

Taylor Campbell '11
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
April 22, 2013

DONIN: Today is Monday, April 22nd, 2013. My name is Mary Donin. I'm here in Rauner Library with Taylor Campbell, Dartmouth Class of 2011.

Okay, Taylor, since you just made an intriguing comment that I want to pursue before I forget about it, you're Class of '11 but you're still here. You're still enrolled as an undergraduate?

CAMPBELL: Yep.

DONIN: So can you share with us what's going on?

CAMPBELL: Well, I'm taking a long time to finish my degree because I'm allergic to bullshit and didn't do terribly well in several classes that seemed to require it.

DONIN: So what's your major?

CAMPBELL: I'm a math major. I finished the math major a while ago.

DONIN: Sure. So these are the other prerequisites, so to speak, that you need to complete, even though it's not part of your major?

CAMPBELL: Yeah, yeah. Well, so Dartmouth booted me out for three terms when I flunked a couple of classes. That was in 2010, I guess, so I wasn't here for what would have been my senior year in 2011. I came back in the fall of 2011, or, I guess my senior year would have been fall of 2010, winter and spring of 2011. So came back in fall 2011. And then I've taken this past winter and the current term, spring, off. I'll be finishing my classes maybe in the summer or fall. I just have two classes left now.

DONIN: And are you working off campus, on campus?

CAMPBELL: I have been working. Right now I'm not, although somehow I

seem to be distressingly busy anyway.

DONIN: So do you find this a good place to be? I mean, how does it feel to be not enrolled but here still in the sort of Dartmouth bubble in the Upper Valley? How is that?

CAMPBELL: I don't know. It's a place to live. It's good to be around a university because there are a lot of smart, interesting people around to run into, and I hang around Sudikoff, in Sean Smith's lab. I go to the lunches there, talk to people about computing and security and stuff. I like the Co-op, the food co-op.

DONIN: Yep, we're lucky to have it.

CAMPBELL: Yes. And all the wonderful, great ingredients and cheeses around here.

DONIN: Yup. And I assume—I mean, you're not the first undergrad that hasn't graduated when he's supposed to, he or she is supposed to. I'm astounded by how many there are that still hang around here, so you probably have a community of friends.

CAMPBELL: Actually, no, I don't know any other '11s or '12s who are still around.

DONIN: Oh, really?

CAMPBELL: That is, who haven't graduated yet. I'm living with a '12 who is still around, but he graduated last year. There are a few other '11s and '12s who are still around, but they graduated on time.

DONIN: I see. Right. Some have a hard time leaving, for other reasons.

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: Right. Well, let's back up a little and find out how it is you came here. I mean, are you what they call a legacy, or was it a high school guidance counselor? Where'd you grow up, and how did you end up coming to Dartmouth?

CAMPBELL: Well, I'm from Boston, from Brookline in particular. And I

suppose, in a certain sense, I am a legacy in that my brother, Brian, was an '04, although he didn't graduate. He got Parkhurst.

DONIN: [Chuckles.] They're still using that term, huh?

CAMPBELL: Oh, yeah, yeah. He spent maybe a year or two here at Dartmouth before he got Parkhurst, although he hung around in the Upper Valley for a while, working at the hospital, at the Interactive Media Lab, until the IML, the Interactive Media Lab, ran out of grant funding in about 2006, '07 or so and went away, at which point he moved down to Boston.

DONIN: Oh, the IML went away.

CAMPBELL: Evaporated.

DONIN: Yeah.

CAMPBELL: So that must have been 2008 or 2009, not 2006 or 2007, because he was still around here when I came up for Dimensions and for the first year or two that I was at Dartmouth, which was—I started in fall 2007.

DONIN: Mhmm. So you had an idea of what—I mean, you obviously—you'd been up here before you matriculated.

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: To visit him.

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: And, despite his being Parkhurst, you came anyway.

CAMPBELL: Well, so I applied to ten schools. I didn't really think much of applying to Dartmouth. I just put it on the list because that's where Brian went. And of the ten schools I applied to, I got into two, one of which was Dartmouth and the other was UMass Amherst. So I visited Dartmouth, and I visited UMass Amherst, and I had a much more positive experience at Dartmouth than at UMass.

DONIN: During your visit?

CAMPBELL: During the visit, yeah.

DONIN: And at that point, were you focused on doing math? I mean, were you specifically looking at the math department?

CAMPBELL: No, I actually didn't really look at the math department. It hadn't occurred to me to be a math major at that time. I did a lot of computing, computer science stuff when I was in high school. I hung around MIT a lot, a bunch of students and professors at MIT, undergrads and grad students, particularly at MIT's Computer Science and AI Lab, CSAIL. So I was looking at the computer science departments mainly, and I also glanced at the linguistics departments 'cause, you know, I suppose I have a hobbyist's interest, perhaps, in linguistics.

So when I visited Dartmouth, I spent a week here, and I lived with Brian, who was living in Norwich at the time, in the house of a professor, a chemistry professor, Professor Gribble, who was on sabbatical at the time. And we went to Flavors of the Valley. You ever been there?

DONIN: I was working there last Sunday.

CAMPBELL: Oh, okay. Oh, did I just miss it this year?

DONIN: Yes.

CAMPBELL: Bummer!

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CAMPBELL: I was just thinking about it, like, last week, wondering, *I wonder when it's happening? I haven't heard anything about it yet.*

DONIN: My daughter was actually the organizer of it last year.

CAMPBELL: Oh, okay.

DONIN: So we got roped into being permanent volunteers now.

CAMPBELL: Okay.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CAMPBELL: Oh, well. I've gone to it most years now since 2007.

DONIN: Yeah, that's great.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. And so then the week that I visited contained the half-week or weekend of Dimensions, and so that was pretty nice.

