

Mary Ann Milanese
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
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DONIN: Today is Thursday, August 29th, 2013. My name is Mary Donin, and I am here in the basement of Collis—is that its official name? Collis, right.

MILANESE: Collis Hall.

DONIN: Collis Hall, with Mary Ann Milanese. Is that how you pronounce your last name? [mill-uh-KNEES]

MILANESE: Yes.

DONIN: Mary Ann Milanese, who's also known as the legendary baker of Dartmouth College. [Chuckles.] Officially you work for DDS, right? Dartmouth Dining Services?

MILANESE: Yes, yes.

DONIN: Okay, DDS. But everybody knows you just as Mary Ann.

Okay, Mary Ann, so first, just to find out a little bit about you, I know you've been here for a long time, but tell us how it is a) that you became such an amazing baker and b) how you ended up doing your baking at Dartmouth.

MILANESE: I grew up baking. My mother loved to bake, and so she taught me when I was very young, and I would get—as gifts for Christmas, I'd get the little Betty Crocker baking sets. They didn't have Easy Bake ovens, but they had little tiny cake mixes and little pans, and I would make those in the big oven. And after a while, my mother gradually would back off, and before I knew it, I was making all the desserts for the house—you know, home.

DONIN: And you were good at it.

MILANESE: I guess. I mean, people liked it. I thought it was fun. I never thought about doing it as a profession back then. Women didn't—the only professional jobs were in the school lunch

programs, and I was encouraged to go to college, so I went to college, UNH. I was going to be a dietician because you didn't go to school to become a cook, and, again, I wouldn't have thought of that at the time. I liked to cook as well as bake, so—I was in the home ec department, which—becoming a dietician was in home ec, which is nutrition—and I did not like the nutrition major. I didn't like all the sciences.

DONIN: A lot of science involved in that.

MILANESE: Yeah, it was very technical. I mean, I did all right in it, but I didn't find it exciting and all. So I moved around within the home ec department. There was early childhood education, is actually what I ended up in. So I was a nursery school teacher, and I ended up in a daycare center, in which they needed to have—after I was there they needed to have—they were going to hire a full-time cook and I had been cooking there because we were taking turns making the meals in the daycare center, and once they appropriated funds for it, I applied and got that, and that was my first cooking job, so—

DONIN: So you were cooking for children.

MILANESE: Yes, cooking for 20 children in a daycare center. [Laughs.]

DONIN: Great.

MILANESE: First time I ever—well, I loved working with the little kids, but I could tell once I had that job that that was what I was supposed to be doing, so—I moved around within the field of cooking. I always loved to bake but never thought I could be a baker because of the hours that a baker would have. I always thought, you know, midnight—you know, go in at midnight, and I wasn't going to be doing that, so—

DONIN: That's a hard way to make a living, isn't it?

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: In the middle of the night.

MILANESE: Yeah. So I had a number of different cooking jobs. I cooked for a woman in her home as a personal chef.

DONIN: Personal chef.

MILANESE: Just for her and her maid. And me. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Wow! That sounds great.

MILANESE: I mean, it was good, but very confining because there wasn't really a lot of work to do, but you needed to cook three meals a day six days a week, and I was married at the time, so it didn't really work out too well for that, so I worked there for only a year. She lived at the beach in the summer and then she lived in Manchester, New Hampshire, the rest of the year, so she had two houses.

DONIN: Wow.

MILANESE: So, again, that didn't work out well [chuckles] for being married, so—

DONIN: Very limiting to you, too,—

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: —in terms of what you were cooking, I would imagine.

MILANESE: Yeah. Yeah. And she liked New England food, which is how I was raised, so she liked my cooking. And then there'd be a dessert. She liked the traditional desserts, so, you know, I'd get to make a cake or a pudding or whatever, but really it wasn't a lot to do—and, you know, small quantities.

I wanted to work in a restaurant, I thought, after that, and got a job in a small kind of small-town restaurant as a sort of chief cook and bottle washer. You did everything, from—you did dishes, and I was making the pizza dough and was answering the phone and doing takeout orders—

DONIN: Oh, goodness.

MILANESE: —and cooking—you know, they had everything from subs and pizzas to full steak dinners.

DONIN: Oh, everything.

MILANESE: Yeah, and we made everything, too. I thought I'd never work in another restaurant after that, 'cause I was the only one in the kitchen. [Chuckles.] That's ridiculous.

DONIN: That was crazy.

MILANESE: I said, *I'm not doin' this*. I mean, I didn't think I'd ever be doing that again. And we ended up moving 'cause we'd been caretaking in New Boston, New Hampshire, and we wanted to buy another house. We'd sold our first one. We found an old meeting house up in North Haverhill, New Hampshire, so that was, like, way far away. But, you know, we were still young and foolish and it was just a beautiful building. Had been all renovated, and it was, like, 1837 meeting house, brick. And it was a private sale, and the terms of the sale were it was, you know, he was gonna finance it for a 20-year mortgage, we said we'd go for it. [Laughs.] It was the most—it was like living in a resort.

And that's what brought us up to this area. We didn't find out anything about the area; we just knew it was beautiful. And, again, when you're young, you just follow your—whatever, your dreams.

So we found jobs, but really the job market was not good up there, so it was hard to get creative jobs. Worked in a summer camp. And then I'd seen an ad in the newspaper for this nice restaurant, Polly's Pancake Parlor, up in Sugar Hill.

DONIN: Oh, sure.

MILANESE: And I went, "Hmm! We ought to just go there," 'cause it sounded like fun to go. So we went there, and I was thinking that, *Boy, would I like to work here!* 'Cause it was sort of a tourist trap, in a way, but beautiful.

DONIN: The setting is amazing.

MILANESE: Yeah, yeah. So we worked in the summer camp that summer, and at the end of the summer there was an ad in the newspaper for Polly's. They were looking for a head cook. And, again, I think, *Oh, it's line cooking*. You know, after my other experience, I was leery, but it said—it was

funny. For the job description—I looked for creative job descriptions, and I can't remember exactly how it was, but it said you had to have a pleasant personality or something like that, or easy to get along with.

So anyway, I just went—I called the number, and evidently the owners were in England on vacation, but the daughter, one of the daughters, talked to me and set up an interview, so I went up and talked to Roger and Nancy when they got back, and, you know, it was a family-run business. It was Nancy's mother who opened it. It was—I don't know, they hired me and—

DONIN: Perfect match.

MILANESE: Yeah. [Laughs.]

DONIN: Perfect match.

MILANESE: Yeah, it was really nice. And then I just worked the fall 'cause unfortunately they closed in the winter. But it was very busy. Fall is their busiest time.

DONIN: Crazy time.

MILANESE: And, you know, here I'm having to do line cooking, and cooking eggs is mostly what the head cook did, and make the batters for the pancakes. And I don't eat eggs, but I knew how to cook 'em 'cause my husband would eat them. But anyway, so they taught me how they cooked each type of—this is a really long story about getting to Dartmouth. [Laughs.]

DONIN: It's good. Keep going.

MILANESE: So they taught me how to do each one, and I had a very good teacher. The one who had done the cooking there before taught me very patiently, and they were so organized there that they made it very easy to do the job. I mean, sometimes I'd be cooking as many as ten orders of eggs at a time, but it was something about it—they made it easy. I had an assistant who would do the bacon and the sausage, and she would also do sandwiches, which is something else I never liked to have to do to order, so she did that. And I also

did the eggs. At the end of the day, I'd make the batters for the next day's pancakes. The waitresses cooked the pancakes and the waffles out front, so I didn't have to do anything with cooking those. So it really was fun.

