuing on into public life in terms of political campaigns and so forth. And I continue to do that myself, I’ve been active in DFL [Democratic-Farmer-Labor] politics for over forty years. So those are very warm memories of the college, and what the college is about. Or should be! [laughter] Don’t lose it! [laughter]

LZ: Well, thank you.

RM: You’re very welcome.

LZ: Is this everything you wanted to talk about, we haven’t—

RM: Yeah, I can't think of anything much more. I hope and pray you'll just continue on like this.

LZ: Well thank you very much for your time. This was a fun interview for me, so [laughter].

[End of Interview, 50:46]