

Amelia (Arneson) Sereen
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
March 21, 2013

DONIN: Today is Thursday, March 21, 2013. My name is Mary Donin. I'm here in Rauner Library with Amelia—tell me if I'm saying this right—is it Sereen?

SEREEN: Sereen. But I came to Dartmouth as Amelia Arneson, I think. And I was generally known as Amy at that point.

DONIN: Oh, really! Are you still known as Amy?

SEREEN: No. When I changed to Sereen, I picked up Amelia, which was my actual name.

DONIN: Your given name.

SEREEN: Yeah, my given name.

DONIN: It's a pretty name.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: Okay, Amelia. So just to sort of put this in context, you came here for graduate work in 1969.

SEREEN: Yes.

DONIN: So that was right in the throes of all the campus activism, and John Dickey was president. I don't know if you were even aware of any of that.

SEREEN: I was involved with a lot of campus—a lot of the activism, but not when I first got here.

DONIN: So John Dickey was just on the way out, and John Kemeny was on the way in.

SEREEN: Right. So this is before John Kemeny came in 'cause I knew John Kemeny from the math department. I was probably one of the first

women to come here 'cause my sister was a student here—my sister was a graduate student in the math department.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So she was working with John Kemeny.

SEREEN: Well, she knew him. Yeah, she knew him.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And is that what brought you here, following your sister?

SEREEN: No, I came to visit her. I was living in Mexico, and I came to visit her. And while I was here, I somehow got into conversation with people in the biology department, which was my field.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And at what point did you decide to do a degree here? Or start a degree.

SEREEN: That's when. And I applied, and I came up I guess it was...I was in Mexico in '68 'cause that's when the Olympics were there. And I came up the next fall, I guess, of '69 was when I started as a graduate student in the biology department.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And what was gonna be your degree? That was just when the....

SEREEN: I was a Ph.D. candidate.

DONIN: Candidate.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: And that's when they were really trying to ramp up the graduate programs.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: At the college.

SEREEN: I don't know.

DONIN: You must have been one of the few women doing—

SEREEN: Very few, yeah.

DONIN: Yeah. How was that?

- SEREEN: It was fine...it was fine.
- DONIN: Was it?
- SEREEN: Yeah...yeah.
- DONIN: Was there any—
- SEREEN: I was living with—I came—actually not when I came up here, but my Mexican boyfriend eventually got admitted. And so we were living together here, both as graduate students in the biology department.
- DONIN: So you weren't really looking for camaraderie or....
- SEREEN: I was friends with people in the biology department, the other graduate students.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- SEREEN: Yeah.
- DONIN: Were you the only woman?
- SEREEN: Yes. And there was one other Jew. And I remember that 'cause he was an advanced senior, Joe—I don't remember his last name. And at some point something was going on, and they were talking about Jews. And I said, "Well, look at your population basis. There's me and Joe, and we're both blond with blue eyes." So that's how I remember that there were only the two of us.
- DONIN: Oh, interesting. Was that an issue on campus? Did you feel that people were noticing if...
- SEREEN: Well, it must have to have had that conversation. But I don't remember it being an issue.
- DONIN: And of course it was a topic of conversation when John Kemeny was selected as well.
- SEREEN: Was it? I don't remember that.
- DONIN: Yeah.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: So what was Dartmouth like back then for a woman in the sciences?

SEREEN: Well, actually—how did that happen? I think it was my brother-in-law who was an instructor or something like that, junior faculty member, in the math department who introduced me to Rhona Mirsky, who was—you know Rhona?

DONIN: I don't.

SEREEN: She was a biochemist. And so I then, because I became friendly with Rhona, Lucille Smith became my thesis advisor. And that was in the medical school in the biochemistry department. So I guess I quickly gravitated to my kind. Biochemistry was my interest anyhow.