My husband ended up getting a job there, too, 'cause they needed a dishwasher, so that got us through the fall. And it was really a fun place to work. The people were very nice. Family atmosphere.

DONIN: That's great.

MILANESE: Yeah. I liked it a lot. Well, they also knew that I liked to make bread. Well, the following year, when they opened in—I think—they had me start maybe in April. They opened in May, but they had me come back to get the place ready in April. But they wanted me to make the bread because Roger had been making the bread, but, you know, he was getting on and sometimes had some health problems, and they wanted to pass on some of the responsibility. So he trained me in making the bread up in what they called the factory, which was sort of the back of the house, kind of a rambling farmhouse. And so he taught me to make the bread.

So a couple of days a week, I'd make bread, and they would freeze some of it. I guess we would make it on certain days and freeze it to get us through the week. And then they wanted to start making soup, so I started making soup, so I was making soups and English muffins. They wanted to make English muffins, so they found this recipe and asked me if I would try out that recipe for making English muffins. So we did that. And those would have to be made on the pancake griddles out front, so I'd be out front making the English muffins, which looked like big fat pancakes. So that was sort of different.

And then pies. They'd pass on the pies, so I was making the pies, and the soups and cooking the chicken for the chicken salad. And it just seemed to grow, what I was doing. And I can't even remember. I think I was still doing some days in the cooking, you know, for the restaurant, but I can't remember for sure. It was six days a week, you know, nine hours a day. It was long.

DONIN: Long, hard hours.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: On your feet the whole time.

MILANESE: Yeah. At least I was still pretty young, and so—

DONIN: Yeah. [Chuckles.]

MILANESE: —you know, I could do it. And so I guess I worked there parts of three seasons. I think I only worked one full season. And then my husband got a job. There was the Pike school up in Pike. It was actually Beckett Academy, I guess, and they were wanting to hire us down in Connecticut at Beckett Academy in East Haddam, so we worked—they hired us as house parents. And I think he started in September, but I finished up at Polly's. And so anyway, there were a couple of years in there where we were at Beckett. And then we worked for—the headmaster of Beckett opened a group home for developmentally disabled adults, so he ended up having a whole business of group homes, which I was doing a food program for that, and my husband was working with the clients there. So we had our house. But I was working with the boss' wife to write menus and recipes for all the houses, the cooks in all the houses, so it was a lot of people that maybe didn't even know how to cook. So we were doing that.

And people in the state were sending—referring others to us to come to see how we were running our food program 'cause I guess there wasn't any other one in the state. We actually had a book that we'd made, you know, with a whole year of rotating recipes, by the seasons, so it wasn't that repetitive, four seasons and a week of emergency menus. Like, when we had a hurricane, there was no power, so we had recipes for, you know, when there was—

DONIN: That's great.

MILANESE: So it was pretty involved, and it was—it was fun working on that. But, again, I guess I moved on from that. We got tired of living in Connecticut. We still owned our meetinghouse up here and we were commuting back and forth on our days off.

But we missed this area, so we came back up here. My husband started working for the Lyme Inn. He was managing that for a number of years. And it was because of that—this is getting down to how I ended up here—in the meantime, we're up to 1988, from 1970 to—or when I got out of college, so through those—[chuckles] it's a convoluted story.

But anyway, Will would take care of the inn. Sometimes if the innkeepers were away, he would run the place and we would stay there. So, you know, I didn't have anything to do, so I'd be lounging around. Well, I was sittin' in the front room while he was up at the desk. And I saw a newspaper by the fireplace and started reading it. Well, there was an ad in it for the Collis Café, which I'd never heard of. I was working in an Italian restaurant, Colatina, in Bradford at the time.

But I wasn't looking for a job, but I always would read the want ads anyway, 'cause my job wasn't very creative, and I was always sort of looking for something like that. So the ad said they're looking for somebody to make vegetarian soups and entrées, breads, and “delicious desserts,” it said. And, like I said, I'd never heard of Collis Café, and I was sort of intimidated by Dartmouth College, and I kind of didn't know.

So anyway, I wrote this long letter. I wrote a hand-written résumé 'cause I hadn't really had to look for a job of that sort, where you needed to have a résumé or anything, so I just spent the afternoon and wrote what I'd done, and I was excited about what we were gonna be doing, 'cause I had done some vegetarian cooking, and I had tons of cookbooks and more than enough recipes that I needed to be trying, you know.

So I thought it sounded exciting, but I wasn't sure. If it was a college, it would be huge quantities and all. So I sent it in, and it was probably a month or more before I heard anything, so I just sort of had forgotten about it. And then it was Linda Kennedy who called, and she said, “I got your wonderful letter, and we're all excited about”—you know. [Chuckles.] “Wonder if you can come in and talk to us.”

And it also had said “flexible schedule,” and I was thinking, *Well, Will works sort of an odd schedule.* Like, he works four 10-hour days. He worked weekends, so he worked Saturday,

Sunday and I think Monday and Tuesday. And on Tuesday he worked from noon until 10, but the other days was from 8 till 6. So it was very dif—

And so I said, “I know you said ‘flexible schedule’—‘cause, you know, we lived up in North Haverhill. And I was never gonna commute to Hanover if we were on different schedules, so I said—you know, I presented this schedule, and [chuckles] said, “Okay.” [Laughs.]

DONIN: Amazing.

MILANESE: And this was before—she hadn’t even met me. We hadn’t even gone in for an interview yet. I think this was probably June. Maybe it was April when I sent the letter in. And so I went in for an interview. She showed me around. But I was really disappointed when I saw what it was. I’m thinking, *Oh, this is a cafeteria*—. This is the old Collis. I don’t know if you were here when the old kitchen was upstairs off Common Ground, where the TV room is upstairs.

DONIN: Yeah.

MILANESE: That’s where—

DONIN: That was the old kitchen?

MILANESE: Yeah. That was the kitchen *and* dining room.

DONIN: Oh, my goodness. I didn’t see it in those days.

MILANESE: The kitchen, server, and dining room was all that.

DONIN: Oh.

MILANESE: I mean, there was a little dish room that came out, but they sawed that off. Literally, they sawed that off ‘cause it was just a piece of the building that jutted out, and they sawed that off when they renovated. So that was everything. I think there were maybe 30 seats. I don’t know. There weren’t many seats. Mostly people ate in Common Ground, and they had staging then. It was, like, steps up—you know, different levels, with sofas and stuff.

So when I saw that, I said—and this was the summer. And, of course, I know from working the summer we don't have many offerings 'cause, you know, business is slow, and I was a little disappointed when I saw what it was. And she tried to explain what I would be doing, you know, on the phone, and yet I guess it was sort of like other jobs that I had. You know, when I was at daycare, and I was always pretty much in charge of my own—you know, what I did. So I wasn't—that didn't bother me. And getting my own recipes, I was excited about that.

And so pretty much—she interviewed me. I think she'd already decided she wanted to hire me; it was more, you know, if I had any questions. She didn't really ask me much. She asked me what I could bring to Collis, and—

DONIN: Did she want you to bring your recipe books and stuff?

MILANESE: Everybody brings their own recipes. In fact,—and this is how she put it: She says, "I like to throw people overboard," is what she said, "and let 'em swim."

DONIN: [Laughs.]