When I went to UMass, I had the worst Indian food I've ever eaten in my life.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CAMPBELL: I should have taken a hint that—well, it was in Northampton, not in Amherst. But I should have taken a hint that—it was at, like, six, six thirty in the evening, and the place was not small, but it was empty.

DONIN: That's a problem.

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: In a student town.

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CAMPBELL: The samosa was cold in the middle, and hot on the outside. I think they had just microwaved it.

DONIN: Yeah. Well, the Indian food here isn't much better.

CAMPBELL: Jewel is *way* better than that.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CAMPBELL: I mean, yeah, I've had Indian food that's far better than Jewel, but Jewel is, yeah, certainly passable Indian cuisine.

DONIN: Right. So the Indian food decided it. [Laughs.]

CAMPBELL: So when I went to UMass, I was going to meet a professor that—well, actually I should back up a bit and add that when Brian was Parkhurst, he transferred to UMass and took a bunch of classes there. Didn't quite finish his degree, sort of, until in 2010 some bureaucracy shuffling happened, and somebody realized, "Oh, actually you've met all the requirements." So ten years after he started as an undergrad, he got his undergrad degree. So he knew some professors at UMass as well, and so I went to meet some professors at UMass.

The two professors I had arranged to meet, or, I'd tried to arrange to meet—one of them was in the computer science department; one of them was in the linguistics department. The linguistics professor, who actually was a Dartmouth alum, wasn't around at the time, but he had me talk to another linguistics professor. The CS professor at the last minute, just as I was arriving at UMass in the morning, said, "Whoops!" Actually, no he didn't even tell me that he wasn't going to be around, but I went into the CS department to meet the professor I was scheduled to meet, and somebody else met me instead and said, "Hi, I'm the replacement for"—whoever it was. I don't even remember his name now.

And I had a very brief, like ten-minute conversation with him, in which he explained a couple of things to me: 1) Dartmouth is a way better school than UMass. He said that outright, basically. 2) The way that UMass admissions works is that they admit everybody who is remotely the least bit qualified, and then advertise.

DONIN: Advertise what?

CAMPBELL: They just try to market the school to all the people who'd been admitted, send them lots of fliers saying, "Hey, UMass is a cool place. You should come here."

DONIN: Oh.

CAMPBELL: And after ten minutes, somebody knocked on his door and poked a head in, and he turned to me and said, "So are we done?" [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Oh, dear. Oh. Well, it was an easy decision, then.

CAMPBELL: [Chuckles] Yeah. So I met another professor at UMass, and I had a much nicer conversation with him, although it seemed like it wasn't going to be—it seemed like the class that he was teaching, which I dropped in on, wasn't terribly interesting and I probably wouldn't have gotten very much out of it. So, yeah, I just had a much nicer experience at Dartmouth than UMass. And of the ten schools I applied to, they were my two options, so I just decided to come to Dartmouth.

DONIN: And at that point, Brian was no longer here, or was he?

CAMPBELL: No, he was still here in the Upper Valley. Yes, he was working at the IML.

DONIN: Oh, that's right. Okay.

CAMPBELL: In 2007 he was living in Norwich, and that's when I came to Dimensions—

DONIN: Okay. I see.

CAMPBELL: —and crashed at his place.

DONIN: So you had sort of a nice welcome here, obviously,—

CAMPBELL: Mm-hm.

DONIN: —'cause your brother was here.

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: So you didn't go through that sort of awkward—did you do Trips?

CAMPBELL: Oh, yeah, I did Trips. And Trips was great. I was a little bit—well, I was rather equivocal about Dartmouth when I came up here, and I think my time at Trips was the time when I have been least equivocal about Dartmouth.

DONIN: Really!

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So it was a good experience. Wha'd you do? Wha'd you choose?

CAMPBELL: I forget what I chose as a trip, but what I was assigned to was Nature Painting.

DONIN: Oh, nice.

CAMPBELL: I didn't even know that that was a trip, I think, until I was assigned to it. So we had a maybe five-mile hike or so, and then we cabin camped and wandered around and pretended to paint nature, although I don't know how to paint, so it was blob painting mostly.

DONIN: [Laughs.] Blob painting. [Laughs.] That's a good description.

CAMPBELL: What was more fun than the Nature Painting I think was cooking dinner in the cabin. We didn't really have all the necessary ingredients to cook terribly well, so I had to improvise. And we didn't have any oil or butter or anything, so in order to sauté some vegetables, I—well, we had some cheddar cheese, and that does have oil in it, and so I just put that right into the sautéing pan, and it actually worked. We were able to make some quesadillas that way. It was a lot of trouble to clean, although since I was doing all the cooking my trip mates cleaned it.

DONIN: Somebody else. [Laughter] Food seems to be a recurring theme here with you. Is food—

CAMPBELL: I like food.

DONIN: Yeah. So did you bond with those people enough that they stayed your friends, the people that you did your trip with?

CAMPBELL: No, not really. I had some trip reunions with them a few times, but I didn't really stay in contact with them much after trips.

DONIN: So what dorm were you assigned to?

CAMPBELL: I was in the McLaughlin Cluster.

DONIN: Roommates?

CAMPBELL: Nope.

DONIN: Single?

CAMPBELL: Yeah, I was in a single.

DONIN: Did you—a lot of people say that their first year floor mates or roommates or whatever became their friends. Is that the case with you?

CAMPBELL: I kept greeting most of them for several years, and I sort of kept in contact with one of them for a little bit, but I've lost contact with all of them now.

DONIN: Well, you had sort of an entrée because your brother was here.

CAMPBELL: Mm-hm.

DONIN: Did you spend a fair amount of time with him?

CAMPBELL: Oh, yeah. So he roped me into MEaD, the Medieval Enthusiasts at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

CAMPBELL: So I went to MEaD meetings and then usually went and had dinner with him afterward just about every week, and we also went to, like, Flavors of the Valley and stuff.