And I was living off campus with my boyfriend, so it wasn't like I was dating or anything like that. And sometime during that, I remember they were having women from other—from women's colleges come and spend the winter here or something like that. I remember one of my students—so I was teaching freshmen—saying, "Twenty-one women is worse than none." I remember his saying that.

DONIN: That must have been what they call...I think it started out as the Twelve College Exchange Program.

SEREEN: Yes. It was instead of going to Europe, they would come to Dartmouth. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SEREEN: For a semester.

DONIN: For a semester.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: To see the natives.

SEREEN: For an exotic experience. [Laughter.]

DONIN: That's pretty brave.

SEREEN: For them?

DONIN: Yeah.

SEREEN: I guess. I didn't have much...that was my interaction with it, was that remembering that one student's saying that. This was new territory for me. I'm from New York City. I remember keeping my skis in my office and going to the Skiway, and I learned to ski on—not the Skiway. The golf course. I learned to downhill ski on the golf course and the old rope tow. And at some point, I think it was after I was no longer a student, I helped start the Women's Center in Hanover.

DONIN: I didn't know there was one.

SEREEN: There was one. There was a very active Women's Center in Hanover.

DONIN: Did it include faculty and staff from the college as well, or was it purely for the community?

SEREEN: I think there were a number of us who had peripheral connections with the college. I mean the women's movement was pretty hot and heavy then. And I know some of the women in my consciousness-raising groups were on the faculty or wives of faculty. Yeah, sure. Claudia Lamperti, who's still around—John is; I guess he's an emeritus professor of the math department. She was my closest friend.

DONIN: And at some point in that decade, anyway, there was a women's group supporting staff and faculty as well, the Women's Caucus.

SEREEN: I didn't know about that. That was, I think, after my time.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

SEREEN: And then I became—there was a fairly good-sized, tight group who were involved in the anti-Vietnam War activities. And so that kept me around. Oh, Luci—when I dropped out, then I worked in Lucille's lab as a lab tech. And then I was the first MedLine searcher at the library.

DONIN: Oh, at the library.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: MedLine.

SEREEN: MedLine was—well, it's like—it's PubMed now. But it was so primitive that you really had to have a lot of skill to do literature searches. And I had previously worked at the Bureau of Medicine or something down in Washington at the library. So I was familiar with it. You know, computers were just coming into that stuff. It was a great job because I was working at—what's the name of the library they say that's moving now, Dana?

DONIN: Dana. Uh-huh.

SEREEN: Yeah. So I was working there. Shirley Grainger was the director. I think they had just put the additional floor on.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

SEREEN: So my job involved people who—researchers would come, and they would have to tell me enough about their research so I could do a good search for them. So it was great! It was a great job.

DONIN: And it was a perfect job for you because of your background.

SEREEN: Right.

DONIN: I mean you speak the language.

SEREEN: I could speak the language. I was perfect for it, but it was like I had these really motivated people teaching me about their subject matter. So I had these—I mean I just loved it. I ate it up.

DONIN: Who taught you? Was it the librarians?

SEREEN: I learned it. I mean there was nobody else.

DONIN: You were the first one.

SEREEN: Yeah, yeah.

DONIN: Oh, wow.

SEREEN: I guess I was the only one for a long time.

DONIN: So was that for....

SEREEN: I mean now anybody can do...I don't know if you've done it, but you can—it's just—

DONIN: Yeah. Anybody can do it.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: But at that time, were you serving docs and students as well?

SEREEN: Researchers. It was mostly researchers for the medical school.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

SEREEN: Maybe they were writing papers, and they were looking for stuff.

DONIN: Yep, yep. So what was your community here at Dartmouth during those early years?

SEREEN: Well, there was the women's community. There was this large group of tight friends who were antiwar activists. But we were a social group as well. I guess that was my biggest community. And then I knew the people from the math department 'cause I'd met them through my sister initially.

DONIN: Oh, yeah. And were you able to sort of travel flawlessly between the Dartmouth people and the townspeople?

SEREEN: Yeah, yeah.