MILANESE: So they don't give you—well, I'll tell you what they gave me. They gave me poppy seed bread, orange chocolate chip, gingerbread, cornbread—which we used to make every day; gingerbread and cornbread we used to have every day. And I don't know, there might have been something else I got, but basically that was it.

On my first day, I had to make a soup and an entrée, and I baked some bread, and I don't know what else. We didn't make cookies then that much. They bought—had some chocolate chip cookies they bought. So now we make cookies all the time, brownies, probably made—and I didn't know about the quantities. I'd just say, "Well, tell me what size pot to use, you know, and I can make that." Never made that much soup before. Well, maybe at camp.

DONIN: You must make them in these big vats.

MILANESE: Well, now Dylan does, but then we made more, like, six-gallon batches, which to me—at the Colatina I'd only make

one or two gallons of soup. So it was big, but it wasn't really huge as far as institutional cooking. I think for entrées they said, "Enough for 70 people." This was then, so—I don't know.

I knew on my very first day, though, that things were gonna be good. I was a little nervous starting out, but once I got here and it was Margot, what's her name? Margot Perrone who was the—I don't think there was technically a head cook, but she's what I would call head cook. She did ordering and stuff, 'cause Linda Kennedy had already gotten another job in the building, and she was kind of gonna be leaving in August. I think we got a new manager just about three weeks after I started, so I didn't see Linda very much.

So Margot just—I remember her showing me around, 'cause she's bringing me downstairs here, which—we used to have—All our walk-ins were down here 'cause the kitchen was upstairs. She was bringing me, showing me everything. She says, "This is the ideal job for someone who loves to cook." That's what she said. And then I knew—I knew right then, *This is—wow.*

DONIN: You were going to be fine.

MILANESE: I said, "I'm gonna be here till I'm 70," because I think—I don't know if it's true, but I thought at the time there was mandatory retirement at 70. I don't know. But anyway, I would tell people, "I'm working 'til I'm 70." Now I don't know that I will be, but—

DONIN: [Chuckles.] But you had that attitude—

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: —which is great.

MILANESE: I did.

DONIN: You really felt comfortable.

MILANESE: Yeah, 'cause you cook what you want to cook. At the time, it was all vegetarian as far as the soups and the entrées go.

- DONIN: Why vegetarian in those days?
- MILANESE: Maybe—I think that’s how Collis started.
- DONIN: Oh, I see.
- MILANESE: From back in—let’s see, Collis was only about ten years old when I started, and that means it would have started in the late ’70s ‘cause I came in ’88.
- DONIN: So Collis was known as the place to get the vegetarian soup.
- MILANESE: I think so.
- DONIN: I see. Okay. Well, that makes sense.
- MILANESE: Yeah. But we did serve meat in the sandwiches, and we did have it for the omelets ‘cause we had bacon and—
- DONIN: Yeah, but there were vegetarian entrées here. Or soups.
- MILANESE: Yeah, yeah. But it wasn’t long before—it couldn’t have been more than a year or two when we started putting some chicken—you know, like, two or three times a week in the entrées and soups. But still people would look to Collis I think for—‘cause we did creative things, too.
- DONIN: Did you respond to student feedback if they would ask for something special? You were able to—
- MILANESE: Usually. I know / would. I mean, I like to have people ask, and if I can do things, I would. And back then we probably did.
- DONIN: And did you have a lot of student interaction, or were you always sort of in the kitchen?
- MILANESE: Well, back then the kitchen—it was all one.
- DONIN: So you saw the students.
- MILANESE: And it was all run by—in fact, back then it was all run by students except for the cooks, and when I was hired—so when I was hired it was just Margot and Sharon and I

cooking, and then Linda Kennedy was the manager. It was all student supervisors and workers.

DONIN: I see.

MILANESE: So we didn't have any full-time counter workers. I'm not sure when that came in. That was when Cynthia was running it, so it was a few years, I think, before we had—

DONIN: So it's changed a lot since those days.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: It's grown tremendously.

MILANESE: Yeah, and it's changed a lot. And I think I'm probably more involved with students now than I was actually then, even though we're separated, because—

DONIN: How is that?

MILANESE: Because now I have some students working with me.

DONIN: Doing baking?

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: Oh, lucky them!

MILANESE: That started probably around, mmm, 2000.

DONIN: Do they get chosen or they want to?

MILANESE: Well...they all want to. I don't go looking for anybody. It all started because a student came down to the kitchen and wanted to look at my recipes. She said, "Can I look at your recipes?"

DONIN: Oh, that's wonderful.

MILANESE: I was thinking, *Well, nobody's gonna be able to make any sense out of all this*, so I said, "Is there a recipe you're looking for?" And she said, "No, I just wanna look." And then she was saying, "Do you ever hire any help?" I can still see

her, too, because she was a freshman, and, you know, kind of a little timid. But, you know, she obviously had the nerve to come down and talk to me about it. And she said that she had never thought about doing baking as a profession before she came here, and she just loved Collis. And so I think she had worked—I think she'd been working at a summer camp on Cape Cod, in which she was involved in the kitchen, and they would make some desserts, so I think she was starting to think that, well, maybe that's something she would like to do.

But at the time, you know, it just came to me—she just came out of the blue, and I wasn't really prepared. I said, "Well,"—I'd had students I'd tried before, in which it was sort of we went to get them, not they came to get us, and it just was—I couldn't really figure out how to fit a student in. We had no space, and, you know, I didn't think I had time to train anybody. But, I don't know, it was another—that was fall term. It was probably the spring when I next saw Laura.

She said, "Well, you know, if you change your mind, get in touch with me," whatever. Anyway, I think we were approaching spring term, and I knew how busy spring term was gonna be, and I was starting to think about how to handle having a student. And I thought the best way would probably be to have them work when actually I'm not there but have some time in which we overlap, so—it's funny, because I was thinking that, and if she didn't—Laura did show up that week.

DONIN: Amazing.

MILANESE: Yeah. I said, "I can't believe that you're here" because I couldn't—I knew her name was Laura, but I couldn't remember what her last name was or how to get in touch with her. So she showed up, and we tried her out. And she was the perfect person to be working with me and to be doing it. She just loved it. I think I might have started her right in with baking, but basically the students would start in by doing the prep for the muffins and scones. And I think we started her on cookies or brownies, one or the other. The first time she made cookies, they were just beautiful because, you know, they take such care in what they do, and also they'll listen. They'll do just what you say! So—

- DONIN: And you sound so surprised! [Laughs.]
- MILANESE: Yeah, yeah.
- DONIN: [Laughs.]
- MILANESE: Yeah, I was really surprised. I mean, I know they're all smart, but, you know...I was not really interested in having to teach anybody anything, and—
- DONIN: She was clearly ready to learn, and she wanted to.
- MILANESE: Yeah. And, like I said, her personality worked well, and she was just so happy to be doing it. She didn't need the money at all, and it was just something she wanted to be doing.
- DONIN: So was this a new sort of concept, the idea that DDS would hire students to work?
- MILANESE: Well, we always had students here. In fact, as I told you, the students were running—well, not running but they had to back off. They need to have I think a little more responsibility in the leadership roles, so supervisors we started hiring full time.
- DONIN: Right. But I mean working in the cooking area.
- MILANESE: I think originally they did when Collis first opened. From what I've read—there was a great article in the *Alumni Magazine* of Robbin—I'll think of her last name. She wrote a beautiful article on how she'd met Julia Child and then she'd gone to France and then she ended up being up the first manager—Derry, Robbin Derry. I think it's [spells]: R-o-b-b-i-n D-e-r-r-y. But it was an article from the *Alumni Magazine* within the last few years.
- DONIN: Oh, okay.
- MILANESE: Actually, she came here—she comes once in a while to visit, and I met her last year, but I was so moved by that article because of—it told about her first—I think she only worked here a year as manager. She graduated from Dartmouth and then—but anyway—so—