DONIN: So the Medieval group that you joined with your brother or that he started—did that—

CAMPBELL: I don't think he started it.

DONIN: Oh, he didn't start it. Earlier.

CAMPBELL: I think it had been around when he came to Dartmouth.

DONIN: But he became the—what do you call it? The head of it when he was there?

CAMPBELL: No, not really. Well, I don't know, he might have been the president of MEaD on paper or something for the sake of COSO funding or something.

DONIN: Right, I think I read that in *The D*. Yeah, that's right. Was that a group that you spent time with?

CAMPBELL: Yeah. I had a good deal of fun fencing with them. I first ran into them at Dimensions on the Green when I was just passing by. And every term they also ran a feast called the Inn at Knotty Crossing. And I've gone to a bunch of those feasts, and I've cooked for at least one of them. I think just one. I haven't been involved with them for a couple of years though, now.

DONIN: So tell me about who became your community as you made your way through your early years here, when you were, I assume, taking a traditional load of classes, three a term?

CAMPBELL: Mm-hm.

DONIN: Satisfying your requirements for your major. Of course, that doesn't happen right away. When did you decide to become a math major?

CAMPBELL: Fairly early on, I think. Maybe my freshman winter, perhaps. So my freshman fall, I took three classes, as usual. I took Math 8 or 9 or something, one of the intro calculus sequence. I took the intro physics, intro mechanics class, Physics 15, and a freshman seminar on medieval monasticism and Umberto Eco. I didn't really expect this would happen, but the freshman seminar, the Umberto Eco class, was the only class I enjoyed that term.

The intro calculus sequence is a big waste of time. It is—well, teaching calculus is sort of an occupational hazard of math professors. There are very few who like to do it, and what those few who like to do it want to teach is usually not what everybody else—well, it doesn't match up with the way that everybody else thinks of the subject calculus. And those who don't want to teach it—well, they don't want to teach it, so it's not fun. So to a lot of mathematicians, there are two words, "calculus" and "analysis." Analysis is a field of mathematics,

and calculus is a derogatory term to a lot of these mathematicians.

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

CAMPBELL: I don't much like that approach, but there are very few to whom calculus is not a derogatory term and they actually want to go about doing it.

Also, when I took Physics 15, the premise was that you had taken AP physics in high school and so you already knew everything you needed to know about Newtonian mechanics. The first third of the class was just a brief review of Newtonian mechanics for everybody who already knew it, which I didn't really, so I didn't do terribly well in that part, and I have a very poor physical intuition for a lot of things. I can deal with the math when it is clearly presented as math, but the language physicists speak is not quite the language that mathematicians speak. It looks very similar if you're not familiar with them, but if you study math or study physics, then you'll see there are significant linguistic differences.

The middle of the physics class was a couple weeks on special relativity, and the math was all very straightforward and clearly presented, and the intuition was, well, basically thrown out because the assumption was you can't intuit special relativity; you just have to work out the math and then conclude what prediction it makes. And so that worked out perfectly fine 'cause it was all really straightforward special relativity, just one dimensional. It was three dimensional, but the high velocities were only in one dimension, so you wouldn't have two space ships going in different directions; they'd always be going toward each other, or away from each other.

And then the last part was—well, it was nominally on quantum physics, except that nobody in the class had a clue about what was going on. It was just, "Here's a bunch of formulae that are from quantum physics." Like, "Here's the Schrödinger equation, and it looks like this. It's minus $i \hbar$ $\nabla^2 \psi = E \psi$ —or $\nabla^2 \psi = -E \psi$, rather—plus blah, blah, blah, blah, this horrible, long thing. Now, if you know quantum physics, then you know there's really nice structure to Schrödinger's equation, where you can break it

into large parts and it looks like it's just a Hamiltonian in a funny form involving a wave function. But we were not shown the high-level structure of it, just this big string of [makes a long Bronx cheer with his lips]. And, "Here, you should remember this."

DONIN: And this was your first fall term.

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: So is it fair to say you were struggling?

CAMPBELL: Um—

DONIN: Or just unhappy?

CAMPBELL: I was not terribly happy. I didn't do very well in the physics class. I think I did okay in the math class. Not badly enough in anything to worry about failing or anything like that. But it wasn't fun.

The Umberto Eco class was great, though. That started with Umberto Eco's novel, *The Name of the Rose*, which is a really great novel on multiple different levels. On one level, it's just a very well-crafted murder mystery. On another level, it's a ripe source of historical references to events and figures in the fourteenth century, in the 1320s in particular, which was a really strange decade. And on another level, it is—and it's written in the first person by a novice who is tagging along a Franciscan friar who is acting as the investigator of this murder mystery and also the mediator of a meeting between some Franciscan friars and emissaries of the Catholic pope in a Benedictine abbey.

Anyway, so the novice is narrating in the first person, and in that voice it's an exploration into the way that people thought in the 1320s and the way that they saw the world. So that was a great starting point for a class on medieval monasticism and all that stuff, so that class was a lot of fun.

But the math and physics classes were—pleh!

DONIN: How 'bout the next term?

CAMPBELL: Well, the next term I took my first real math class, which was called Real Analysis. That was exactly what I had been hoping that my first math class had been in the previous term—

DONIN: And what were the other two that you took?

CAMPBELL: The other two were Electricity and Magnetism (Physics 16), which I ended up dropping because it just made no sense, and Introduction to Korean Film. And I couldn't figure out how to write about film, so I ended up flunking that class, actually. We saw some interesting films, but I couldn't figure out how to write about film, so that didn't work out so well. So I ended up flunking one class and dropping one class that term, which—well, increased—well, it didn't do much for satisfying all the general course requirements that I have at Dartmouth, which is part of why I'm still here.

