

Susan Goodman Cohen, Class of 1979
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
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DONIN: Today is Friday, April 5, 2013. My name is Mary Donin. And we're here in Rauner Library with Susan Goodman Cohen, Dartmouth Class of 1979. And your dad was Dartmouth Class of 1953. Is that right?

COHEN: Yes.

DONIN: Yeah. And he's a New Hampshire-ite.

COHEN: Yes, he is.

DONIN: Is he still a New Hampshire-ite?

COHEN: He is. He lives in Hampton, New Hampshire, now.

DONIN: Great! Does he come over here often?

COHEN: He does. He comes to his reunions. His 60th is this June.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

COHEN: I'm sure he's coming.

DONIN: Great. So that leads me to my first question. Was there a lot of talk about Dartmouth when you were growing up?

COHEN: Oh, absolutely. To me, Dartmouth was college. And it was always where I was going to college. I always say, when I tell the story, fortunately Dartmouth went coed when I was a sophomore in high school, because I was coming anyway. [Laughter] There was no question. I have a sister one year older than me, and she went to Bates College, where my daughter is now, and I'm going to get into that a little bit more. My daughter will be coming to Dartmouth next year for her master's.

DONIN: Oh, great!

COHEN: She loves Dartmouth also, and was not accepted as an undergraduate. But, well, my father is from Lebanon, New Hampshire, graduated Lebanon High School. And my mother grew up in West Lebanon.

DONIN: Oh! You've got real roots here.

COHEN: Oh, I have roots. My mother's maiden name was Jette. J-E-T-T-E. She was French-Canadian.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

COHEN: And her mother's maiden name was Charbono. If you go look in any local phone book right now, you'll see Jettes and Charbonos and I'm probably related to them all. Not that I know them all or am in touch with them. It's a big family. They had big families. My father was number 12 of 13, the Goodmans of Lebanon. They were one of the few Jewish families here, and they moved to New Hampshire when my grandparents were young because my grandfather had health issues from working in factories when he first immigrated. My mother—again, her parents were French-Canadian. I think they were both...both her parents were born in this area. My grandfather once told me his family was from Stukely, Canada. And if you look up Jettes in Stukely, there are over a hundred.

DONIN: Amazing!

COHEN: Anyway, my mother also grew up in Lebanon. But when she was about high school age, her parents moved to Lisbon, New Hampshire, probably for work for her father. She remained with an aunt and an uncle in West Lebanon and went to West Lebanon High School. My parents didn't know each other in high school, but they met...I think my father's younger sister became friends with my mother somehow. They knew of each other, but they didn't start dating 'til my dad was a senior at Dartmouth, and my mother was a senior at...Plymouth State College was then Plymouth Teachers' College.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: And they both went into the field of education. My father became a school superintendent, my mother was a high school teacher and junior college teacher. But anyway, they were married on campus. They were married behind my father's fraternity which was Delta U.

- DONIN: Oh, Delta U!
- COHEN: Which I think is now Foley House.
- DONIN: Yes, Foley.
- COHEN: It was Foley when I was an undergraduate. I don't know if it's still Foley.
- DONIN: Yeah, it is.
- COHEN: They were engaged at Bartlett Tower and married on the lawn behind the fraternity.
- DONIN: Amazing!
- COHEN: My mother...I know there's a house downtown where—she'd point it out—where she would stay because as a young woman in the '50s coming to campus to visit, you didn't stay with your boyfriend. You had to stay in a house with chaperones and check in and out and all that.
- DONIN: They had parietal hours back in those days, I think, when your dad was going here.
- COHEN: Probably, yeah.
- DONIN: And it was called...it was Miss Somebody's house—or Mrs. Somebody's house—where everybody used to stay.
- COHEN: That's where my mother stayed, I think.
- DONIN: Amazing! That is so.... So your dad was like a townie, right, coming from Lebanon?
- COHEN: From Lebanon. And he announced—and I never knew this until he spoke at his retirement some years ago—he was accepted at UNH and Dartmouth, and he came to Dartmouth because it was financially a little bit better for him. Not that he lived at home. He lived on campus. But he was given more of an award. He played football for Dartmouth. And his Dartmouth experience was very different from mine, I guess understandably so.

DONIN: Right, in many ways, I'm sure.

COHEN: Many, many ways. But meanwhile, when we'd come to visit grandparents in Lebanon, I remember driving around the Green when I was very young and seeing the tower, Baker Tower. To me, this was college. And I remember him taking my sister and me to a hockey game in the old hockey arena. The new one wasn't even built.

DONIN: Oh, the unheated rink.

COHEN: I don't remember that. I just remember seeing a hockey game. And I just knew that this was where I was going to college. I would try to map out my life in my head as a child, and this was where I was going to college. So I applied early decision, and I got in.

DONIN: You must have been a good student in high school.

COHEN: I was a good student. High school—I loved high school.

DONIN: Now did you grow up in New Hampshire?