DONIN: Did you consider yourself part of the Dartmouth community?

SEREEN: Yeah. Yeah.

DONIN: And the antiwar activities that you were involved in, there was certainly stuff going on on campus. Did that include the townspeople as well?

- SEREEN: Yes, yeah. I think most of the people there were.... Yes, 'cause—well, but they were people who were also Dartmouth graduates. I mean John Moody was a friend. Do you know him?
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- SEREEN: So he was very involved in it. He and I were good friends. I think he's a Dartmouth graduate, but he was also a vet.
- DONIN: He is. Yep.
- SEREEN: And so, you know, that's why his take—what's a town person, what's a....
- DONIN: There's a lot of bleeding between friends.
- SEREEN: Right. Yeah.
- DONIN: Right.
- SEREEN: And Claudia was a faculty wife, but she...that was not her identity.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Right.
- SEREEN: And I came up as a graduate student, but I was no longer a student, although I was working part time.
- DONIN: Well, you were an employee.
- SEREEN: Yeah, I was an employee then.
- DONIN: Yeah. Right.
- SEREEN: And then people came for other reasons and then got jobs here. Shelby Grantham I think it still there.
- DONIN: Sure. Yep.
- SEREEN: And she was very active in it. But she didn't come, I don't think, for a Dartmouth affiliation.
- DONIN: I don't know.

- SEREEN: She and Doug North, who was her husband at that time, came, I remember, when she came. Yeah.
- DONIN: She's an instructor now and has been for a long time.
- SEREEN: Uh-huh. Yeah. But that was a long time ago. That was '71 or something.
- DONIN: A long time ago.
- SEREEN: Yeah.
- DONIN: And so you were here probably for the invasion of Cambodia and when they shut down the school for a week with John Kemeny.
- SEREEN: Yes, yes, yes. I remember that because one part of it was that we went out and did community service. I think that was part of the decision to shut the school down was that those of us who.... And I remember going places that now I'm familiar with; but, like, the Mill Road in Lebanon, there was a still we came across there.
[Laughter]
- DONIN: Amazing.
- SEREEN: And I think that's when we helped start.... I think the LISTEN Store got started at that point, if I'm not mistaken.
- DONIN: Oh, interesting.
- SEREEN: And maybe Headrest. I'm not sure about that.
- DONIN: Gee, somebody should be documenting those places, you know?
- SEREEN: You should check with Don Wade 'cause he would probably remember those things more distinctly—Shelby probably would, too.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So how long did you stay affiliated with the college, either as a student or as an employee?
- SEREEN: I retired two and a half years ago, and at that time I was adjunct faculty at the medical school 'cause I was working at the VA. I was a physician assistant.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SEREEN: And I was precepting medical students.

DONIN: What does precepting mean?

SEREEN: They would come to my clinic and follow me and learn how to do medicine and stuff like that.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SEREEN: Get clinical experience. It's called the LCE: the Longitudinal Clinical Experience, I think.

DONIN: At the VA.

SEREEN: Well, they did it lots of places.

DONIN: So this is part of the medical school training?

SEREEN: Yes, students.

DONIN: To come to the VA.

SEREEN: Well, not just the VA. They were looking for places, clinical places, for the students to get experience, and the VA was one of the places they went.

DONIN: Not a lot of choices around here. It's either Hitchcock, APD [Alice Peck Day].

SEREEN: Well, some of the students traveled quite a distance. And then they went to physicians' practices. I think there are medical students—yeah, I know that there are medical students who go to the Family Health Center where I get my medical care now.

DONIN: Is that at Alice Peck Day?

SEREEN: No, it's a private practice right across the river from Longacres.

DONIN: Oh! So where did you actually get your PA training?

SEREEN: That was the MEDEX New England, which was affiliated with Dartmouth.