DONIN: Right, right.

CAMPBELL: And I don't recall what else went on that term. So most of my time here at Dartmouth, I've been pretty immersed in classes and not much else, which doesn't imply that I've done very well in most or in fact many of my classes, but that's where I've put most of my time.

DONIN: Now, did you have any interest in engaging in the whole Greek thing?

CAMPBELL: Not exactly. So Brian was a member of Phi Tau, and so I've hung around Phi Tau a good deal, and I've lived there for a few terms, although just as a boarder, not as a member of the house. The main reason that I started living there was that my sophomore year, I shared a room with a friend of mine, James Oakley, who went off to join Phi Tau in the middle of the year. So we had been living in Wheeler, one of the dorms, but in the spring term he went to live at Phi Tau, and it occurred to him that if he went off to do that, then the ORL would presumably assign me some random roommate, and so he said, "Well, you know, we probably have a room at Phi Tau. You can move into it if you'd like." So I did that. So I've lived at Phi Tau for a few terms. But I've never really gotten involved, in spite of all the exhortations of the brothers of Tau to make me join, exhortations that I ought to join.

DONIN: If you were absorbed in your classes so much, you probably didn't have much time to do much extracurricular stuff.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. I haven't done very much extracurricular stuff. I have, on the side, spent a good deal of time in software engineering programming, computing stuff, although I haven't done terribly much with that *while* taking classes.

DONIN: Your classes absorbed most of your time.

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: Yep. How about your sophomore summer?

CAMPBELL: Let's see, what did I do that term? I took one linguistics class on the Languages of South and Southeast Asia, and I took Spanish, Spanish 2, I think, and I did an independent study on some computing stuff.

DONIN: So can you tell us about getting Parkhurst and what led up to that, and when did that happen?

CAMPBELL: So just as a technical verification here, when you say "Parkhurst," do you mean any action taken by Parkhurst?

DONIN: Getting called in there and—you know.

CAMPBELL: Okay. Because usually when I say "Parkhurst" I mean actually getting booted out permanently.

DONIN: Okay. Is that the right meaning for it?

CAMPBELL: I'm not sure that I've heard all that many people say "Parkhurst" to refer to a temporary suspension, but I'm not certain about the precise denotation.

DONIN: Right, right.

CAMPBELL: It could be a word like "impeached," which, you know, everybody uses to mean getting booted out of office, even though the technical definition is just being tried for something.

DONIN: Right, right.

CAMPBELL: Well, that was my sophomore—no, it wasn't my sophomore—it was my junior spring, I s'pose. Something had possessed me to take four classes that term.

DONIN: Well, to make up for—

CAMPBELL: Yeah. Probably because I needed—if I wanted to graduate on time, then I had to take four classes at some point, in some term. (So much for that idea.) So I was taking a computer science class in Machine Learning, a...—what was I taking? I was taking Machine Learning and a music class on the History of Beethoven, and a linguistics class—or not linguistics, sorry, an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, I think, class on language and—sorry, it's called Language and Society in the Middle East and Asia. There was one more class... Oh! Computational geometry, another computer science class. That was fun. The other classes weren't. I think there's a bit of a theme here. Each term, there's been one class that has been fun, I think, and the other classes that weren't.

DONIN: And did the fun classes cause you to ignore the other classes?

CAMPBELL: Oh, no. The fun classes were not necessarily the classes I devoted all my time to. I think usually each term there's also been one class that I devoted most of my time to. It was not necessarily the fun class. I think that most of my time probably went to the Machine Learning class that term, even though it wasn't terribly fun or enlightening and I didn't much like the way it was taught. But it took a lot of time, and the problem sets were big and required a bunch of programming.

So anyway, I ended up flunking the History of Beethoven class because the professor was nuts, and I didn't understand what he wanted. Those are two separate issues. One, the professor was nuts; the other, I didn't understand what he wanted. I should have taken a hint when two different—sorry, three different students independently warned me about the professor. A friend of mine had gone on the music FSP in London the term before, I think. This professor, Bill Summers, had—I think he was running the

FSP or something like that; anyway, he was there, too. My friend decided after a week of hanging around this professor, in London on the FSP, to hop on a plane back to the U.S. and completely bail from the FSP altogether. Just because of him. I don't know any details. I don't know exactly what occurred to motivate this, but that's what happened.

DONIN: So you should have taken that as a fair warning.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. I kind of thought, *Well, maybe it had something to do with, like, you know, living in the same hotel or something, just hanging around him all the time rather than just taking a class with him, so maybe, maybe it's fine. Maybe I don't need to worry all that much about it.*

And then a couple of music students—one of whom I knew, who lived at Phi Tau; one of them, I didn't—had told me that Bill Summers was insane. I had taken a couple of classes so far, and it was, like, the first week of classes, and I'd seen—*Okay, he seems to have a curious personality, and, yeah, it's kind of insane but probably doesn't seem like insane in a harmful way.* So I kind of brushed those off, too, because I thought they meant he's, you know, he's kind of odd but—what they meant was that he was insane in a very unpleasant way.

DONIN: So that didn't work out, obviously.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. I learned a lot from the class, although part of that was because I realized halfway through that the primary source for the textbook that we were reading was a fellow named Anton Schindler, who was Beethoven's first biographer, who knew Beethoven. You know, he lived in the mid-nineteenth century, this Anton Schindler character, early- to mid-nineteenth century. And so Beethoven had these conversation books, which he used when he started going deaf, to have conversations with people, so he'd just write what he wanted to say, and then people would talk to him or write back to him or whatever. They would have been a fantastic source for biographers of Beethoven except this Anton Schindler character went and fabricated entries in them.

DONIN: Oh, dear.

CAMPBELL: And made up stories about Beethoven. So the class motivated me to go and find some real information [chuckles], and so I did learn a great deal about the subject but not exactly through the class or the professor.