COHEN: No actually, in Massachusetts. My father's career took him to school superintendency in southern New Hampshire; this was after he got his doctorate and everything. Then he worked for NESDEC, the New England School Development Council. He was the executive director of that for a number of years. Then he went to his superintendency in Wellesley, Mass. We moved to the town of Wayland, and I graduated from Wayland High School.

DONIN: That's a good high school.

COHEN: And actually five of us from Wayland came to Dartmouth in my class. One, Karen Thompson Dale, grew up in Wayland, but her father was in the armed forces and senior year they moved to Alaska. So she actually seemed to come to Dartmouth from Alaska, but she was from Wayland. She lives there now, raising her family there. David Jabs, Rufus Smith and Kathy Dunlay were all from Wayland High.

DONIN: So three women.

COHEN: Yeah.

- DONIN: That's great. I mean I guess Wayland High is probably virtually one of these feeder schools, or used to be, I'll bet, because it's a good school.
- COHEN: I don't know, but I did get a good education there.
- DONIN: Yeah. You were well prepared when you got here.
- COHEN: Although one problem that I see now is that it was a very tracked high school. So I was...not that only people from honors classes came to Dartmouth. But I was with the same 30 kids since seventh grade. There's actually another '79, Bill Mitchell, who's a very active alum, he attended Wayland High School I think his freshman year, and then his family moved up here to Hanover.
- DONIN: Uh-huh!
- COHEN: We just found that out recently when we were talking about our Wayland friends. But anyway, yeah, that was what brought me here.
- DONIN: It was in your blood from the get-go then. You never considered another school.
- COHEN: Right. And one reason, in fact, I didn't consider Bates—actually Bowdoin was my backup school, or my next favorite on the list—I didn't consider Bates because my sister was there. There was no way I was going to go where she was. [Laughter]
- DONIN: She probably felt the same way.
- COHEN: But it's a great school and founded by a Dartmouth alum, in about 1853.
- DONIN: Oh, I didn't know that.
- COHEN: Yes.
- DONIN: He founded Bates?
- COHEN: Yeah. Not Mr. Bates.
- DONIN: Right.

- COHEN: But Bates is a banker—I don't remember the name of the 1853 alum—or 1850-something—who founded Bates.
- DONIN: Oh, I'll have to look that up. So when you actually left home to come here, your family was still in Massachusetts?
- COHEN: Yes.
- DONIN: So you really did get the experience of being away from home and being here and not having your parents down the road.
- COHEN: Oh yes. Right.
- DONIN: And how was it for you? I mean, was the transition easy 'cause you'd been here so much as a child?
- COHEN: Being away from home wasn't that hard. I remember feeling some loneliness the first few days, I'm sure at other times, too. But I did not go on a Dartmouth trip. I had a boyfriend who was a year behind me in high school. I wasn't that anxious to leave home because of him. We broke up later, my freshman year. I guess, thoroughly, my sophomore year here. But also, I couldn't afford the freshman trip. I wasn't on that much finance— I guess I had some loans at the time. I did have some financial aid. But it was a stretch to come up with several hundred dollars, it was at the time, to do the freshman trip, and to leave a boyfriend, to leave home early was out of the question. Then I got here, and there was no one on campus.
- DONIN: Oh.
- COHEN: I was in my dorm room. My roommate was off on a freshman trip. All my Wayland friends were on freshman trips. I hadn't met anybody. And then they all started coming back into town, and they had their freshman trip friends. And I felt just sort of left in the dust. I mean I wasn't the only one who didn't go on a trip. But over 92 percent do, I think.
- DONIN: Wow!
- COHEN: When I speak to young people now coming to Dartmouth, I tell them they must, must, must go on a freshman trip. That's the thing that I regret.

DONIN: Yeah. Now the ratio of men to women then was huge.

COHEN: Three to one.

DONIN: Ooof! How did that feel?

COHEN: It was fixed three to one, which you know is because of the Dartmouth Plan. It felt...I mean, I wasn't that uncomfortable with it. There were a few times...I mean, I was almost always in a room with three guys. It was just by the mathematics of it. But it wasn't a problem, and I actually think it did prepare me for the years I worked on Wall Street after graduation in many ways.

DONIN: Yeah.

COHEN: But I mean there were things I didn't like about it, too.

DONIN: Like what?

COHEN: There were, for me, a few mildly sexist incidents. And having read a couple of the interviews that you already have on the website, I didn't experience anything super traumatic. But, oh, let's see. I remember.... Well, actually I was asked about this once when I was graduating.

Around when I graduated, someone wanted anyone who'd had any sexist incidents to come and report it. And I don't know where all this information is. But I had an economics professor who was the head of the department, and I was considering different internships, leave-term jobs, and I was talking about my career. I think he must have been my advisor 'cause I double majored in French and economics. And I told him I was interested in working in the OECD in Paris, which is an international organization, and would use both my French and economics. I loved France, I loved Paris. And he was discouraging. Then I told him, "For my leave-term I'm applying to Jordan Marsh, the Boston department store." "Now retailing. That's a good thing for women to get into."