- DONIN: Oh, I've never heard of that.
- SEREEN: And they don't consider me an alumna because I think they think it's a vocational—it was a vocational training.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- SEREEN: It was here for five years. And it was funded year by year. And there was a program—MEDEX was—program started for returning medics from Vietnam, who had no credential.
- DONIN: Right, right.
- SEREEN: And so they started—
- DONIN: On-the-job training. That was all they had, right?
- SEREEN: Yeah. I had a classmate, and he was in a ship in the middle of the Pacific, and his consults were if there was a doctor in a plane flying overhead.
- DONIN: Wow!
- SEREEN: But when he came back, he had no credentials to do anything, you know. So that's what that program was started for. But then they said, Hey, you have to let women in, too.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- SEREEN: And I kind of squeaked in. I'd been involved in the women's health movement. You familiar with that?
- DONIN: Uh-uh.
- SEREEN: Oh! It blew my mind. And I remember at that time when we heard this was happening, we started doing it. The women would learn to do gynecological exams on each other.
- DONIN: This was up here as well?
- SEREEN: Up here, yeah.
- DONIN: Overseen by the medical school?

SEREEN: No. No, no. This was layperson. This like broke the whole mystique of, you know, the ownership of medicine by the—

DONIN: Medical profession.

SEREEN: Medical profession.

DONIN: Male medical profession.

SEREEN: Male medical profession. Of course now I'm part of it, but—or was. But that was just—I remember that was like a major...breathtaking.

DONIN: Well, I remember *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.

SEREEN: That was it, yeah. I was involved with some of that. And it was coming out of that. But that's exactly what it was. So I had had that experience. And then I—I don't remember exactly the timing, but I went to live in a commune up in central Vermont, and it—close to Goddard College. And I helped set up the laboratory. The college health center there had a young go-getter doctor, and he wanted to make it a community health center. It was the only medicine between Montpelier and St. Johnsbury. There was no other medicine between those two places. You forget what things were like, you know.

So I helped set up the lab there in exchange for medical care for the commune. And I remember bringing a baby in once, and John just started talking and teaching immediately. So he arranged for me to get into the MEDEX program here at Dartmouth. And sent two of the nurses up to Burlington to become nurse practitioners and that. And then he got a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and now it's a pretty good-sized health center, I think, up in Plainfield, Vermont.

DONIN: That's fantastic.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: So what brought you back here after your PA training?

SEREEN: Oh, so I got my PA training, and then I went down to Brattleboro, and there was a collective health center there. And then I got a job in the Bronx. And I think that's how it went. I worked in the

cardiology department—that was quite a cultural change—in the Bronx for five years. And then I started seeing an old friend up here, and so I came back up here to live with Ed. It took me a year to find a job up here.

DONIN: Did it?

SEREEN: Yeah. And I worked in—

DONIN: In the medical field.

SEREEN: Yeah...yeah. But I worked in the alcohol treatment program at APD. I mean I wasn't fussy. I went from cardiology—people said, "Oh, you're so picky." I said, "I don't know." I went from cardiology to alcohol treatment." And then I came and worked at the old Hitchcock here.

DONIN: Uh-huh. As a PA, still.

SEREEN: As a PA. Briefly—for a year, I think. And then I had a bunch of other jobs. I don't know. Anyhow, then I worked for 18 years at the VA. I finally got into the VA system and worked there in primary care.

DONIN: And you're listed still as faculty at Geisel, right? I mean aren't you...

SEREEN: Well, because I had been a—I had precepted the students while I was there. That's how I became on that. I think it's an accident that they still list me as faculty. I think they don't realize—

DONIN: That you've retired.

SEREEN: That I've retired.

DONIN: [Laughs] I guess what I'm after is, if you're precepting at the VA, that makes you part of the faculty at Geisel.

SEREEN: Yeah. Right.

DONIN: Because that's one of the places that the students train at.

SEREEN: Right. They were Dartmouth medical students whom I precepted.

DONIN: I see. Yeah.

