

Linda Kennedy, Class of 1972 and Gene Stump, Class of 1974

Conversation 4/4/2018

Linda Kennedy (LK): Tell me, how did you hear about Macalester?

Gene Stump (GS): I um... When I was in high school, I went to a school called Archbishop Shaw and I did decent, you know, I was in National Honors Society and all of that. And got a lot of um...letters from a lot of different schools and... One of my friends in high school— Previous to going to Shaw, I went to Lincoln. And that was Alan Green [Class of 1974], and his family and my family know each other. So Alan was already a freshmen at Macalester and...I told him I had gotten this letter from Chinula Chinula Chinula [Deputy Director for Student Affairs for the EEO Program]—

LK: [laughs]

GS: And it was for the Expanded Educational Opportunity Program, EEO Program. And Alan and I—they had given me the whole tuition, room and board and everything—[it] was 3750, three thousand, seven hundred and fifty dollars. And I talked to Alan and I said—I saw him one summer 'cause his sisters lived up where we lived and I talked to him and I said, “What do you think about this?” And he says it'd be good and he convinced me to go. And also Macalester had, they had students writing me and all of that. And I had narrowed it down between going to the Air Force Academy or Macalester, and because of Alan...I decided to go to Macalester. But Alan also told me that next year he wouldn't be at Mac, he would be in Africa. So I went up there in my freshmen year, somebody who I knew was not there—he was in Africa. So that's what convinced me to go to Macalester. Allen and the generous scholarship that I got from there.

LK: So you didn't know anybody when you got on campus. What was your first impression?

GS: Um... It—you know my dad was in the military, so we traveled a lot. So my impression was...you know it was, it was a good location. I'd been to places like Minnesota before—same weather so... My impression was it was okay. I mean it was different but it was okay.

LK: How about the stu—

GS: And I had lived in places where I was the only black kid so not a— I think Minnesota had at that time about .8%...uh oh, I'm sorry—

LK: That's okay—

GS: —.8% African Americans. So I was used to living in a place where there weren't many of us and so Minnesota was no different.

LK: There's not many more now [laughs]...in Minnesota. I always look for them and count them when I'm there. But anyway so what was your impression of the other students or the faculty? Did you have any instant ideas or feelings about that?

GS: Well I'd never been, there were quite a few black people and I'd never been around... Well when I was in New Orleans, you know going to Lincoln, that was an all black school. And when I was in 9th grade is when they integrated the school, so I'd been to places where it was all black. But um the black people that we had at Mac were from Chicago and St Louis and Houston. You know a lot of big urban places, and they were a little different than the people that I'm used to. And then the professors, I found some of them were really good. Some I still talk to like Dr. Mosvick, Roger Mosvik, was a great guy, one of my good mentors. Chuck Green, Scott Nobles, there were a lot of really good ones. Mahmoud El-Kati. They're just, you know, people who [make] an impression on you and they give you tools that you can deal with for the rest of your life. Like Mahmoud—always question, never take anything that you receive, no matter who it's from, for granted; always have questions about it, and not that you're denying it, but you just want to verify you know, and make sure that everything you hear and see is really what it is.

LK: What was the EEO staff like?

GS: Oh they were great. John Warfield and Chinula and um...let's see... Jim Bennett... All of them were great. I mean, and especially Black House. That was a place we could go to and get away from the campus. I was in Dupre my freshmen year, so it was only like just across Summit Avenue and you know, half a block away. But it was good to get over there. And I worked with Randy Royals [Class of 1973] he's, he was the editor of *Imani*, and we did *Imani* at the Black House. But the EEO staff, I mean I'd go in their office every now and then to make sure that all my paperwork was done and stuff. But I spent more time at the Black House and stuff like that then I did at the EEO Office and so on...

LK: What was the—what was the racial...issue like when you were there? I was there when you were there, but I had been there a couple years by the time you got there, so what was that like for you?

GS: I I think that it was good. I think that some of the... I think that people like Madeline Franklin [Class of 1974] who was into campus politics, and her and Maureen actually shared the student body presidency—that was good. And I ran and I was gonna do the same, but the guy I ran with wasn't good so we barely lost. They

said if I were to run myself, it wouldn't— I would've gotten elected. But I didn't have time to do that. But I think that all of us were involved in everything on campus. The only thing that I saw any pushback for was with *The Mac Weekly*. Some of us who wanted, who did college—high school newspapers and wanted to do college newspapers, had some pushback from them. And that's why Randy started the *Imani*, because they wouldn't take our articles and wouldn't look at us. And so he started that, and so we were able to get our voices heard through our own newspaper rather than not being able to do it there. I think that it was good in that many of us, Rudy and myself and Larry Craig [Class of 1975] and Ira Cummings [Class of 1973] we were all on KMAC so we got our music heard on the radio station. So I think that, you know, some of the students probably didn't want us there, especially the huge amount of African Americans. And then you had some people, one guy, I won't say his name, but they did things that reinforced a lot of negative stereotypes that they had of us. But I think for the most part, most of us who were there were good academically and we would have done well anywhere we would have gone. So we dispelled a lot of stereotypes that people in Minnesota where they didn't see many blacks in their normal lives, they said wow these people are smart and they're just like us, they're hard working and they're no different than us. So I think that by us being there I think for the most part I'd say 95 percent we dispelled those rumors. And again you always are going to have 5 percent or so that are knuckleheads and they would be knuckleheads no matter where they went.