DONIN: Oh, my!

COHEN: That's what he said to me. I remember also being yelled at crossing the Green at some point. I may have been a little too close to somebody's pickup softball game. I don't know. Something about the coeds. And then, my freshman year, I lived in an all-women's

dorm, which I liked. I still have a lot of friends from that dorm. But it wasn't...it was catty. I didn't really want to stay. Another girl who lived upstairs and I moved out, and we moved to the Motor Lodge. And as I always tell people, sophomore year it was like I went to a different college. It was that different.

DONIN: In what ways?

COHEN: Motor Lodge was a coed dorm. It wasn't one of the traditional dorms. Much more interaction with guys. And then I had a boyfriend on campus. He was a black man. So that opened up all kinds of other worlds for me.

And then my senior year again, I felt like my senior spring I went to a different college because I took a class taught by a visiting professor named Claudia Card. She's an ethicist, but she labeled herself a radical lesbian feminist. This class, which was called Women and Sexual Politics, under the philosophy department, just opened the whole world of feminism to me. I learned so much. I Googled her the other day, and she's still teaching, I believe at the University of Michigan; at least that was posted 2011.

But it was this amazing class. And right off the bat—she didn't come out and say it—but of the few guys in the class, the few men, none of them were going to get an A. It was impossible for them to get an A. And I'm not saying that that was right for her to do at all. But it was just eye-opening. And I learned about foot binding in China. I learned about all the genital mutilation that goes on in Africa. Just about the sexism in general and in society. And so I joined the—it was called Women at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Oh, yes! WAD.

COHEN: Yes. It was first called Women at Dartmouth. And we would sit around and discuss why we called ourselves Women at Dartmouth and not Women of Dartmouth, 'cause we felt like women "at" Dartmouth. Towards the end of my senior year, right before I graduated, I believe it was, the college wanted the group's name to change because it didn't reflect all women at Dartmouth. It was a very radical group. And I was sort of in it for educational purposes, I told myself, 'cause I'm pretty traditional. I mean, I wanted to be married, I wanted to raise a family, which is what I did. So they changed the name to Dartmouth Women's Alliance.

DONIN: Oh.

COHEN: I don't know if it still exists. DWA.

DONIN: Hmm. I'll have to look it up.

COHEN: But I still have my T-shirt, BTMFD. And I'm looking at the yearbook. And I see a page on Pyro-feminism.

DONIN: Oh, yeah.

COHEN: Pyro-feminism, BTMFD. And we had T-shirts in black with red lettering and red flames. It stands for "Burn The Mother Fuckers Down." [Laughter] I didn't make it up, and I wouldn't go around chanting it. I didn't even attend "Take Back the Night," although I did attend the Frat Hums that year.

DONIN: Oh. The Hums.

COHEN: Right. So by the time I was a senior....

DONIN: Had you been politicized or just educated, do you think? If you know what I mean by those terms.

COHEN: A little bit of both.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

COHEN: I mean, I hadn't really thought about these issues, and I wasn't the one at the front of the line and organizing the demonstrations. I was just going along for the ride and learning. In the context of that class I took, it was just so interesting. You know, again, being traditional, but having grown up in a traditional family, too.

But the Hums, the Dartmouth Women's Alliance wanted to do some kind of a protest. And I think they ended up—I say "they" because I wasn't one of the leaders of the group, and I was observing kind of—but I went to participate. I wore whatever we were supposed to wear, red and black probably. And they wanted to stand and sing alternate songs against the—now this wasn't the Hums. The Hums had happened on Frat Row where there was still—no one could stop them from standing on their front steps and singing, "Our Cohogs," which they did.

So we're on Frat Row singing alternative songs. And who was there but *Esquire* magazine doing that famous article, which I have somewhere stashed away. In fact, I just noticed in here that our pictures are much better than *Esquire's*. It's funny. But I purposely, when they were taking a photo, a group shot for *Esquire*, stood way at the side. So we were standing in a line, and I think we had posters or we were holding up our banner or something. But I didn't want to be in the center. I moved so I'd be way at the side, because I was about to start interviewing for real jobs, and I thought, Oh, I'm gonna... Somehow I had it in my head that all these men who work in these corporations are going to read *Esquire*, and they're going to see me, and they're never going to hire me 'cause here I am protesting sexism at Dartmouth.

So anyway, it didn't have anything to do with me getting a job or not. But those are some of my memories.

DONIN: So if you had to describe who was your sort of group, your support group, so to speak, your friends, when you first got here and how they changed from when you left four years later, how would you describe that group? Who were they? Were they like your roommates or your dorm mates?

COHEN: Dorm mates.

DONIN: First year it was dorm mates?

COHEN: Yes.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

COHEN: That was in North Mass, the all-women's dorm.

DONIN: Yeah.