- DONIN: So they had been having students.
- MILANESE: She was cooking—I mean, she would have ‘em cooking, and it sounded like she had ‘em doing everything. So—anyway, so—yes, but in the kitchen we had student cooks when I first was hired, but then when we started hiring more full-time cooks, they stopped it because it was not too reliable. I mean, they were having too much freedom, and we had less consistency, so—
- So I started doing the bakers. But I just had Laura. And then Abby came. They just came along.
- DONIN: It was word of mouth, really.
- MILANESE: Yes.
- DONIN: You never advertised.
- MILANESE: No. No. And there were a couple of dry areas when I might have had a term without somebody, but I didn’t really want to advertise. I wanted it to be somebody who was—you know, a lot of people just don’t know we hire, and when they find out, they’re interested. But, you know, some people just ask. Like, “Do you happen to hire?” But they’ve just come along.
- DONIN: That’s wonderful.
- MILANESE: Yeah. So it’s helped connect me with what’s going on because since we moved down into *this* kitchen—
- DONIN: You don’t see them.
- MILANESE: No. Before, I would see the customers, I would see the student workers, and I would know, you know, if somebody was taking a piece of tea bread or whatever, and whatever they said, negative or positive, I would hear it.
- DONIN: You heard it.
- MILANESE: Now, you know, down here we would only hear word of mouth if somebody said something good or bad. So—

DONIN: So the feedback—you're missing out on the feedback except what somebody tells you from upstairs.

MILANESE: Yeah, yeah.

DONIN: Yeah. Do you miss the student interaction?

MILANESE: I didn't think I would, but I did really miss the way that was set up 'cause you felt more a part of what was going on, and now we're so isolated that, like I said, now my students sort of keep me connected with not only what's going on in the café—'cause I rarely can even get upstairs when it's busy, you know?

DONIN: Right.

MILANESE: And what's goin' on on campus as well.

DONIN: And that's a pretty important piece of feeling like you belong here, is seeing people consume what you've created.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: You know, Ray [Crosby] was—When I interviewed Ray, so much of what he enjoys is the frontline interaction with the parents and the students.

MILANESE: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

DONIN: The students come in and bring their parents to introduce them.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: I think that's a wonderful way to feel tied to the Dartmouth community.

MILANESE: Yeah, yeah.

DONIN: So you miss that interaction.

MILANESE: Yeah, we don't have any of that. And I'm not really an outgoing person. Ray's perfect for that sort of thing, you know.

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

MILANESE: And my—you know, the people people. And now, I only on a small scale have experienced that with some of my students. Sometimes I get to meet the families, or when they're graduating it's sort of a big deal to see one of my students graduating, you know?

DONIN: Yeah.

MILANESE: And I've kept in touch with some of them after, you know, they've graduated.

DONIN: Sure.

MILANESE: So the first one that graduated was 2003, so—she just sent me a birthday card. She always sends me a birthday card and a long—she's working on her second master's degree, and she's married and has a little boy now.

DONIN: Aw!

MILANESE: He's two and a half. And, you know, she's working on her second master's in fine arts in novel writing, so—she always wanted to be a writer, so she's happiest now that she's doing what she always wanted to do. And so that's nice to see that.

DONIN: It's great.

MILANESE: But she's kept in touch all this time.

DONIN: And you clearly made an impression on her. I mean, you were a part of her life at Dartmouth.

MILANESE: Yeah. No, it's nice that—her personality, too—I think she's probably that with everybody she knows. But she makes you feel that way.

DONIN: So does Collis have its own sort of personality in terms of—you know, students have choices on campus of where they can go to eat, and what is it that attracts the students to Collis?

MILANESE: I wonder that sometimes because we must have the most patient customers ever because when I see what the lines are like, I can't believe that they're willing to wait as long as they have to wait. But one of my current students will say she just loves Collis, and she—there's just something about it. And I think if you read that article by Robbin Derry, you might see that there is some history that people might not even realize that's still—the heart of Collis, is still there, that—[Chuckles.] I don't know what it is. The people.

DONIN: Is it the people?

MILANESE: I think a lot of it is the people that are very welcoming.

DONIN: Yes. And the food.

MILANESE: And the food is different than you'll get, maybe. Or I always thought it was different than—

DONIN: How so, different?

MILANESE: Well, from when I was cooking, I just thought that—because of the vegetarian items that we do. Again, maybe it's not—it's changed in that sense, but we would do dishes that you wouldn't find other places.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Do you think the staff here is more responsive to student input so that you'll—I mean, Ray referred to things like... There'd be a special cookie that was made for a student because he or she loved it so much.

MILANESE: Oh, yeah.

DONIN: Do you think people here respond more to the student likes and dislikes?

MILANESE: Maybe. 'Cause I don't really know about the other places. Maybe because we're smaller and we do try to be accommodating. I don't know if other places do, but I know that we do, that we do things—we'll do things for one student, that one student. You know, if we have a student that can't eat this certain kind of bread, at times I've made

breads for one gluten-free student. This is years ago, before there were so many gluten-free people.

DONIN: Well, and there was an article recently in *The D*, in which you were talked about, about all the vegan offerings that are here.

MILANESE: Yeah, I love doing that.

DONIN: You've mastered—

MILANESE: Yes.

DONIN: —You've mastered the vegan thing.

MILANESE: Vegan—that's mostly all that I'll eat for baked goods, is the vegan ones. I feel less guilty about, that they tend to be whole grain and healthier overall. I mean, it's still a lot of sugar in the sweet things, but I think that people are maybe becoming more aware of that, and if they're gonna eat something sweet—there is quite a following for the vegan baked goods, and most of them aren't vegan because I don't think there's that many vegans on campus. People—it might even stem from some of the students that I've had that are good at publicizing. They'll send out blitzes and tell what the vegan baked goods are on any given day, and I think they make people aware and that it's not something strange necessarily.

DONIN: Well, and obviously I think advice from their peers probably goes a lot further than, you know, any kind of advertising that the college would do.

MILANESE: Yeah. That's right.

DONIN: They trust the word of mouth—

MILANESE: Yes, yeah.

DONIN: —of the students.

MILANESE: And if there's—I know sometimes I would tell Kelly a veg—actually, I have one vegan student now, and I've had—Kelly was probably my first vegan student. But she would really

publicize—she started a little note she'd send to everybody, and she'd come in on a daily basis and look to see what we had vegan, and she'd tell people, or I'd tell her. I'd blitz her and say, "I just made this today, Kelly." And then she'd tell—[chuckles]—you know, write to her, or tell all her sorority sisters.

DONIN: That's great! Yeah.

MILANESE: You know. So they—I think it really helped to raise some awareness of the vegan things that—

DONIN: And you do post your menus on your website now.

MILANESE: Yes. The baked goods, not.

DONIN: Oh, I see.

MILANESE: They're done—they haven't asked me for any of this. I decide really pretty much on a daily basis what I'm gonna make—the sort of things we have all the time. You know, on Wednesdays we have blueberry muffins, or Fridays we could not go without having [chuckles] chocolate chip scones.