- SEREEN: That was wonderful for me. I loved that.
- DONIN: And at that point it was still a two-year college. They were still doing the two-year program or no? It had already become....
- SEREEN: Maybe at the beginning it had been. Yeah.
- DONIN: 'Cause then they farmed them out for their two years of clinical.
- SEREEN: Yeah. I think one of my first students—I have to go find her last name. She was a wonderful student. We had such a great time together. I think she went down to Rhode Island. Yeah.
- DONIN: So over these years, you've been sort of peripherally connected to Dartmouth for a long time.
- SEREEN: Well, like I still sing Bach cantatas at Howe Library every Friday morning. That was started by Joan Snell.
- DONIN: Oh, yeah. Amazing! Yep, well, there is, as you say, there's a lot of sort of bleeding between the town and the college, and how can you help it?
- SEREEN: Thursday I study Talmud at the Roth Center, and I got into that through a Jewish book group. And the person who started that group with me, the study group, is an alum, a Dartmouth alum.
- DONIN: Oh, yeah.
- SEREEN: He's a lawyer, but he got his undergraduate degree here at Dartmouth.
- DONIN: And he's back here living?
- SEREEN: Yeah.
- DONIN: Yeah...yeah. Which many of them do.
- SEREEN: Yes. I used to joke, you know, when I was in the depths of the radical feminist movement, I'm just another Dartmouth student who never left the area. [Laughter] But it's true. And I guess it's always been true.
- DONIN: Always been true. Well, it's a pretty nice area to make your home.

- SEREEN: Yeah, yeah.
- DONIN: So do you still sort of feel connected to the Dartmouth community through these peripheral connections?
- SEREEN: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.
- DONIN: Yeah.
- SEREEN: I don't think of it like that, like when I...so I don't come into Hanover that often. But I do, you know. I come in every Friday morning, every other Thursday evening. I go to things. I usher at the Hop. I go to other things here.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. And do you identify yourself more as an alum or as an employee—if you had to?
- SEREEN: Either.
- DONIN: When you meet people, do you introduce yourself as someone who is....
- SEREEN: I introduce myself as a dropout. Yes.
- DONIN: Really!
- SEREEN: Yeah. Well, I did. I dropped out.
- DONIN: Yeah, dropped out of the Ph.D. program.
- SEREEN: Yeah, yeah.
- DONIN: Yeah.
- SEREEN: Well, that's right. I graduated—well, you know, you see Dartmouth has really, really disowned me, or disowned the MEDEX graduates. I remember that because when I was here and working in a medical practice locally, not affiliated with Dartmouth, and I wanted to be able to get, oh, to use the medical library for my continuing education stuff, and they refused. They said, “No, you're not an alum.”

DONIN: Oh, how interesting. And this was the program that was administered, though, by the medical school, right?

SEREEN: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I think that's what my diploma says. Yeah. 'Cause I pushed, because I really, you know, I was working in a small medical practice. So it was expensive to get my continuing medical credits. So going to the library—

DONIN: Would have been....

SEREEN: It was finally... One of the docs, I think, was on the faculty or something and made me his research assistant. But they wouldn't recognize me as an alum.

DONIN: Interesting.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: But you were enrolled in the biology department working on your Ph—

SEREEN: Right. But I didn't graduate.

DONIN: Right.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: But I thought once a student, always a student at Dartmouth. No?

SEREEN: No. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Uh-huh! So if we look you up in the Alumni Directory, you're not there.

SEREEN: I don't think so. Of course you'd have to figure out which name. I know when I looked my sister up, it was a name that —I think she's changed that now actually. We have theses from two Lucy Jane Garnetts at the Dartmouth library.

DONIN: Oh, interesting.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: And that's your sister.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: Uh-huh. But when you say two....

SEREEN: There's another one, a famous—

DONIN: With the same name?

SEREEN: Yes. I think it's Lucy Mary-Jane Garnett. And she worked on Greek folk songs or something. She apparently was a very famous person.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Interesting. So did she stay connected to Dartmouth?