COHEN: Then I moved to the Motor Lodge. The man I started dating there, I dated for five years, until a year or so after graduation. He and I and a couple of male friends of his who were '80s—class of '80—we hung out together a lot. I remember doing math and blowing bubbles, with liquid bubble stuff, and we'd blow bubbles; then we'd try to blow bubbles within bubbles, then bubbles within bubbles within bubbles! And of course there was a lot of marijuana involved in this bubble blowing.... That was sort of a subculture that I touched into.

I wasn't a big drug user, but some of these friends were. Actually, the person that I dated, when I first met him, he would get stoned on the weekend nights. And then he would start with Thursday nights. And then he would be high every day and then all day long. And then, by the time I ended the relationship, he was doing other drugs, and I was growing up and realizing that there was nothing that I could do to change him. So anyway, that's that story.

DONIN: Did you ever.... So you obviously didn't get involved in Greek life.

COHEN: Oh, no. In fact I.... Well, I went to some fraternity parties my freshman year with sticky beer on the floor and, you know, we'd go in and say—when asked where we were from—we'd say, "From Wellesley," or from some girls' college, because if you said Dartmouth, they didn't want to talk to you. But I didn't want to meet those guys anyway. They weren't interesting. I don't know, I didn't like those kinds of parties.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: I did want to mention, because I didn't see this anywhere in what I read that anyone's spoken about, there was a group on campus, I don't know when it started, called the SSA, Students for Social Alternatives. That was a club, an official club of the college, and I was pretty involved in that in my sophomore and junior years. And when people talk about the dances in the Hop, the club put on a lot of those dances. Maybe the college did for a while, but the club took over. We would have disco dances—it was the disco era. And I loved the music; I love to dance. I did a lot of dance at Dartmouth, and I still take a lot of Zumba classes. So we'd have these disco parties, and we had one once, I think down at the boathouse. And we would do other things that were social alternatives.

DONIN: So even then you were able to find ways to socialize without having to go on Frat Row.

COHEN: Oh, yeah. There was a lot going on that wasn't Frat Row.

DONIN: Were you in The Players, too?

COHEN: Yes, I was. I was very involved with The Players and the Hopkins Center. Maybe not as involved as some. I was in a musical my freshman year. "Kiss Me, Kate" was the show. I was a dancer. And

then sophomore year, talking about the financial aid, my father changed jobs. He went from being the school superintendent of Wellesley to the executive director of the School Boards and School Administrators associations in the State of New Hampshire. He took a pay cut. My family moved back—that's when they moved to Hampton, New Hampshire. They're still there. And he called Dartmouth right away, because I was going into my sophomore year, to find out what they could do for financial aid. So I received a scholarship for some of it, and I also got work study status.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

COHEN: So I got a job at the Hopkins Center, and it was so much fun. I worked in the scenery shop and the prop shop for the rest of my undergraduate time. I learned so much, and it was really fun.

DONIN: Oh, how fun. So was there any kind of stigma attached to being, you know, a financial aid kid in those days?

COHEN: Not that I noticed.

DONIN: That you were aware of?

COHEN: I didn't really know coming into Dartmouth how many students had gone to private school. I mean I knew some students were wealthy. There was someone who would go to Europe almost every weekend, somebody in a long mink coat, and people would go to L.L. Bean in the middle of the night. Well, that wasn't really so much dependent on financial aid. But I couldn't buy anything. I remember one time my dad gave me a \$20 bill when he came to visit. I went downtown and bought myself this skirt that I had liked. That was about it. [Laughs]

DONIN: Yeah. But you didn't feel surrounded by people who were not on financial aid? It was a mix then.

COHEN: It was mixed, and there wasn't any stigma. And you didn't really know if someone was on financial aid or not, if they weren't, you know, displaying it with what they wore or what they drove or whatever.

DONIN: Right, right. Now what about... I mean, being with a boyfriend who's a man of color, were you ever exposed to any kind of racial incidents with him?

COHEN: No, not with him, not on campus. I mean, a little bit of discomfort from some of my family members, but they're pretty much mostly liberal New Englanders. And I mean, we were soul mates in a lot of ways, and we got along really well for years. I did have a little racial incident at Dartmouth once that I wanted to tell you about. It had nothing to do with him. They didn't know I was dating him.

For some reason I had to go to, I guess, the cashier's office. It was like a bank, a mini-bank, in one of the administration buildings. And an older gentleman who worked there spoke to me about whatever it was I was doing. I don't know, making a deposit or making a payment or something. And he had some negative things to say about a number of the students who were working there who were of color. That he couldn't trust them, and he wished he didn't have to work with them.

Yeah, you're eyebrows are popping up. I know. That was right up there with the professor telling me that retailing was a good thing for women to get into. Just old attitudes and, you know, it was... I mean, my antenna went up right away and I was like, Okay, whatever.

DONIN: Yeah. But not... Oh, he was in the cashier's office, right. But your boyfriend never experienced any kind of troubles that you knew about.

COHEN: Not that I knew about.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Because by then, the black population here had certainly improved from what it had been, say, even ten years earlier, '65 to '75.

COHEN: I mean, there was a black community. He wasn't so much in that community. He didn't sit where the black students sat in the dining hall. He wasn't a member of or live in that house.