DONIN: I see. I see.

MILANESE: But basically there's not too many things we have regularly like that on a given day.

DONIN: Oh, so it's different every day.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: Wow. That's amazing. That is just amazing.

MILANESE: And I think that, again, that might be part of Collis's attraction, is the—you don't know what it's gonna be.

DONIN: Right. And, you know, despite the fact that the size here is a challenge in terms of accommodating all the students who wanna eat here, that's probably a plus side to make it seem a little less institutional?

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: And a little more like home?

MILANESE: Mm-hm.

DONIN: And welcoming? I don't know. I'm totally making that up.
[Laughs.]

MILANESE: No, but I think you're probably right. It does have that, even though you can't really have a server without it feeling institutional. I think the people have a lot to do with it. They make the students feel at home, and I think the parents feel good that their students are eating here.

DONIN: Here, right.

MILANESE: I did have one woman that came up during a graduation. I was sitting upstairs, actually copying some recipes during graduation, and a woman came up—she looked like—I would say she was grandmotherly looking. I don't know if she was this girl's mother or grandmother or what the relationship was, but—Rebecca was the cook at the time, and the woman said our names, "Mary Ann" and "Rebecca." She said, "I want to thank you for"—[chuckles] the girl must have been embarrassed, but she didn't act, "I wanna thank you for taking care of my baby"—

DONIN: [Laughs.]

MILANESE: —or something like that, but the mother would say that, "feeding my baby for these last four years," something like, "When her tummy is happy, she's happy." You know, "She always liked to eat at Collis." You know, that really is one of the few times that I've had any interaction with a parent, or grandparent, that I didn't know, you know. And so this—obviously, this girl had been eating—always ate at Collis, and so—and that was pretty nice.

DONIN: So is there any sense of competition among the different dining halls, I mean...?

MILANESE: I think we do different things. I don't really think of it as competition.

- DONIN: So does each dining hall—do you have the sense that each dining area has a different kind of personality, if that’s the right word?
- MILANESE: Well...I think so.
- DONIN: You know, some of them maybe stay open later or—
- MILANESE: Yeah.
- DONIN: —some of them are—I don’t know.
- MILANESE: ‘Cause we have Late Night, which is a separate entity, even though it operates—that has a different personality, probably, and it has a whole different clientele than maybe Collis.
- DONIN: Oh. And different people cook for that?
- MILANESE: Yeah, and they serve more fried things and, you know, more—you know, junk food. It’s different—you know, what you want for late-night studying, so it is different. It’s not—Collis has—we’ve always been known as “from scratch”—you know, more homemade food that probably you wouldn’t get at ’53 or at—like, so we have our own niche. And so that’s probably part of our personality. But, again, I think the homeyness—that people maybe do feel more at home here.
- DONIN: Right.
- MILANESE: And, again, I think that people up there have a lot to do with it.
- DONIN: Yup, right. The face of Collis.
- MILANESE: Yeah.
- DONIN: Yeah. So—you know, this whole project we’re doing is about the Dartmouth family, the Dartmouth community. I mean, did you feel welcome when you first came here, like you belonged, or were you intimidated by being here?
- MILANESE: I was first intimidated because, you know, Dartmouth is—it’s an Ivy League school, and, I don’t know, I didn’t know what

to expect. But, as I said, I was put at ease on the first day, but I never really felt too much a part of the community, probably because I live so far away, and I wouldn't spend too much non-work time on campus because I'd spent so much time driving and, you know, working. So I didn't feel necessarily isolated, but I didn't feel too much a part of the—

DONIN: The whole family.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: Did you feel a sense of—like you belonged to the—there was a Collis family that you belonged to?

MILANESE: I did when I first came here because it was all—the cooks—I felt we had quite the camaraderie with the cooks because we were the only full-time workers. And when we had as many as five cooks and we all loved what we were doing, it was the first time I really, I think, had a job where there were other people. Usually I was the only one—

DONIN: Yes, I see.

MILANESE: —in that position. There were other people, and we would egg each other on if we'd—we'd actually have time to look at a cookbook then, during the workday. And we'd be up in the—we actually had our own little office.

DONIN: Wow.

MILANESE: And we'd say, "Oh, look at this recipe," and then one of the other cooks would say, "Well, go make that right now!"

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

MILANESE: You know, I'd never experienced that before, and we were excited for each other. And the other thing is it felt like Christmas every day, that we had *all* the ingredients—

DONIN: That you needed.

MILANESE: Yes! And I was just overwhelmed by *that*, that any recipe I found, if I don't have it here today, I can have it tomorrow. And I was encouraged to do it. Money didn't seem to be an

object. I mean, I've always been in places where we were on tight budgets, and so I was always conscious of that, and I didn't want to waste anything. But the fact was that we could get any ingredient we wanted to get, and there were people that—you know, *that* was my community, was my coworkers. Now, there's only two of us. There's Dylan [Griffin] and I. There's one baker and one cook. I mean, he's a chef, and he's a trained chef, and he's not really into baking *per se*. I mean, we can talk on a certain level, but he has a different attitude than I do. So I miss that.

I had an assistant, Kate, who hopefully will be coming back this fall, but—and she worked at the old Collis with me, and she's been helping me over the last couple years, but she's been out for a few months. And so we could renew that sort of relationship, and, you know, we'd have our books and—“Oh, look at this recipe” and “Let's try that” or “You know, you haven't made that for a long time” and, “Try that.” We're excited about that, the things we can make. I don't know, I still get excited after 25 years, and I don't think if I worked here 50 years, I don't think I would lose that, trying to find new things to do.

DONIN: Yeah.

MILANESE: You know, I'm sure my energy is less than it was, but I still want to do it.

DONIN: Sure, sure.

MILANESE: So—

DONIN: Are you still encouraged to try things and bring in new recipes?

MILANESE: Oh, all the time. In fact, Mike [Ricker] even brings some that he's found. He'll say, “Oh, look at this.” And, you know, it'll be some off-the-wall recipe. Or he'll say, “Just try that right now.” And in the summer, he'll—you know, when he knows there's time here—“Make that.” Or last summer, it was a magazine article, and they had a recipe for corn ice cream. He said, “Here, make—you know, try that.” And I have my ice cream maker. I keep it in the freezer if I want to make a

little batch of ice cream for downstairs. He says, “You try this.” And Dylan had some corn, and so I made it that day.

DONIN: Amazing.

MILANESE: And it was terrible!

DONIN: [Laughs.]

MILANESE: It was made with—actually, I didn’t think it was *that* bad, but most people hated it. The corn was probably rather mature, so it was very sweet?

DONIN: Yeah.

MILANESE: I think maybe with the younger corn it would have been better, but you had to boil the corn cobs, take the corn off, boil the cobs, use that liquid—it was coconut milk; it was vegetarian. It was really a long recipe to make. But, again, it was the summer, and it was fun, so, you know, it was the kind of thing that—

DONIN: You’re supposed to do.

MILANESE: And Mike likes us to do that, too. He does encourage it.

DONIN: Right.

MILANESE: So, you know, it was fun, and everybody hated it. [Laughs.]

DONIN: [Laughs.]

MILANESE: But now we joke about it. But, you know, again, you learn.

DONIN: So has the personality of the college changed? I mean, over the years—you’ve been here 25 years. For instance, does who the president is—does that trickle down to how things feel to you?

