Williams College Oral History Project Interview with Gordon Winston
May 25 & June 2, 1998

Interview length: 75 pages

Gordon Winston (b. 1929) taught economics at Williams from 1963 to his retirement in 2004. Winston majored in English at Whitman, a college he says was modeled after Williams, and went into business after graduation. He went to graduate school in economics comparatively late in life, entering Stanford in 1960.

In his interview with Charles Alberti, Winston speaks at length about coming to Williams just after fraternities had been abolished, and discusses serving as a faculty advisor to former fraternities. He talks about the Economics Department at great length, describing it as an ideal place to work, but stating that in his years at the College he has seen a shift in faculty loyalties away from the College and the department and toward individual research. He also speaks about the Department's close connection to Pakistan and his work there.

Winston speaks about the Committee on Undergraduate Life and the changes he's witnessed in the student population over the years. He states that minority students have become more and more on a par with white students, and that students in general are brighter now than they were when he first arrived, but that the growing disparity between academics and athletics has an affect on the classroom. Winston asserts that athletes are not on a par with the rest of Williams students.

Winston goes into great detail about the Economics major; the admissions process; his time as Provost of the College; and the presidents under whom he served, describing Sawyer as a reluctant realist, Chandler as a low-key, thoughtful, warm, consolidator, and Oakley as a conscientious, energetic, diligent president. While Winston's interview was recorded on three audio tapes, only two of those tapes are summarized here and available to the public.

The transcript of this interview and the accompanying audio file (if available) may be accessed only in the Archives/Chapin Reading Room.