DONIN: That frat house, yeah. The Shabazz House.

COHEN: Okay. I mean we went in there once or twice for a party. But he wasn't there frequently. We both were economics majors. He worked, he worked really hard; he was brilliant. He came here when he was 16.

- DONIN: Wow!
- COHEN: And he was a runner, he was a sprinter. He was on the track team.
- DONIN: Oh, yeah.
- COHEN: He was busy.
- DONIN: Right. So back to who your sort of community was. So it evolved and changed. So by the time you graduated, who would you have called your—how would you have described your community?
- COHEN: You know, it's funny because the people that I'm friends with now from my class, I wasn't really friendly with here. I mean, a couple from North Mass, but they're not even my best friends. My best friend from Dartmouth—I don't know if we can say names?
- DONIN: Oh, sure. Yeah.
- COHEN: Sova Fisher. Her last name was Pheng, her maiden name. Sova Pheng Fisher. We became good friends after Dartmouth. We got to know each other in the French department 'cause I was a big [John] Rassias, whatever, aficionado. Is that the word I want?
- DONIN: Yeah.
- COHEN: Student of John Rassias.
- DONIN: So he was one of your professors, yeah?
- COHEN: Oh, yeah. He and Claudia Card, I learned so much from. I met Sova doing one of the plays. And then another good friend of mine, Gwen Kujala Stein, is a '79; we're in touch on Facebook sporadically. But we were pretty close the years after Dartmouth. A lot of people moved to New York, Boston or New York, after Dartmouth. I went to Boston for one year and then moved to New York when I broke up with the Dartmouth boyfriend. Anyway, so there was sort of a community of alumni in New York, where I had some friends that I hadn't really been friends with on campus.
- DONIN: So your Dartmouth community sort of changed after you graduated.

- COHEN: It's kept changing. And now, partly because of Facebook—I did want to point that out, because people on Facebook aren't necessarily ones we were friends with as undergraduates.
- DONIN: Right, right.
- COHEN: But it's a great way to keep up, and a lot of barriers have come down. And I know at my last reunion, which was the 30th, everyone was talking about—whether it was totally true or not—they were talking about all those cliques and all those groups are gone now and we're all just in the same class. And I do find that some of the people who maybe wouldn't have spoken to me or I wouldn't have spoken to in my undergraduate years, I can now pretty easily, and they listen, and it's nice.
- DONIN: Life is a great leveler of people, I think.
- COHEN: Yeah. We're mature—maybe a little too mature at this point.
- DONIN: Right, right. Well, speaking of that, of people you wouldn't have spoken to, you know, one of the lenses we're looking at to sort of describe people's experiences here—that we're looking through, excuse me—to describe people's experiences here, is whether you experienced moments of feeling like an outsider here. How difficult it is sometimes to get established here and find your community.
- COHEN: Yeah. I remember one of the truisms that people would say—and they said this when I was an undergraduate—is that part of going through Dartmouth is feeling like you don't belong at Dartmouth.
- DONIN: As a woman, you mean?
- COHEN: No, anyone, at different times I guess.
- DONIN: Many people come here—
- COHEN: And I also... I do have the love/hate relationship with Dartmouth that a lot of people have, the complex relationship. You know, I resent the Greek system. In some ways I resent the ultraconservative side, but we'll leave that out of the conversation. I remember when I was a senior, not only did a few sororities come to campus....
- DONIN: Oh, they did. That's right. Yeah.

COHEN: I didn't know about this 'til afterward, but some women in my class went and started...I think they started a women's secret society.

DONIN: Oh, yeah.

COHEN: Which to me is elitism on elitism and shouldn't exist. But who am I to say?

DONIN: But aren't they just trying to act like the men?

COHEN: I guess so. But what are these secret societies about? You know, we can't know because we're not the privileged ones to be in them. I don't know.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: What good do they do?

DONIN: Yeah, that's the ultimate insider operation, isn't it?

COHEN: Uck! Yeah.

DONIN: And there are a number of them now.

COHEN: There are? I don't know. I mean, I know that there were a few.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

COHEN: There's a couple listed in my yearbook, which I didn't even know.

DONIN: I was interested that they list the members in them.

COHEN: Yeah.

DONIN: 'Cause I thought they were secret.

COHEN: I know. Go figure. I don't know. [Laughs]

DONIN: Yeah...yeah.

COHEN: Maybe it's just a tradition that somehow got started at some Ivy League school way back when, and it hasn't died. I don't know what

good they do. Do they go around doing community service? I mean, I don't know.

DONIN: I think some of them do. Yeah.

COHEN: Alright. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: I do. But I don't know that much about them 'cause they're secret. [Chuckles.]

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Right.

DONIN: So did your experience here sort of, having your mind opened up and educated about politics and philosophy, did that...I mean that must have really changed your view of the world.

COHEN: I think I grew up.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: I think I had a pretty narrow view. I mean, when I was in high school, I did, in light of what's come out in the press this week, I did want to go to Dartmouth partly to find a husband. I knew I wanted to get married and have kids, which I did.