MILANESE: It definitely does. I think the only president that I—well, at first I didn’t have blitzmail or whatever. I don’t know when that came about, but I didn’t become computer-friendly until probably the mid to late ’90s anyway, so I wasn’t reading maybe anything—well, unless the president sent letters.

I really was intrigued by President Wright and his—I never met him. I guess I did hear him speak once, but I felt—through his letters, I could feel his personality, and I felt more a part of the community than I have with any other president. And I don't know, it might just be—it's probably his personality coming through. But he's a very warm person, and—

DONIN: Right. I think his personality does come through.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: And he expresses it well.

MILANESE: Yeah. So, yeah, it does depend on who they are, but—

DONIN: And how do you feel—you know, I realize your exposure is so limited because you are down here in the kitchen the whole time—

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: So when things are going on in the community, do you get involved in thinking about them or talking about them?

MILANESE: Sometimes.

DONIN: You know, whether it's budget cuts or—you know, good things or bad things going on. Yeah, it trickles down to you, I assume.

MILANESE: Yeah. A lot of times I don't know, but Dylan tends to read the newspaper, and he'll say, "Did you see this?" or he'll bring it up, and we might talk about it. And I do get, you know, the updates in the newsletters on my e-mails now, so I do try to keep in touch with some things like that, 'cause it does—it can affect me. And when we were having all the budget cuts and people were getting laid off, I definitely felt that a bit. I wasn't—I didn't think my job was, you know, threatened, but it coulda been. You never know—if they just decided to close Collis altogether—you know, I mean, they could have.

DONIN: Right. I think everybody felt vulnerable.

MILANESE: Yeah, that was the scariest it's been. It seemed like there was one other time when DDS was having problems, and I wasn't worried about my job, but, you know, they shut the raises right off. There's only been—I don't know if there's been more than one year. Maybe it was only one year or two in which we didn't get any raise at all. But, you know, I don't really care about the money per se, but it's just what that means is if, you know, the college isn't doing that well, so—

DONIN: Right. Now, are you all members of the union? Do you have to join the union?

MILANESE: No, no, we're the only non-union food service.

DONIN: Oh, that's interesting.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: I guess Ray told me that, yes. And is that a good thing or a bad thing?

MILANESE: It's a good thing. I wouldn't want to be union. I was in the union for one year. I didn't tell you that I did—we did close for a year back in '92, at the end of '92, so in '93 I worked over at Byrne Hall. When they first opened, I worked over there. Andrea hired me to do what I did over here, so in essence I was doing baking and vegetarian entrées and soups. So I did that for a year.

So I had to join the union, in which case—I'd been here four and a half years, and I had to take a cut in pay because they had to put me down as a Grade 1 so I wouldn't be threatening any other people's jobs, so they had to make me a Grade 1, and I made less money. I didn't feel like—the union didn't help me out at all in that. So I only worked there 'til we opened here back in the following January.

DONIN: So you must have been glad.

MILANESE: Yeah. I didn't—I think there were only two of us that came back when we reopened. The other cooks found jobs elsewhere. But I was definitely gonna come back. They said I could stay there and they would have made me a Grade 5,

which I don't know what that is, but I came back here and they gave me the raise I would have gotten even though I wasn't there. I don't know, they gave me a couple of raises, and then after three months they gave me—I don't know, within the year I got I don't know how many raises. And, you know, I don't think I lost too much money from working over there, 'cause I did a lot of overtime 'cause I was overworked. They did a lot of catering, and, I mean, I didn't like it at all.

Andrea was very nice to me. She'd get me anything I wanted. She liked my attitude because there's a different—it would be a different attitude with the union people. To me, I don't know, I just never want to be union.

DONIN: Maybe that's what makes Collis feel different to people.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: That they're not union?

MILANESE: Maybe. I don't know what it is about why the union would make people's attitude different, but it just feels different to me. We've never even taken a vote on the union since I've been here. I know there's a few people that would like it, but for the most part, I don't think people want it here.

DONIN: So that doesn't impact your feeling of belonging or not belonging, being in the union or not in the union.

MILANESE: No, I don't think so.

DONIN: Because you're all together here, sort of.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: It sort of feels like it's—you are you own family here.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: The Collis workers are their own family.

MILANESE: Yeah, yeah.

DONIN: Their own community.

- MILANESE: Yeah. And I like that—the people that we have in the kitchen—we have a good core of workers, and we’ve all been here—well, Dylan’s the least. He’s been here, I don’t know, maybe only a year and a half. But everybody else has been here around 10 or 15 years, I think.
- DONIN: That’s a good sign.
- MILANESE: And they’re all—everybody in the kitchen—they just go about what they’re s’posed to do. You know, you don’t have to worry about anything. Everybody does their job and we get along.
- DONIN: Right, right.
- MILANESE: The other people upstairs, we don’t know as well. But—you know, we hardly ever see Ray. Every once in a while, I have to go up and say hi, but we don’t see him ‘cause they’re tied to their stations up there. We’re a little freer, in a sense. But, like I said, I don’t get upstairs too much ‘cause a lot of times I do have things in the oven, and I just can’t—
- DONIN: You’re down here.
- MILANESE: Yeah. Even on my lunch break, I can’t always—
- DONIN: Go anywhere.
- MILANESE: I can come out in the atrium and eat, but I got my buzzer set, and I could technically ask Dylan, I guess, if he’d watch it, but I don’t like to bother anybody else. They’ve got their own jobs to do.
- DONIN: Right, exactly.
- MILANESE: And sometimes I can arrange it so everything comes out, and then I have lunch, but it doesn’t always work out that way, so. [Chuckles.]
- DONIN: So you’re just totally swallowed up by—
- MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: I mean, that's sort of the heartbeat of the place, is where you are.

MILANESE: Yeah. And I like it. I decide what I'm gonna make, and I sort of make my own bed. You know, I could make it easier on myself, probably, if I wanted to, but—

DONIN: Well, there'd be squawking from the students, though, about what happened to such-and-such.

MILANESE: Yeah. And I can, you know, try to balance some of the easier things with some of the more time-consuming things that I make. But if I'm on a crunch for time, I know some brownies I can make very fast, and they wouldn't probably know that that didn't take me very long. [Chuckles.] But everything's from scratch, so—

DONIN: So do you have to do all the food ordering, too, for your recipes?

MILANESE: Well, most things we keep stocked. We have Rich [Bibeau], who does the storeroom. He does all the ordering and everything, so we'll make lists, and usually he keeps inventory, so some things he'll keep around all the time. If something's special and he might not know we're out of it, I'll, you know, have a list going, and the same thing: he checks with Dylan to see what he needs for his soups and entrées. He comes in every day and takes our orders from us.

DONIN: And this time of year, now that the students are going and the term is over, you get a little bit of a break in terms of the volume that you have to cook, right?

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: And are there sort of annual jobs you need to do during this slower time?