SEREEN: No. No.

DONIN: She's gone.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: From the area.

SEREEN: Yeah. And it took her many years, actually, to get her doctorate. She left and didn't get it and didn't get it. And finally got it.

DONIN: Mhmm. So in keeping with the theme of this oral history—

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: —how would you describe, from your experience, how the Dartmouth community has changed? I mean, you arrived here on the cusp of major change, obviously.

SEREEN: Yeah, yeah.

DONIN: The arrival of women. But so much else has changed about it as well over these 40 or 50 years. How would you describe it from your perspective?

SEREEN: Well, it's pretty breathtaking. You see I was not a—I knew that Dartmouth was mostly men, but it didn't seem like that big a thing for me personally. Race was a big thing.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SEREEN: Remember, I was living with a man from Mexico. He was whiter than you and me, and I'm pretty white. And we were totally unaware. He had a tough time. I was the only—he knew English very well. But I was the only one he'd spoken English with when I met him in Mexico.

DONIN: Wow! And he was gonna come to school here in English?

SEREEN: He was a graduate—but he'd done—he knew English well. The textbooks in his biology school were all in English. So he knew it well; he just hadn't spoken it well. I remember at some point he was accused of having me write his papers for him. And I said, [chuckles] "You're kidding. My papers are not that elegant." His written English was really elegant. We didn't get it until once one of the faculty members said, "Gonzalo, you need to understand this has nothing to do with your being Mexican." [Laughs] And at that point it suddenly dawned on us.

DONIN: What the issue was.

SEREEN: Yeah. 'Cause we had—you know just hadn't thought about that.

DONIN: Was he able to complete his program here?

SEREEN: He didn't. But that was stuff about him, too. He started doing drugs a lot, I think, you know acid and stuff like that.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SEREEN: You know, who knows what social things pressure people and stuff.

DONIN: Yep, yep. So race was an issue then. Is it—

SEREEN: Then. And then the next time I really became aware of it is when I was precepting students, and one of my early students was from India. And she said, "I call myself black." And I was very aware of race and dealing with racism and stuff like that. And after the first couple of patients we saw, we went back to my office. I'm really proud of this. I thought it was really great. And I turned to her—and I don't remember her name—I said, "Shall we talk about the racism we've encountered?" Which I thought was—I mean I hadn't thought it out, but that was the way to put it, you know. And after that, all of

my students were women of color. And probably not a total accident.

DONIN: Yeah. Oh, interesting.

SEREEN: And we talked about race, which is, you know, it's hard to talk about race. You tend to think it's so delicate, and you don't do it. So I'm really glad—it's helped me that I had that opportunity to do it.

DONIN: And imagine being in New Hampshire where, you know, people of color, even today, don't even amount to 2 percent of the population.

SEREEN: Yeah. There are a lot of people of color around here now. And not associated with the hospital or the college even. I mean in Lebanon there are a lot of people of color.

DONIN: It's changed.

SEREEN: Yeah, yeah.

DONIN: It's more reflective of the United States but still a long way behind, I think, you know, other parts of the country.

SEREEN: Uh-huh. Yeah.

DONIN: Can be very isolating, I imagine.

SEREEN: It is.

DONIN: And it was back then even worse.

SEREEN: Yeah. And there are a lot of Jews around here.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SEREEN: I remember you couldn't get a bagel here, you know.

DONIN: Well, the Roth Center, you know, that's only been around since what, 1995, I think?