DONIN: Mm-hm, mm-hm. So that was the end of that class.

CAMPBELL Yeah.

DONIN: And that was the end of your junior year?

CAMPBELL: Mm-hm. That was my junior spring.

DONIN: And then you were dismissed.

CAMPBELL: Mm-hm.

DONIN: And where did you go?

CAMPBELL: Well, I went to live with my girlfriend at the time in New York, in Manhattan. She was at Cornell, and she was spending that summer at Cornell's medical school, which is in Manhattan, working as—well, she was a Ph.D. student there. I was working remotely on some research for a professor at MIT. So that's where I spent the summer.

And then in the fall, I moved out to Mountain View in California to work for Google as an intern. And then I went up to Ithaca to hang out there for a while and work on some of my own projects.

DONIN: So you left the Dartmouth community. Was that painful for you?

CAMPBELL: Not really, no. I've never really had all that much of a community here. I mean, yeah, I know some people, I've made some friends here, and the brothers of Phi Tau have certainly sort of accepted me as someone who's around, but I've never really found or made a community here.

DONIN: Was that by choice or by happenstance or—

CAMPBELL: I think I could probably easily ascribe it to choices I made,

although not directly. I didn't intentionally make a choice, *I'm not going to find any community here*. So I'm not sure I'd call it happenstance, but I wouldn't call it a direct choice, either.

DONIN: And you're drawn back here, though, obviously, in order to finish. How does it feel to you now, when you returned? Any different?

CAMPBELL: Well, it didn't feel terribly different when I came back in fall 2011. There were still plenty of familiar faces around. When I came back and hung around Phi Tau in fall 2011, the people there [*were*, I expect?] a little bit—the set of people there had changed a little bit, but there were still plenty of people I knew. But what I've noticed in the past couple months is that when I, you know, just walk down the street as people are going between classes or I walk down Berry Main Street and watch the people studying, everyone looks really young. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Oh, yeah.

CAMPBELL: [Chuckles.]

DONIN: That happens. Yeah, for sure.

Is it fair to say that your time here—it strikes me that you are more of a sort of—you're on the fringes of Dartmouth. You're not exactly—

CAMPBELL: Oh, yeah.

DONIN: You're not exactly deeply engaged in the whole life of the college.

CAMPBELL: That's right.

DONIN: Is that fair to say?

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: Even when you were an undergrad.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. Well, I still am an undergrad, but you mean— [chuckles]

DONIN: I'm sorry, yes.

CAMPBELL: [Laughs.]

DONIN: I keep misspeaking.

CAMPBELL: Even when I was a normal undergrad?

DONIN: Yes, even when you were a regular, traditional undergrad in the time slot allotted to you—

CAMPBELL: Yeah. Yes. Yeah.

DONIN: —before graduation. I wouldn't call you deeply engaged with Dartmouth.

CAMPBELL: No, I'm not.

DONIN: And is that your personality?

CAMPBELL: You mean my personality's match with—

DONIN: To stay outside the traditional profile of a Dartmouth undergrad.

CAMPBELL: Well, I don't think I fit very well into the Dartmouth culture, and I haven't really found a culture that I do fit into. I'm not sure whether that means I sort of generally—well, what I want to say is I don't fit in, but what I mean by that is I generally don't *do* the thing that is fitting in. That is, I mean to put emphasis on the verb here, not on what you apply the verb to. So I'm not sure which it is. I'm not sure whether I just haven't found a culture I fit into or whether fitting in isn't a thing that I do.

DONIN: Right.

CAMPBELL: One of the high school teachers who wrote a recommendation for me had some trouble writing the recommendation and asked me for help with guidance about it and had written down, "Taylor certainly walks to his own drummer" or "marches to his own drummer."

DONIN: Marches to his own drummer, yup, yup.

CAMPBELL: And I don't like the feeling of being borged, being assimilated. It is plausible to me that I could find a culture that I would fit into, but I'm pretty confident that if that happened, I would persistently maintain an independent identity.

DONIN: So this is by choice.

CAMPBELL: It's not exactly. Well, not exactly by conscious choice so much as assimilation feels icky.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

CAMPBELL: And conforming to a groupthink feels icky.

DONIN: And that's what's required when you join a group like this, not just Dartmouth but, I mean, any—

CAMPBELL: Sure.

DONIN: —any group.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. Yeah.

DONIN: And that takes you outside your comfort zone.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. I mean, I don't—I guess—Marvin Minsky once remarked something to the effect that culture is a set of prescribed answers to questions that you're not s'posed to ask. And I don't like prescribed answers, and I don't like not being supposed to ask questions. So maybe by that analysis, I'm never going to find a culture that I will fit into, because that's, well, sort of definitionally contradictory.

DONIN: So what's your relationship with Dartmouth going to be after you finish?

CAMPBELL: I don't know.

DONIN: Will you have one? Do you envision yourself having one?

CAMPBELL: It is entirely plausible to me that I will just go away and never really come back. It is also entirely plausible to me that I'll end up hanging around here for a long time, finding either

remote jobs or jobs at Dartmouth—you know, like Brian did.

DONIN: And the things that you're good at—aren't they considered solitary?

CAMPBELL: What do you mean?

DONIN: Computer science and math?

CAMPBELL: Well, there's a popular conception that they are, but that's—I mean, there's a popular conception of the antisocial, reclusive whiz kid who solves all the world's problems with pencil and paper at his desk with the fluorescent light on and nothing on his walls and the door closed and Cheetos on the desk and Mountain Dew. And that's largely a fiction. Certainly there are a lot of people around in computer science, at least, who would eat the Cheetos, but—

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

CAMPBELL: —I'm not one of those.

DONIN: Right, right.

