

**Williams College Oral History Project Interview with MacAlister Brown**  
November 16 & 20, 2000

Interview Length: 67 pages

MacAlister Brown (1924 - 2006) was Fairleigh S. Dickinson, Jr. Professor of Political Science. He came to the College in 1956 and retired in 1994. Brown begins his interview with Charles Alberti discussing his childhood in eastern Massachusetts, his undergraduate years at Wesleyan, and his graduate work at Harvard. He talks about serving in the Navy during World War II, having an internship in Washington, D.C. with the U.S. government, and his consideration of a career in the Foreign Service.

Of Williams, Brown discusses his political science colleagues Fred Schuman, Vince Barnett, and Fred Greene, their politics and their lives; he talks about David Booth and his role in the department over the years; and he discusses Jack Sawyer at length, talking about the abolition of fraternities, curriculum changes, and the decision to become a co-educational institution. Brown goes into great detail about the student protests to the Vietnam War, explaining his position and his role in the protests. He also talks about the decision the Presidential Search Committee had between Frank Oakley and Steve Lewis for president, explaining that Lewis's position for divestment in South African companies was controversial, but that his success as president of Carlton is evident. Brown talks at length about athletics at Williams, its role, some of the problems associated with it, and his time on the Athletics Committee. Brown talks about Oakley's achievements as president, including the Oxford program, and mentions how President Oakley handled the Latino and Third World student occupation of the president's office. He speaks briefly about Harry Payne and the problems he faced during his short presidency.

Brown discusses his life and the raising of his children in Williamstown, his loyalty to the institution, and his own world travels.

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