SEREEN: I don't know. Yeah, I wasn't involved with that—I mean when it started up and stuff like that.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

- SEREEN: I was dealing with my own internalized, you know, assimilation tendencies and stuff.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So what does it look like to you today?
- SEREEN: In terms of?
- DONIN: The Dartmouth community. I mean it's obviously more diverse.
- SEREEN: Yeah. And I think things have changed. I had a friend who was a medical student. And my memory is that medical students just worked, worked, worked all the time. And now, you know, medical students and residents and interns have lives.
- DONIN: They do somewhat.
- SEREEN: And students do, too, a lot, you know? And are involved in other things. I think, you know.... For instance, I was involved—it was a music honors student or something who got community people together, no auditions, to perform—was it a Puccini mass?
- DONIN: Oh!
- SEREEN: And it was breathtaking. It was like one of the—one of my great musical experiences. It was so wonderful. I think there's—I know there are recordings of it.
- DONIN: So this was relatively recently.
- SEREEN: Well, a good ten years ago, I would say. Maybe more. Well, so he was a Dartmouth honors student, and he did this—he got community people to do that. And I would not have had that kind of an opportunity had it not—I love singing and everything, but I am not—I have an innate voice, but not ability to—I have no memory for music. I'm getting there. I'm getting there.
- DONIN: Learning it.
- SEREEN: Yeah, yeah.
- DONIN: So it sounds like you're saying that there are actual—there are benefits to community.

- SEREEN: Oh, yeah. Sure.
- DONIN: The fact that the community is made up of both direct associates of Dartmouth as well as community members who feel that they can be a part of it as well.
- SEREEN: Yeah. Right.
- DONIN: Yeah.
- SEREEN: And I mean I'm a community—I was on the zoning board, the Lebanon Zoning Board for 14 years. And so, in a sense, you could think of it, you know, that's a Dartmouth person who then became, you know, part of.... I mean I didn't think that my presence there had anything to do with Dartmouth, except I wouldn't have been there had it not been for Dartmouth.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Right, right.
- SEREEN: Some people who would have been glad had I not been there.
[Laughter]
- DONIN: So what sort of impact has...I mean how would you describe the impact that Dartmouth has had over these years on your sense of community here? You think you would have stayed if it weren't here?
- SEREEN: No, I would never have come here had it not been for Dartmouth. I can't imagine why. I mean I wasn't a skier, you know. So it got me here.
- DONIN: And it brought you back.
- SEREEN: And it brought me back. The man I came back to live with was a faculty member, so. And then of course the impact on, you know, when I was working at the VA, getting students. That really helped me—that was a very hard job there, and having the students was like a bright light in that.
- DONIN: And I'm sure they felt the same way coming to you.
- SEREEN: I know. They did, I think. I got a lot of very gratifying feedback.

- DONIN: Well, medical school can be so intimidating that it's nice to have, you know, a friendly face sometimes.
- SEREEN: Uh-huh. Yeah. I was more than a friendly face. But I was a friendly face. I was an involved teacher.
- DONIN: I didn't mean to imply that you weren't professionally proficient.
- SEREEN: No, yeah.
- DONIN: But also....
- SEREEN: Well, no, that's friendly. I mean, you know, you could.... I remember when I was a graduate student and I was sitting in on the lectures of the course that I was teaching the labs for, and I started saying to the students next to me, "Do you know what he's saying?" He says, "No." I said, "Well, I don't either." And I got the students to start asking questions in the class. The professor, I think, did not appreciate it. But I thought that was important to do.
- DONIN: So this was one of the biology classes.
- SEREEN: Yeah.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- SEREEN: I don't remember what it was. But I think the way students are has changed. I think that's the norm now. I think students are much more self-assured, entitled—not entitled, 'cause that's used as a pejorative often. But they speak up, they take charge and stuff, but not back then. Back then the students, the freshmen, would just sit there quietly while somebody would speak incomprehensibly, sort of reading notes that were 20 years old.
- DONIN: Well, and the teaching methods have changed as well. I think the professors, especially at Dartmouth, are much more accessible. They're not some guy that walks in—and I mean guy—who walks in and simply lectures to them without any interaction with the students at all.
- SEREEN: Yeah.
- DONIN: That's changed. It seems to me it's changed dramatically.

SEREEN: Uh-huh. Oh, yeah.