DONIN: Right.

COHEN: And I wanted to raise my kids. I wanted to be a mother. If you asked me when I was a kid growing up what I wanted to be when I grew up, a mommy. My sister, no; she was aghast. She never wanted to be a mother. She's single to this day. But I wanted to be a mom and bake the cupcakes and bring them into school, and I did. [Laughs] But, yeah, I would say my social group kept evolving, and part of that's because of the Dartmouth Plan, I guess.

DONIN: Did you do any study abroad?

COHEN: I did. I went to France.

DONIN: Oh, you said that. Right. Yeah.

COHEN: With the Foreign Study Program.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And you did your sophomore summer?

- COHEN: I did—yes. Sophomore summer. I also did a second summer. Because if you did a second summer, you could take two classes and only pay for two. And the same thing with senior spring. If you stayed for senior spring—‘cause a lot of people were out of here as soon as they finished their requirements—if you stayed, you could take two classes and pay for two. And so I did that. It’s nice taking two classes.
- DONIN: Yeah. It’s a nice schedule.
- COHEN: Yep.
- DONIN: So this love/hate relationship that you have, does it have anything to...does that impact at all your sense of how this experience changed you over time?
- COHEN: No. But I have to say the love/hate relationship was at its peak when my daughter wanted to come to Dartmouth and wasn’t accepted.
- DONIN: Oh, I see, yeah.
- COHEN: And I did have some love/hate issues before that. But she knew about Dartmouth, and she was interested in a health career—after doing a lot of dance. She was a very advanced ballet dancer and was in a youth pre-professional company over these years. And I was a dance mom. I also have a son, by the way; we can talk about him later ...he’s totally not a Dartmouth type of person. He went to NYU Film School.
- But anyway, my daughter had some injuries over the years of her dancing and became interested in a medical profession. She joined our local first aid squad when she was 16. But meanwhile she looked online, and she found that Dartmouth has a summer camp for high school students interested in health careers; it’s a one-week session. So she attended when she was 15, and she’s been working for them ever since. And now she’s coming to the program, TDI, The Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice. She’ll be matriculating in July and graduating next June, in one year. It’s a very fast, intense master’s program, four terms in a row. So she’s very happy about that.
- DONIN: You must be delighted.

COHEN: Oh, yeah. I'm very proud.

DONIN: Yeah.

COHEN: I'm kind of sad that she won't be spending that much time here on campus. Most of their classes are more in the direction of the hospital.

DONIN: Right, right.

COHEN: But that's fine with her, and she'll have her Dartmouth degree.

DONIN: So has she also been imbibed with this sort of Dartmouth lore from you?

COHEN: Yes. I mean she did want to come here. She applied early decision and was deferred. She didn't get in. I do alumni interviewing, so I know that some of her grades were not what they could have been. She probably took too many AP courses and didn't get As in all of them. But she's now learned how to work.

She's a very hard worker, and she's.... and I have to say, though—I still wrestle with this—doing the alumni interviewing, seeing some of the students who get in and who don't, it's very tough. I mean, my daughter would have been a phenomenal Dartmouth student. She has been on the dean's list at Bates. She doesn't drink and party. Boy, if they could just have a check box on their application form for that: Do you plan to drink when you go to college? I mean some don't really get into that 'til they get to college. But you know what? I felt like writing a letter to admissions, you know. For all of the—whatever, I don't know what word to use; I want to use—duds or clunkers that you accepted and that are drinking their way through Dartmouth, here you could have had this person who really wanted to come, whose heart was here, and she didn't get in. So she's gone to another college, and it's been great for her. She's doing them credit.

DONIN: And she's thriving.

COHEN: Yes.

DONIN: Right. It's probably harder for you than it is for her.

- COHEN: Oh, yeah. I mean I remember hearing that a lot about kids growing up and trying to go to private school for high school or even the younger grades, and the parents are more upset for years when they don't get in. The kids just, you know, don't look back and go forward. I mean, it turns out Bates is the perfect school for her. It's been a great four years.
- DONIN: But that's the love side of Dartmouth. You really wanted one of your children to go here.
- COHEN: Yes.
- DONIN: Right. Why is that? Nobody can explain it. [Laughs]
- COHEN: I guess it's just this sense of loyalty and family, you know.
- DONIN: And for you especially because your father went here, and your parents were, you know, married here.
- COHEN: From the Upper Valley.
- DONIN: And from the Upper Valley. So you have really deep roots, more than just the fact of attending Dartmouth, the fact of their connection to it as well. Well, your daughter's carrying it on.
- COHEN: Yeah, she'll be here. [Laughs]
- DONIN: She'll have a Dartmouth degree.
- COHEN: She's even already talking about looking for a job, after she graduates. She's still toying with, you know, will she go to medical school? Will she become a nurse practitioner? Will she go into something administrative? And as one of my business school professors once told me, it doesn't matter what you do before you're 30. I say it doesn't matter what you do ever. So you can always switch, right? [Laughter]
- DONIN: So do you think Dartmouth's location impacts anybody's experience, and did it impact yours?
- COHEN: Oh, I loved the location.
- DONIN: Its remoteness and its....