CAMPBELL: No, most of the real work in computing and for a lot of math, too, is very much collaborative. I mean, yeah, every once in a while there's some amazing brain that comes along and solves some major problem, like Grigori Perelman in Russia, with the Poincaré conjecture. And he kind of epitomized that image, particularly when a reporter called him to ask why he rejected the Fields Medal and the million-dollar prize for it, and he said, "Go away, I'm picking mushrooms."

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

CAMPBELL: But that doesn't characterize the vast majority of work that's going on in math and computer science. So, I mean, if I start on some computing project—you know, if I start on some software engineering project, I don't have anyone to talk with about it, then it usually doesn't go anywhere.

So having worked at several software companies, I have decided that I don't much like working for them. I've worked for Google and BBN, a small company in Cambridge that

does a lot of defense contracting work. I did not do anything that had to do with defense, itself. I would not deal with that. I don't have a security clearance, and the software I was working on was all free software that's published to the world. I just happened to be *at* a defense contractor. And I've worked in a small company that does storage appliances and video editing, called EditShare.

One thing that really frustrates me about software companies and the software industry is that if you want to do software engineering, then you pretty much have to sign a nondisclosure agreement saying, "I will not talk about this stuff with my friends, the stuff I'm working on, with my friends. I will not publish it to the world. I will not do any of that." And I really don't like that. I like being able to talk with people about what I'm working on.

At some places, like Google, it's not quite so bad because there's an enormous number of interesting people from a diverse array of backgrounds to talk with about your project. Google has a very open environment *inside* the bubble. But at a lot of software companies it's very—there's a lot of self-pollinating. It's very closed. It's a closed echo chamber.

So what was I—oh, I was talking about solitary work. So, yeah, collaboration is—I mean, all major software projects are done collaboratively.

DONIN: So could you see yourself working here at Dartmouth?

CAMPBELL: I could imagine that. I could imagine doing research here. I could possibly imagine being a grad student here, although I would not apply only to Dartmouth.

One thing that has frustrated me about computing at Dartmouth is that our IT department, which was formerly called Peter Kiewit Computing Services, was created by Kemeny and Kurtz and funded by Kiewit for the purpose of—well, part of its purpose, a substantial part of its purpose was education, to keep Dartmouth students apprised of issues in computing, well, because computing is very important in the world.

Recently, it seems that they've decided to drop the name

Peter Kiewit. I don't know whether that's because the money ran out or because the new administration decided that they didn't like that mission anymore. But computing services no longer thinks that education is part of their mission. They are just here to provide service.

DONIN: So you're not talking about the computer department.

CAMPBELL: Not the computer science department, the IT department. That is, not an academic department but just the computing services.

DONIN: Services, right.

CAMPBELL: There used to be a lot of collaboration between them, but there is no longer. They're on very bad terms right now, actually. If you sit them down in the same room, then there'll be shouting.

DONIN: I see. So you would rather be involved with the computer science department.

CAMPBELL: Well, so what frustrates me is that the IT department does not—computing services does not care about education anymore, and their *modus operandi* is basically: Well, if we need to something computing-wise, we will pay Oracle to do it for us. Or we will buy a license from Oracle to use some of their software. Or we will pay Microsoft to do it.

When I last sat down with the CS department and the computing services back in the fall, it transpired that computing services did not know what Oracle application they had bought that imposed the restriction of eight-character passwords, so all of our Dartmouth passwords, the DND passwords, are—well, they're not called DND passwords anymore—the Dartmouth name directory. But whatever they're called now, your general Dartmouth passwords for e-mail and everything is limited to eight characters. And that's because the computing services had bought some application from Oracle ages ago. They don't know which one it is, and Oracle doesn't know which one it is. When someone at the computer science department asked someone at Oracle, "What could you possibly have given us

that mandates eight-character passwords?” Oracle didn’t know. So, I mean, maybe it was just different people at Oracle and whatever, and Oracle’s an enormous organization, so—I don’t know how much credence to give to that, but the computing services didn’t know which Oracle application still required eight-character passwords.

When I e-mailed computing services two years asking them, “Why do we still have eight-character passwords? I know the technical reason why we had eight-character passwords in 1988, but that technical reason no longer applies as of about two years ago.” They said, “We’re still trying to work on getting rid of these legacy applications.” That was two years ago, and they haven’t gotten rid of them yet, apparently, and they don’t even know which ones they are.

DONIN: So where are we going with this?

CAMPBELL: Just remarking on frustration with the way that computing at Dartmouth happens.

DONIN: Right, right.

CAMPBELL: Now, it’s very frustrating to me, especially because of the education aspect. That is, computing services doesn’t believe that education is part of their mission, *but* everything they do that is visible or that has consequences for the students *has* some influence on the students’ education. And so if Dartmouth, which is, you know, an eminent university—well, not university; I mean college, I guess—really is a university, no matter what Daniel Webster thinks—besides, he’s dead [chuckles]—

DONIN: [Chuckles] Right, right.

CAMPBELL: Not that I think that it’s bad for Dartmouth to maintain a focus on undergraduate education, but it really is a university.

Anyway, computing services does have an influence on students’ education, and Dartmouth is a very high-profile educational institution, where a lot of future economic leaders are currently taking classes as we speak. And so they’re going to learn from this, *Oh, well, using eight-character passwords for everything, that’s perfectly okay.*

And they're going to learn from other things computing services does that, for instance, when you connect your computer to a WiFi network, that, well, it brings up sort of a log-in screen that say, "Hey, you should download this program and run it on your computer and enter your Dartmouth credentials in order to get on the network, so it'll be faster. Otherwise, you have to use the slow network."