DONIN: So the students feel that they can speak up, speak their mind.

SEREEN: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

DONIN: Lucky them. I mean that's what Dartmouth is noted for.

SEREEN: Uh-huh. Yeah.

DONIN: Accessible teaching.

SEREEN: I remember actually—at some point I was living at a place without running water in Norwich. And so I was looking for places to take showers. And I was working in the medical school. And down in the basement of the medical school, there were two restrooms with showers. And one was staff, and one was women.

DONIN: Really!

SEREEN: Yes.

DONIN: Staff and women. That's bizarre.

SEREEN: That's how bizarre things are. It's hard to believe. I remember when they were trying to go coed, one of the last-ditch arguments against having women as students was that women take baths, and they didn't have bathtubs in the dorms.

DONIN: [Laughs] That's weak!

SEREEN: I mean, people said that out loud! [Laughter] It was bizarre. Then when women finally got a sauna in the gym, the temperature was set low. [Laughter] We can laugh at it now, but that's...

DONIN: Yeah.

SEREEN: But people said that out loud here.

DONIN: There was a lot of resistance, nonsense.

SEREEN: Well, it wasn't just resistance. It was another reality, you know.

DONIN: Yeah. Those early classes of women were really brave.

- SEREEN: Oh, the undergraduates, yeah.
- DONIN: And look at the early women faculty, too.
- SEREEN: That's right. There was...I remember a faculty member in the biology department saying, "Well, if any qualified women apply, we would be glad to hire them." And then Hannah Croasdale—do you know her?
- DONIN: She's legendary.
- SEREEN: She was around at the time when there was some sort of suit, and they were supposed to give back pay. 'Cause she was always a—
- DONIN: Researcher. She never got to be—
- SEREEN: She was never a faculty member even though she was functioning that way. And she refused to accept that. She refused to accept the reparations they were supposed to make. I remember. I knew her. I stayed in her house one winter. She went away. She was amazing. So she would go—she had bad arthritis, and she would go away in the winter. And so she would have the house housesat. I think it's when I was in the MEDEX program. I house sat there. Her accommodation to her arthritis was she had a set of tools on each level of her house.
- DONIN: Oh.
- SEREEN: So she could fix things. She wouldn't have to carry the tools up and down the stairs.
- DONIN: Great role model.
- SEREEN: Yeah. Except for the fact that she—and I can understand it, you know. She just would not accept the reparations. Reparations is the wrong thing. The settlement.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. She was too busy with her work.
- SEREEN: No. I think this was after she'd retired. I think it had to do with denying—having to deny how badly she'd been treated. That was my take on it at the time. And, you know....

DONIN: Yeah, she's one of the legendary first women.

SEREEN: Yeah? Oh, good.

DONIN: Her name comes up a lot.

SEREEN: Yeah.

DONIN: Any other memories?

SEREEN: Oh, sure. I don't know what I can think of. There's probably big chunks of my life that I have, you know, of Dartmouth that don't come to mind.

DONIN: Right, right. So you knew John Kemeny. Did you know Jim Freedman?

SEREEN: No.

DONIN: David McLaughlin?

SEREEN: No.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. That's just, you know, the presidents through the 20th century.

SEREEN: Yeah. Uh-huh.

DONIN: Plus you were—for a lot of the time you were at the VA, so you were sort of removed from the—

SEREEN: For the past 20 years. And for more than that, yeah.

DONIN: You were removed from part of the campus.

SEREEN: Right. I was really peripheral to the campus. To the college.

DONIN: And after the hospital moved, that didn't change anything for you in terms of connections to Dartmouth.

SEREEN: Right. 'Cause....

DONIN: Being in Lebanon didn't make any difference, whether it was Lebanon or Hanover.

SEREEN: I guess I was working at the old hospital here when they were getting ready for the move. I remember people walking around with plans and stuff.

DONIN: Alright then. I'm going turn off the tape recorders. Thank you very much.

SEREEN: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]