- COHEN: Not so much the remoteness, just the hills, the pine trees, the air, the buildings.
- DONIN: Did you consider yourself an outdoorsy person at that time?
- COHEN: Not particularly. But I was as much as any other kid who grew up in New England. I mean, we rode bikes, we hiked—
- DONIN: Skiing?
- COHEN: We skied, we went to the ocean.
- DONIN: Skating?
- COHEN: Skated. My mother always took us skating.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Did you do any of that here?
- COHEN: I did. I took ski lessons freshman year.
- DONIN: Oh, yeah.
- COHEN: I took the bus out to the Skiway, which I also tell applicants: You can take ski for gym.
- DONIN: Yeah. [Chuckles]
- COHEN: I skated on Occom Pond a couple of times. I used to run, I would jog down past, you know, over the golf course, down along the water, and back up. Even out by what was the ski jump, and back into town.
- DONIN: Oh, yeah.
- COHEN: Yeah, we were outdoors a lot.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- COHEN: But Dartmouth Outing Club, no. I mean, I have not climbed Mount Moosilauke. I didn't do my freshman trip; so how could I have climbed Moosilauke? And I still want to do that. Some year at reunion. Maybe next reunion I'll do that.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I assume they offer that.

COHEN: They do. You have to go for the day, and you have to leave early in the morning. But if I'm gonna do it, I've gotta just do it.

DONIN: Yep. That is definitely part of the Dartmouth experience, I think. Is there anything else you wanted to... Any more stories?

COHEN: Let's see. I wanted to mention that I was in the Big Sister Program at Dartmouth, and my little sister was a ten-year-old who lived in Hanover. So I was 19. I'm still in touch with her. We've been in and out of touch over the years. So now she's 40-something.

DONIN: Wonderful!

COHEN: She was the one who actually got me onto Facebook. Not that that's anything to be proud of particularly. But it was because she was on there that I did that. She's of a little bit younger generation.

DONIN: So this was through the Tucker Foundation?

COHEN: Yeah.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Great.

COHEN: I started that in freshman year, and that was, I don't know, an activity that I did that I really enjoyed.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Were you able to, in terms of your friend groups—speaking of friend groups—were you able to have guy friends as opposed to....

COHEN: Yeah.

DONIN: Did everybody appear to be, you know, a potential husband, or were you able to—

COHEN: Oh, no, no. During my freshman year, I met a woman who was a sophomore, and we were talking about what we were going to major in and careers. And she really got me thinking, You've got to think what you want to do when you graduate. You've gotta work towards going into something where you can get a job. The whole husband thing was gone once I got here.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: Really. I mean....

DONIN: And so you were able to establish friendships with guys.

COHEN: Yes.

DONIN: 'Cause I should think it would be pretty lonely otherwise; there just weren't that many women.

COHEN: Well, but that being said, there were so many women in my class, 250 of us, so many I still have never met.

DONIN: Right. How was it in the classroom?

COHEN: I don't really remember... There was one time in an economics class, and this was another time I felt it was a little bit of a sexist incident. It was a seminar, and they were talking about some research project, and they kept getting a weird result from this research project because every 28 days something would happen with the data. They could see this 28-day pattern. And the professor said he...they could only think of two things that had a 28-day pattern: the cycles of the moon and women's cycles. And I felt very uncomfortable. It was like, Why are we talking about that? It had to do with changing researchers with every few weeks or something. I don't know. But that made me uncomfortable 'cause everyone thought that was so funny.

DONIN: Yeah.

COHEN: I mean, overall my experience with the professors, with students, it was fine, really, other than some incidents that we all were on the alert for. It wasn't as bad as what some other people went through.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Well, you know, as you say, you were outnumbered two to one—three to one.

COHEN: Three to one, yeah.

DONIN: And I can imagine that that could feel threatening sometimes.

COHEN: I didn't feel threatened. I think I had a pretty good level of self-esteem from my parents. Having a big sister, maybe. No, I didn't feel threatened.

DONIN: That's good. So any more notes there?

COHEN: I just... Let's see. I did want to mention the song, "Men of Dartmouth," which was the *alma mater*. At graduation—and I wrote this up in a letter to the alumni magazine a couple of years after I graduated, and they published it—they were talking about changing the *alma mater*. And during graduation when we stood to sing it, I stood up out of respect for the school, but I didn't link arms and rock back and forth, and I didn't sing it. And I felt like John Kemeny was staring right at me. I mean, maybe he was, maybe he wasn't. But I'm so glad they changed it.