LK: Did you have any feeling about the faculty, where you felt like perhaps they didn't feel initially that you were up to speed for Macalester? Up to the challenge of Macalester?

GS: I had one professor who was like that. He was a stone cold racist, almost had me quit Mac. I was, I wrote a 42-page paper for him, and he gave me a D plus. And I went and re-did it and I got a C plus from there and I got a C plus from him—the lowest grade, the only C I ever got at Mac. I think it's the only C I ever got. And this guy was a total horse's rear end and um...very bad professor. A lot of people had him and they said the same thing and probably Mac should have fired him. He was—

LK: What class was it?

GS: It was Voice and Diction and the guy's last name I think was Wilson. But he was from somewhere in the South, and he was full of the stereotypical hatreds that people have for people of color, who are from there. I don't think that exists now [at Mac], but he was 19, circa-1930s, southern—I won't call him a gentleman because he wasn't—but southern male from the South in the 1930s.

LK: Okay. But you didn't have that sense from anyone else? Just that one professor?

GS: He is—he is the only one. And then once, after I graduated and I went to St. Thomas for grad school, and St. Thomas wanted to combine my Mac loans—because I had to take a loan at Mac my last year...

St. Thomas wanted to combine my—their loan with my Mac loan, and it would have been easier on me. It would have made one payment, and you know, easier on me. But the guy at Mac in financial aid would have no part of it. And he actually—him and I got into a heated discussion, he called security, and had me thrown out. And I did not like that. And so for a while, for many years or maybe a decade or so, I hated Mac and wanted no part of Macalester. But since then, all wounds heal, and so I healed, and that guy went away, and so life was good. And you know after I paid everything off it was good.

LK: Okay. So were you involved in any of the Vietnam opposition on campus, or any of the big movements on campus?

GS: Okay, my father was military; he was in for 27 years. My mother was military; she was in for about 4 years. My grandfather was in the military. We've had military—serving in the military since the Revolutionary War, so I was not necessarily opposed to Vietnam. I spent 27 years active military myself, flying B52's, which they also used in Vietnam. So I mean, I thought—I had a low draft number, my draft number was 111. And I thought I was going to be drafted, so I went and joined Marine PLC, which is called Platoon Leader Class. And that gave me a deferment. So I went to summer camp, Marine summer camp, in the summer of '72. And what happened was I took a physical there, and from my lab work they determined that I did not, could not join the Air Force, or I mean Marine Corp, military at all. So I spent about a month at Quantico and like I said, after that physical they said, "You are not going into anybody's Vietnam, as a matter of fact you're never going to go into service." So I never had to worry about that. But if I would have been drafted, I would have gone and served. I'm one who believes that, you know, service, citizenship is something that you were granted by birth, but we need to earn it and part of earning that is if the—if during that time I would have been drafted, I would have gone. I would have been happy to serve my country. So I was not a Vietnam protester, I am always supportive of my government, regardless if the President is Democrat or Republican or Independent or what. I am a good supporter of the United States Government.

LK: So how did you get into the Air Force, if they told you you would never ever go into the military at all?

GS: I went and went to a specialist and got a waiver and went in. So that waiver got me in and I went and so later on, after I was [had] been flying for a while, when I was stationed at Edwards Air Force Base, I had another physical and on my EKG they discovered something and it was an irregular heartbeat. And so they did a bunch of tests on me and then they looked back at other EKGs I had, and I've always had that irregular heartbeat, so they gave me another waiver. So I had two waivers that I had while I was in the Air Force.

LK: Okay. Anything you want to add about your experience at Mac that I left out maybe?

GS: The thing about Macalester that people fail to—that they never talk about is the lifelong friendships that we made there. As we transitioned from teenagers to adults, we had a lot of life awakening experiences that we never had before. And the friends that we made we have kept for life. We really have. And so I can't tell you how many friends I have from Mac that are still friends of mine today. And I think that we are a very good support organization for each of us also. And so the academic stuff that I learned at Mac: all fine and good. The sports stuff that I did at Mac: fine and good. But the friendships that I made at Mac are what Mac means to me and all the people that I met there, positive and negative, will always be a big part of my life and they have made me what I am today. So I am very grateful to Mac. That's why I try and do as much as I can for Macalester. And even though I went to school down the street at St. Thomas, it's not the same. My formative years were at Macalester and that is what has made me the person that I am today.

LK: Terrific!

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