MILANESE: We always clean the place from top to bottom between every term. In the summer, when it's slower, I use that to try to get new recipes, copy recipes that are disintegrating. You know, some—every few years, I got to copy them over because they—

- DONIN: Literally.
- MILANESE: —even though I keep them clean, they’re just worn. The writing wears right off from them. But some of them, I hate to get rid of ‘cause it gives them character when they have, you know—[chuckles.]
- DONIN: Right.
- MILANESE: And we get several magazines we subscribe to; it gives us a chance to catch up on some of those, which keeps us in touch with what the food trends are.
- DONIN: Yeah. That’s important.
- MILANESE: Yeah.
- DONIN: I mean, students are definitely on the forefront of food trends, aren’t they?
- MILANESE: Yeah, yeah, ‘cause I know anything red velvet right now is hot, so, you know—
- DONIN: [Laughs.]
- MILANESE: —I’ve got a whole list of red velvet items to make. And it doesn’t matter what it is, but it’s gonna fly out the door.
- DONIN: Really!
- MILANESE: [Laughs.] I don’t know why. I never would make red velvet cake ‘cause it bothered me that it had all that red food coloring, but I’m, like, *Well...I’ll make it*. Some of the recipes call for beets instead, so, like, the vegan ones—I use beets in the vegan cupcakes. But things like that, that are trendy, we try to keep up.
- DONIN: Stay up with it.
- MILANESE: But also I like to put in some old-fashioned things, you know, things that shouldn’t be forgotten. And some of them get born again. Well, like red velvet cake. That’s been around for years.

- DONIN: Forever. Right.
- MILANESE: The flavor itself now is going across the different [chuckles]—like cinnamon rolls and cookies.
- DONIN: Amazing. And the same with the soups, I assume.
- MILANESE: Yeah. The soups—there's some classics that you like to—you know, cream of mushroom or anything cream soup used to always be very popular, and I think they still are. Corn chowder would always go. But then you try to get some of the new flavors that are—new seasonings, spicy.
- DONIN: So between now and September whatever it is, 15th, you get a little bit of a breather.
- MILANESE: We used to always get anywhere from two to three weeks off, but now, with the calendar changing—and some years we'd be open for Freshman Week, and some we wouldn't. This year, all we have—and I think last year, too—we only had the Labor Day weekend. So we actually have a four-day weekend, and then on Tuesday we're opening. And we don't open till 11—I think 11 to 3.
- DONIN: Lunch.
- MILANESE: Because I guess some parents are dropping probably freshman.
- DONIN: For the trips.
- MILANESE: Trips, yeah. So we need to be open in case some parents don't want to be pay the—you know, like '53—'cause it's all you can eat, so that they have another option. That's why we're open. So it'll be even slower than the summer is [chuckles], which is hard to believe.
- DONIN: It *is* hard to believe.
- MILANESE: We're so slow in the summer, and then we're gonna get slower. It's hard to know how much food to make. And then all of a sudden, after Freshman Week, which is I guess the following—I don't know. Anyway—

- DONIN: The Orientation Week.
- MILANESE: Yeah. After that—then when classes start, then all of a sudden we get slammed.
- DONIN: Yes.
- MILANESE: And it's hard to—every year I wonder if I can do it again. *Can I make—? 'Cause it seems like in the summer I kind of pace myself so I can comfortably do everything. Then I'm thinkin', How'm I gonna be able to go back and make two or three times as much again?* [Chuckles.]
- DONIN: Well, you'll be looking forward to your helper.
- MILANESE: Yes. Yes, I will.
- DONIN: For sure.
- MILANESE: And I think I have one student in the fall. Two of my students are away this term, so in the winter I'll have maybe two or three.
- DONIN: Right.
- MILANESE: They come in the afternoon, and they work from 2 to 4 or 2 to 5, and they'll bake some brownies or cookies.
- DONIN: Great. And by then you're gone, though, right? So they know how to do it on their own.
- MILANESE: Yeah. They can—we have a little overlap time. Like, if maybe they come in at 1:30 or whatever. Sometimes I've had some that didn't—they couldn't—'cause of their schedule, they couldn't come till 3, but if they're trained, I'm fine with that 'cause they're all very responsible.
- DONIN: Yup. What's your take on the community of students here generally? I mean, you've had good experiences with your interactions with them.
- MILANESE: Yeah, yeah, I've had very good—it's nice to—even though I'm in a way quite isolated, I like being a part of a college

community because it's part of the future to see—the students are our future, and it's encouraging to see them, the few that I get to know. I feel good that they're gonna be where—you know, in charge of our future.

DONIN: Yes, yes, it's true.

MILANESE: So I think there's hope. It gives hope. 'Cause you hear so much today about young people being spoiled or—but they say that about every generation.

DONIN: They do.

MILANESE: I was spoiled, too. [Laughs.]

DONIN: Right.

MILANESE: But, I don't know—

DONIN: And I think you get to interact with a fairly elite, self-selected group of students who come to this Ivy League school, but in addition to that, they seek out—seek you out to be cooking.

MILANESE: Yeah. I'm surprised that—and it's encouraging to me that there are students that still can bake or some that don't know too much but they really wanna learn. I do like them to have the basics. I don't want them to be starting from nothing and have to teach 'em, but they've all baked at home, and they want to be doing it. And some of 'em don't necessarily need the money at all; they're doing it because it's something they want to do.

DONIN: They enjoy it.

MILANESE: And they enjoy it, and evidently it's quite—to be working in the Collis bakery has some status to it, I'm told. One of my students from last year said that—she was trying to get into a sorority, and she said, "When they found out I was baking at Collis," she said, "that was—you know, that was a big deal."

DONIN: That's great.

MILANESE: You know, something that I do would help somebody get into a sorority?

DONIN: Fantastic.

MILANESE: Yeah. So it's kind of interesting.

DONIN: I know you have limited access to students, but do you have any sense that the sort of face of Dartmouth has changed over the last 25 years that you've been here?

MILANESE: Oh!

DONIN: In terms of, you know, the kind of students who are coming here? You know, obviously you weren't here before the days of women,—

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: —but it's changed in more ways than just the fact that women are here. There are more, say, financial aid students, there are more international students, there are more students that, you know, do need to work because they are not from these—you know, there's this old-fashioned image of all Dartmouth students are, like, white and rich. And we all know that that is just absolutely not the truth.

MILANESE: No.

DONIN: But have you, yourself, experienced any of that sense of the changing face of Dartmouth? You have so little exposure to them; it's probably hard.

MILANESE: Yeah, it is. I do remember—I think it was even my very first year, I heard a couple of students talking to each other, and they were working for the café, and one said to the other, “Are you working here because you have to or because you want to?” And I think the one that was asking it said that she worked here because she wanted to have her own money, but she definitely did not need to work here. I think that, you know, they like the idea of having independence.

DONIN: Yes.

- MILANESE: I mean, and that's a good quality in somebody.
- DONIN: It's a very good quality.
- MILANESE: Again, I haven't had a lot of exposure, so I don't know. I did always think, have a stereotype in mind that they would be snobby.
- DONIN: Yep.
- MILANESE: And I don't know that I've ever come across anyone that is, and I know any that would set foot into the kitchen would not be, because they [chuckles]—you know, they would not—
- DONIN: It doesn't attract those kinds of people.
- MILANESE: No, no. But I know—I was told when I was first hired that some of the students that we had working—Margot would tell me, "Some of them have never been in a kitchen," she said, 'cause they have cooks or whatever, and to think they're actually working at Collis—that means they don't have to, but I think that Collis, because it was run by students—I think it had a certain status that, "Oh, this is fun." Maybe they were doing some things they probably shouldn't have been doing, but—
- DONIN: [Laughs.]
- MILANESE: So the music was—it was pleasant. They'd have kind of loud rock music, which I wouldn't take now, but then it was an up atmosphere, and they were all happy. I just remember the workers. They were all doing their jobs. And it was just very happy.
- DONIN: Nice atmosphere.
- MILANESE: Yeah.
- DONIN: And, you know, talking about those kinds of students and how they get along and they're happy to be here—what do you make of these incidents on campus where students are being so mean to one another? Whether it's making fun of students speaking Chinese or, of course, the physical

assaults on women or gay people. It's hard to make sense of that—

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: —because so many of our interactions with the students are so positive.