I don't know when they changed it. But when we came back for our—'79—25th reunion—so that's already, I don't know, eight, nine years ago— my classmates still sang "Men of Dartmouth." And I was just appalled. I got up, and I said something: "How are we dating ourselves here, people? This is unconscionable. This song is now 'Dear Old Dartmouth.' We have to learn it." And I sent the words into the newsletter a few times. The last time we had a reunion, some of the powers that be sort of downplayed that. But we had a memorial service, and the words to "Dear Old Dartmouth" were printed, so that's what we sang—or most of us sang anyway.

DONIN: Right.

COHEN: And I was privileged to go on a couple of the Dartmouth travel trips with my husband.

DONIN: Oh! Great.

COHEN: We went to one in... The first one we went to was Greece and Turkey, and Professor Rassias was on board the ship with his wife, Mary, before she passed away. And it was awesome. That was three or four years ago.

DONIN: Oh, fantastic!

COHEN: So two years ago we went to the Amalfi coast with a Dartmouth trip, and both of these times I was maybe not quite but almost the youngest alumna. And there were only a few alumna—alumnae—going on these trips because most people are a little bit older or retired. But there were a few women. In fact, one of my old roommates was on the Greece one. So in Italy we were talking

about singing the songs the last night. And I said to these more senior male alumni, "Did you know it's now 'Dear Old Dartmouth?'" And I read the words, "as sister stands by brother," and somebody yelled, "Jesus Christ!" This is two years ago. I mean, I couldn't believe it. I don't know. But what are you gonna do?

DONIN: The littlest thing.

COHEN: Yeah. But they did sing it. They sort of stumbled their way through it. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Grudgingly.

COHEN: [Laughs] Yeah.

DONIN: Well, it's been said that, you know, the older classes are having...had a much harder time with this whole coeducation thing—until, of course, one of their own granddaughters was allowed in.

COHEN: Or daughters.

DONIN: Right, right, daughters or granddaughters. So that doesn't actually surprise me. I mean it would surprise me, though, that your classmates are resisting it.

COHEN: I know. But that's what we sang when we were here. But still, why would they resist it? I don't know.

DONIN: So do you have any memories of interacting with John Kemeny?

COHEN: No, not one on one.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. I guess he wasn't the most warm and fuzzy kind of guy anyway. A great teacher, but...

COHEN: I don't know if he was warm and fuzzy. I mean, he was nice. I respected him tremendously. No, maybe I introduced myself, but I don't remember anything in particular. I'm trying to see if I made notes on anything else.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: Oh, here's a note. Well, for years and years, probably until my kids were applying to college, I was so, I want to say, brainwashed, that Dartmouth is the only college that mattered, the only college that counted. I mean, it's really taken me an effort to open my mind and to realize that the education everywhere is pretty much the same. I mean, I've let go of that somewhat, that Dartmouth is the best school and the only one that matters.

DONIN: It's taken you a long time.

COHEN: Yeah. When one of my good Dartmouth friend's son was applying to college—he's a year older.... No, wait. I think he was a year behind my son. Anyway, her son, he ended up—he was a Dartmouth Class of '12. He wanted to go to Columbia University. He applied early decision and was deferred or waitlisted. So he ended up being waitlisted at Columbia, accepted to Dartmouth, accepted in a couple of other places and waitlisted at a few others. And he didn't really want to come to Dartmouth. He wanted to go to Columbia. He wanted to move to New York City, and that was his dream. But they didn't know if they should take the chance waiting to see if he gets off the waiting list. So should he go to XYZ university?

And my girlfriend emailed some of us and said, "Do you think it's important that he get an Ivy League education?" And I wrote back, "Ivy League education, what does that mean? Education's the same everywhere. It's what you make of it; it's the classes you take. It's the professors you have. There's nothing special about an Ivy League education." I mean, I know that now. I didn't believe it then, but I know it now. So he ended up coming to Dartmouth.

And again, why does a kid who didn't even want to come here end up coming when my daughter, who would have torn her teeth out to come here, couldn't get in? Who knows? But he came, she didn't. But anyway... That's life.

DONIN: That's frustrating.

COHEN: Well, in some ways it's a path or there's karma or destiny or whatever. But he came here, and he liked it. He's now working in New York City. But anyway... So that, again, helped me to see, you know, what is the big benefit of... I mean, what is special about the education? I don't know. It's a great education, but so is it at a lot of other places.

DONIN: Sure.

COHEN: Most other places.

DONIN: Right. But I think, you know, the experience you had is different than the experience that they're having now.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: Because you were one of those early classes that had to acclimate to this scene where you were outnumbered, you know, three to one.

COHEN: Well, we were ready for it. I mean, we wanted to come here.

DONIN: Right.

COHEN: So...

DONIN: The timing was perfect for you.

COHEN: Yes.

DONIN: Perfect. Okay, Sue. This was great.

COHEN: Thank you. It was very interesting.

DONIN: If you think of anything else, we can...

COHEN: I feel like I was all over the map, and I apologize for that. But I guess that's the way the conversation goes. [Laughs]

DONIN: That's the way these conversations go. Absolutely. Let me just check this list here. Looks like...yeah. Okay. I'll turn off the recorder here.

COHEN: Thank you.

[End of Interview]