That's a really bad idea. I mean, yeah, the operators of Dartmouth's network aren't going to do anything malicious through that, but anyone could just set up another WiFi network that is also called Dartmouth Public, that looks the same and seems to work the same way but sends off your username and password to some database somewhere. And so the message that computing services is giving here is that this stuff it okay and they're giving this message to people who are going to be responsible for major economic decisions in the coming decades. And so those decisions are going to be very much vulnerable to remote influences that they didn't think of because they're just, well, "Okay, these computing practices are perfectly okay 'cause Dartmouth does them, right?"

DONIN: So.

CAMPBELL: Unfortunately, I don't think that computing services likes me, and—

DONIN: Your chances of getting a job with them, I guess—

CAMPBELL: Oh, yeah, I wouldn't want to work with them for various reasons, but—so I sat down and talked with some of the computing services folks a few years ago, when some network changes were happening, and the folks I talked to were pretty reasonable, although one of them I think has just been fired. I don't know why he was fired, but—

DONIN: Well, there's a lot of that that's been going on.

CAMPBELL: Right.

DONIN: So that wouldn't work for you, but it's possibly you could stay within the Dartmouth community as part of computer science.

CAMPBELL: Yeah, something like that. Or math. Or something. I don't know.

DONIN: Right. So how would you describe your relationship with the Dartmouth community? There isn't much of one.

CAMPBELL: No, there isn't.

DONIN: Is that fair to say?

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: Right. You're here to finish your job as an undergrad.

CAMPBELL: Yeah.

DONIN: And the chances are you'll probably not have much of a relationship with the community.

CAMPBELL: Mm-hm.

DONIN: But will you take away some feeling of having belonged here?

CAMPBELL: Um—

DONIN: When all is said and done, you walk away with your diploma?

CAMPBELL: Honestly, I don't know. I had a pretty good feeling of belonging here during and shortly after trips, but I don't think that persisted very long.

DONIN: Right, right.

CAMPBELL: I'm reminded of something that an English professor told me here, which was that until about 20 years ago, the freshman seminars or, well, the intro writing classes—I'm not sure whether freshman seminars were a thing back then, but anyway, the intro writing classes were all run by the English department, and for many years, they were all based on *Paradise Lost*. So now the writing classes are on, well, writing, and the freshman seminars are on a variety of different subjects.

DONIN: Right.

CAMPBELL: But it used to be that they were all *Paradise Lost*. This had the effect that—

DONIN: Now, you're talking about while you were—

CAMPBELL: Oh, no.

DONIN: No, this was a long time ago.

CAMPBELL: This stopped happening 20 years ago.

DONIN: Oh, it stopped happening. Sorry. Right.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. Actually, I think it stopped happening about 30 years ago, but the English department, for about 10 years or something like that, had split it up into a choice between *Paradise Lost* and a few other standard books. But while it was *Paradise Lost*, it had the effect that everybody coming into Dartmouth got a, well, a common cultural experience and a common vocabulary from *Paradise Lost*. That is, they were all able to, you know, quote scenes from *Paradise Lost* and recognize images from it and so on. And that gave Dartmouth students and alums a common vocabulary, so if two Dartmouth alums from wildly different class years ran into one another many years later, then they might start the conversation by quoting *Paradise Lost*.

DONIN: Mm-hm. Can you imagine that happening now? No.

CAMPBELL: No. Well, for a couple of reasons. One is that people don't really respect *Paradise Lost* all that much, and the other is, well, I think that there are probably far too many parties involved in running freshman seminars to agree that they should all divert them back to one bit of source material.

DONIN: Right. Right.

CAMPBELL: Although I should add that I later had another conversation with this same professor who told me about this, when I think she was in a slightly worse mood [chuckles], and she said that, "Well, that sort of provided a common cultural

vocabulary, but mostly it served to put a thin intellectual veneer over a fundamentally anti-intellectual group of people being trained to be middle managers.”

DONIN: Oh, interesting.

CAMPBELL: [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Interesting. Do you agree with that?

CAMPBELL: Well, I wasn't around when they were doing *Paradise Lost*, so it's hard—

DONIN: No, but the concept of putting a thin intellectual veneer.

CAMPBELL: Do you mean do I think that's what—is it plausible that that's what was happening, or do I think that was a good idea?

DONIN: Was it plausible that that was happening?

CAMPBELL: Oh, it's certainly plausible to me that was happening. I think that a lot of Dartmouth students have a very—well, this is going to sound extremely snooty, I'm sure, but there are a lot of Dartmouth students who have a very cavalier attitude toward intellectual pursuits. And I know that totally sounds, you know, like an armchair philosopher-curmudgeon bemoaning the rise of the unwashed masses and some such nonsense like that—

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

CAMPBELL: —but if I just sit around in FoCo or something or a dining hall, listening to conversations around me—well, there's a lot of—I know this is going to sound very pretentious, but there's a lot of pretty shallow gossip about frat basements and a lot of—I'm not sure—dismissive talk about classwork. Not really dismissive so much as it's sort of—

DONIN: It's not the focus of a lot of the students here.

CAMPBELL: Yeah, it's a chore. And I think that considering it a chore can easily be a—well, I think that that can be a valid perspective in the institution if the classes are used as sort of an excuse to get interesting people together looking at similar subjects

and similar classes of ideas so that they can interact with one another over a lot of interesting ideas, in which case the classwork per se is not necessarily the most important thing. Fundamentally, the purpose of a university is to get a lot of interesting, smart people together in one place.

DONIN: Mm-hm.

CAMPBELL: But I don't think that's really the phenomenon that I'm observing, when I hear what I call dismissive talk about classwork.

DONIN: Right, right. So that's why you don't engage with those people.

CAMPBELL: Yeah, I suppose so. I'm also not very good at meeting people. I'm not terribly *a priori* outgoing.

Now, one thing that I have liked a great deal in my experience at Dartmouth is being a TA. I would like to do that again sometime, although I'm running out of time to do that, I suppose. And I guess now I'm kind of that creepy old guy who's still around.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CAMPBELL: So I don't know whether—well, I mean, there are grad student TAs.