MILANESE: Right. It just has to be a very small minority, because I've never seen any of that. I've never experienced it personally. And when you see all that publicized, of course, those are important things that need to be dealt with, but there are so many more positive things going on, and I hope—I don't think that's a trend for those types of things.

DONIN: It seems to go in—it sort of goes in cycles. You know, so often these things—you can read the paper from the '70s, and the same kind of complaints are going on,—

MILANESE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DONIN: —of different varieties, but many of the same issues. And it's sometimes— It's hard to understand why these issues just keep rearing their heads over and over again.

MILANESE: Yeah, yeah.

DONIN: And it may just be that when you bring together a large group of people in a closed atmosphere (the way Dartmouth is)—

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: Closed in a sense that everybody's living on campus. Most of them.

MILANESE: Yeah, true, you're gonna have that.

DONIN: It's human nature.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: But it's very disturbing, on the other hand.

- MILANESE: It is. And those things have to be dealt with. You have to deal with them, and we should be made aware of 'em, but you don't want to think that that's the bulk of what's going on here.
- DONIN: And, you know, somebody said to me—I forget whether it was a student or a worker, but that Dartmouth is a different place after dark. There's two Dartmouths: there's the Dartmouth during the day, when everybody's, you know, doing their job, whether they're being a student or being a worker and trying to be positive and productive, and yet after dark, it all changes, which is a sort of scary thing to think about.
- MILANESE: It is.
- DONIN: I think there's something to that, that those of us who are here just during the day—we only see one side of Dartmouth.
- MILANESE: Oh, right, because, yeah, 'cause I'm rarely here. I'm rarely here at night.
- DONIN: Yeah, I'm never here.
- MILANESE: The only dark is when I come in the morning, and then everybody's asleep. [Chuckles.]
- DONIN: Yes. Thankfully.
- MILANESE: Except if they maybe haven't gone to bed yet, which is some Sunday mornings.
- DONIN: You probably find them sleeping on the steps—
- MILANESE: Yeah.
- DONIN: —or staggering around.
- MILANESE: Yeah. I mean, that's a good point, because I haven't seen the nightlife at all.
- DONIN: Right.

- MILANESE: But does that have a lot to do with alcohol consumption?
- DONIN: Sometimes, I'm sure. I lead such a sheltered life about what goes on here at night 'cause I'm rarely here.
- MILANESE: Yeah.
- DONIN: As you say, you know, you go home, and just coming in in the dark in the morning isn't so great, but you're not worried about your safety.
- MILANESE: No, no. I don't. I mean—'cause, you know, when I come in Sunday morning, sometimes I think that, you know, I'm the only person coming in, and, you know, the door isn't always locked to the building. I mean, I think it's s'posed to be. Well, sometimes there's FO&M. Sometimes there's custodians working, but sometimes not. A lot of times I'm the only person.
- DONIN: That's a little spooky, isn't it?
- MILANESE: I mean, it enters my mind, but I'm not—I don't know. I've been just doin' it for years, coming in on Sunday alone. You know, I walk from the parking lot. A lot of times, I'll see a security—I mean, they do—you know, they're always driving around. So I'll see a vehicle, but I rarely see a person. But if I do see a person at that time, and I'm the only—
- DONIN: You're conscious of it.
- MILANESE: I think it does occur to me, but usually, *Oh, it's just somebody—whatever.*
- DONIN: Right.
- MILANESE: I've never had any problem. Nobody's ever even said a boo to me except "good morning" maybe.
- DONIN: Right.
- MILANESE: But, you know, I've never had any problems. And I try not to dwell on that. I'm sure if that scared me, they would do something about it.

- DONIN: Oh, I'm sure they would.
- MILANESE: I mean, I would have to work. I wanted to work that schedule—because they were gonna have me work—for years, I did work four 10-hour days. I worked that for a while.
- DONIN: Oh, did you?
- MILANESE: But then I couldn't do it anymore 'cause of—we had—I don't know why, but I couldn't. So for I can't remember how long now, I've been working the regular 40 hours a week.
- DONIN: So you work 5 to 2, you said?
- MILANESE: Well, right now I work 5:30 to 2:30. I forget now, 'cause the summer's been different. I guess it will be 5:30 to 2:30. Is that right? No, that's not right, 5:30 to 2. No. Yeah, that's what it'll be.
- DONIN: Five thirty to 2.
- MILANESE: 'Cause that's eight and a half hours.
- DONIN: Yep.
- MILANESE: That's what I'm doing.
- DONIN: And you're able to get everything baked for breakfast by coming in at 5:30?
- MILANESE: Yeah. Well, we open at 7. We always used to open at 7:30, and when they changed it to 7 sometime within the last couple years, nobody even really told me we were changing it, so then I realized, *Oh, we're open*. But, no, I think that if they wanted me to have everything ready at 7 they would have told me that.
- DONIN: There's not that many kids that come in at 7.
- MILANESE: But most things are ready by 7 anyway, and now if my helper comes back, she'd be making the muffins and I'd make the scones, so I wouldn't have to make—and the cobbler, so if I have somebody helping me, then it's no problem getting things ready for 7.

DONIN: Right, right.

MILANESE: But I don't think they care. Nobody says anything. They really don't—I'm pretty much left alone. [Laughs.]

DONIN: You're pretty independent. It's a great job.

MILANESE: It's always been that way. But it's probably more that way now because—well, I'm the only one that does this job. You know, for a long time we had more of us, and we used to all cook and bake, and then at some point, Cynthia, who was the boss then, wanted us to specialize in what we wanted to do the most, and I preferred to bake. And some people preferred to make soups and entrées. And I said, "Oh, I"—we had to say what two things we liked the best, and I said, "I like to bake and make soup." So she had me baking and making soups. And then eventually we got so that we separated completely, so you have your cook and your baker. Dylan's been having to make the muffins and scones on Friday 'cause it's my day off. But if I had my assistant, she would be doing that.

DONIN: Right. Pretty independent. That's great.

MILANESE: Yeah. And it's pretty ideal. It fits me. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: So the hour's up, and—ooh, the hour's over. But let me just ask you a final question. So Mother Dartmouth—has she been good to you?

MILANESE: Oh, yes. Yeah. I can't really complain. I've been able to do what I love to do the most and still have time off. We get so much time off, and, you know, to have a baking job and to not have to work every single holiday, which you do in this business; you get used to having to work every holiday, not necessarily getting vacation or sick days or anything like that, so, I mean, this is—what's to complain about? I might even have a pension. I can even maybe retire if I should so desire. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: But you say your community really is right here.

MILANESE: Yes.

DONIN: Right here at Collis.

MILANESE: Yeah, I would say so.

DONIN: Right.

MILANESE: Yeah.

DONIN: It's a pretty nice community to be a part of, it sounds like.

MILANESE: Mm-hm, it is. Yeah, I think I came to the right place when I came to Collis.

DONIN: Yeah.

MILANESE: That ad was there for a reason.

DONIN: Right. Good timing. Very good timing.

MILANESE: Mm-hm. Yep, yep.

DONIN: Alrighty, then. That's it, Mary Ann. Thank you. I'm gonna turn this off.

MILANESE: Okay.

[End of interview.]