DONIN: Sure.

CAMPBELL: And they're creepier and older than I am, right?

DONIN: Well, I hope you achieve that. I hope you achieve your graduation and become a TA. It'd be great. Great for Dartmouth.

CAMPBELL: I was thinking of being a TA while still an undergrad.

DONIN: Oh, an undergrad. Can you do that? Oh, I didn't know you could do that.

CAMPBELL: Oh, yeah, yeah. I've been a TA several times as an undergrad. My freshman winter, I was a TA for the intro CS

class, CS 8, and it was a lot of fun. And I TA'd that class again the next fall. And I also TA'd a math class, Math 32, The Shape of Space. But I would like to do more of that 'cause, well,—

DONIN: Could you identify that as your community here at Dartmouth?

CAMPBELL: How do you mean?

DONIN: Well, I mean, it sounds like you feel comfortable. You belong there and it gives you pleasure to be doing that.

CAMPBELL: Well, being a TA doesn't confer community intrinsically. It has the effect that I interact with a bunch of people that I don't know or didn't previously know.

DONIN: On a regular basis.

CAMPBELL: Yeah, on a regular basis, although in most cases, the interaction is fairly limited. In some cases, I've met some people who are interesting and have had good conversations with them afterward and kept in touch with them, but most of the time, the interaction is fairly minimal, partially because a lot of students don't drop by office hours or whatever—well, not in office hours for undergrad TA, but lab hours or whatever—and explore much on their own.

Actually, this is something that I find frustration about Dartmouth culture in general: There's not a great deal of exploration. So I wanted to go to MIT. I'd wanted to go to MIT for a long time, and I hung around MIT a lot when I was in high school, and, yeah, I'm wearing an MIT t-shirt right now from a program where I taught classes at MIT to high school students. I think this shirt is from when I was teaching classes there my freshman winter and spring.

But anyway, MIT—well, I think the culture may have changed a little bit in the past few years, since I've been hanging around there a great deal. Maybe not. I don't know. But MIT really encourages exploration. It's really in the culture. So if you're admitted to MIT and you're coming for orientation week or if you're a high school student in the area who can pass off as a freshman at MIT, which was not too

hard for me to do, then there are tours of the campus called the “orange tours.” Now, these are not official tours in any capacity. These are not run by the administration or anything like that. These are run entirely by students, all named Jack Florey.

DONIN: [Chuckles.] Who is Jack Florey?

CAMPBELL: Well, Jack Florey is the fellow who runs the orange tours.

DONIN: I see. Okay.

CAMPBELL: And they are tours of the roofs and tunnels and stuff at night, when the campus police are not around or—well, if they are, then Jack Florey has a collection of walkie-talkies to communicate about when that stuff happens.

DONIN: So I can’t see this happening at Dartmouth.

CAMPBELL: No, this doesn’t happen at Dartmouth. Dartmouth doesn’t have a culture of exploration and of hacking. I mean, if a police car ended up on the top of Baker Tower, people would find that really weird, but that sort of thing happens regularly at MIT, as part of their hacking culture.

DONIN: Right.

CAMPBELL: Well, not a police car, actually; there was only one of those. But, still, that sort of thing is a common occurrence at MIT, and it’s really part of the culture. That is not part of Dartmouth’s culture. You’re not supposed to upset the image of the college.

So I’m reminded, now, speaking of the image of the college the: fall that I got here there was a debate between the Democratic presidential candidates. And I wasn’t terribly interested in the debate, but I was rather flabbergasted that Dartmouth had set down rules saying, “You may not have campaign posters hanging in your windows” or anything like that. You’re not s’posed to upset the image of the college. And the Green was—well, the Green had a little speech cage separated from the rest of it by a bunch of metal barriers.

DONIN: Oh, yes, I remember.

CAMPBELL: And I found this appalling. Now, the Green is not public property. It's not the property of the town. It's property of Dartmouth College, so the First Amendment does not apply to it. But I found it flabbergasting enough that I decided that I would make a, well, I suppose political sign and walk around outside the speech cage, showing the First Amendment. And I went and also asked the people standing in the speech cage, "Why are you standing in there?"

The speech cage was also carefully placed so that none of the television cameras would be pointing at it. There was some other stuff going on in the Green. There was some platform for talking heads to be yammering at cameras and stuff, but it was all oriented so that the cameras were facing the Hop and not the people on the Green. I mean, not the people with political signs, so that, you know, the rest of the world wouldn't see Dartmouth being politicized, wouldn't see the actual political inclinations of this college.

I sort of wish that it had been public property so that I would have had standing to, you know, walk around with the First Amendment. But as is, an S&S officer, after I was parading around there for, like, a half hour or so, asked me to leave, so I went and stood on the corner of the street nearby and talked to one reporter.

DONIN: And that was your introduction to political misconduct here at Dartmouth.

CAMPBELL: Yeah, I suppose so.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CAMPBELL: I haven't gotten involved in political groups at Dartmouth, but I get the impressions that politics at Dartmouth has changed a little bit since the '60s, when students came and occupied Parkhurst.

DONIN: Yes. Yes, I think you're probably right. Probably right. But you didn't get involved in anything while you were here.

CAMPBELL: Not in the student groups on campus. I have gotten involved

in small ways otherwise. I'm a member of the ACLU and the EFF, and I've talked to, well, the offices of representatives to say, "Hey, you should vote for this."

DONIN: Right. But not here, locally.

CAMPBELL: No.

DONIN: Okay.

All right, Taylor, I think our time is up.

CAMPBELL: Okay.

DONIN: Thank you very much. And we have our agreement about how we're gonna handle this transcript.

CAMPBELL: Okay.

DONIN: Let me just turn these off.

[End of interview.]