

Peter Cornelius
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
August 23, 2013

DONIN: Today is Friday, August 23rd, 2013. My name is Mary Donin. We are here in the Treasure Room of Baker Library with— and I want to use your official title. What's your official title? Patrolman?

CORNELIUS: I'm actually night security.

DONIN: Night security [officer], Peter Cornelius. Is that right?

CORNELIUS: That's correct.

DONIN: Okay, Pete, so just to sort of get a picture of who you are and how you ended up at Dartmouth, tell us how long you worked here and how it is you initially learned about Dartmouth and started working here.

CORNELIUS: Okay. I've been here—actually in September will be 13 years.

DONIN: Oh!

CORNELIUS: Yeah. It was September of 2000 when I started, so we're getting pretty close to actually my 13th—

DONIN: So you've already had your ten-year—

CORNELIUS: Yeah, I have.

DONIN: Gotten your 10-year award.

CORNELIUS: Yep.

DONIN: Or whatever.

CORNELIUS: Yep.

DONIN: Oh, cool!

CORNELIUS: My four-weeks' vacation.

DONIN: Oh, yeah.

CORNELIUS: Yeah.

DONIN: Let's talk about the important—that's right. [Laughs.] So how did you know about Dartmouth?

CORNELIUS: Okay. So my wife has worked here since 1989.

DONIN: Oh, I didn't know that.

CORNELIUS: Yeah. She works in development. And—I'll try to keep this concise as I can. I've—Before I came to Dartmouth, I always worked in warehousing and I worked for a huge, probably the biggest produce chain or grocery chain in the Northeast.

DONIN: Wow.

CORNELIUS: And I worked in Massachusetts, Hatfield, Massachusetts. Originally I worked in White River Junction, and the company expanded, and it was either Brattleboro or Hatfield, Massachusetts. And, because I had done produce all the time I was there, they offered me a position as a produce inspector to go there. So I went to Hatfield, and I was a produce inspector for—I forget now exactly when I started as a produce inspector. Um, and I did that I think roughly for about—the first three years, they put me up in a hotel, so it wasn't a problem because it was 200 miles a day round trip if I was driving it, so originally I stayed in a—they put me up in a hotel on the days that I worked. I worked three to four days a week, still 40 hours. And it lasted for about three years, give or take.

And then budget stuff always changed, and they were, like, "Oh, sorry, we can't do the hotel anymore." So I was kind of on my own. So I stayed with my brother-in-law for a little bit, who lived in Brattleboro. That saved the trip a little bit. But I felt... like—He never complained, but I just felt—you know, he has a full family. It was just a pain. So I decided, *I'm just gonna drive home. I'm gonna gear myself.* So for about six years, I drove 200 miles a day—

DONIN: [Sharp intake of breath.]

CORNELIUS: —back and forth from Hartland, Vermont, to Hatfield, Mass.

DONIN: Unbelievable.

CORNELIUS: And I loved my job there, so it didn't really—I guess—now I look back at it, and I'm, like, *How did I do that?!* When I drive—we go to South Carolina on vacation every year, and we always go by the exit I used, and I'm thinking, *How did I—*but you do what you have to do. And I loved my job, so—but it got to a point where I was trying to get—like, I drove in the worst weather you could imagine. You know, it was year 'round.

DONIN: Down 91 in the winter.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, it was terrible. I mean, I went off the road I don't know how many times. The interstate was closed I don't know how many times. You know, it was just that type of stuff. And then I'd be so exhausted because I worked in a warehouse and it was, at best, 35 degrees the whole time I was there—and it just makes you tired. And so you gave me a nice warm vehicle, and in about an hour—you know, you used to just kind of—so it got to a point where either I was going to kill myself or somebody else on the road, 'cause I would pull into my driveway and my wife would find me a couple of times just asleep in my truck.

DONIN: You couldn't even get out of the car.

CORNELIUS: Because I was so exh- —I get home, and I'm, like, *I am here. I made it.* And I just put my head back and out I went. But I had to turn around and be back to work—you know. So my wife had been on me. She didn't want to move to Hatfield. She loves Dartmouth and she loves her job, so—and my kids did not want to move to Massachusetts in that area. So I more or less, to appease everybody, because my wife says, "Just apply up at Dartmouth." And there was always custodial positions and not anything better than a custodial position, but I'm like, *I worked hard to be a produce inspector.* Like, I worked with the USDA. I was trained by the USDA and I really was kind of geared that way.

But after a lot of thought, it was the right thing to do, so to appease everybody, I said, "I'll apply. I'll just do it." Not really thinking I would get a position. And Bill Flannigan—I'll never forget. He was my supervisor then or the supervisor for FO&M. Called me up and offered me the position.

DONIN: Fantastic. So you knew him ahead of time?

CORNELIUS: I knew him from a friend of a friend type of—and that's how they—it's one of those—you know, getting into Dartmouth, especially with facilities, you need to sort of know somebody. It helps to know somebody. And they say, "This guy's a great worker." 'Cause I had never done custodial work. I didn't even know—I knew what a mop was, but I didn't know—

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CORNELIUS: They handed me this thing called a mini-mop. I'm, like, *What do I—do I push to do it?* You know.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CORNELIUS: I really did. And I was very— So, he offered me the position, and I knew if I turned it down I would never have another chance. It was—if you get an opportunity to get into Dartmouth, you take it. So I—it was hard. It was really, really hard, one of the hardest decisions I ever made. And I took the position, and that was, like I said, back in September of 2000.

It was very—it was very odd for me to come here. I'd never gone to college, so I had no past of... you know, like, what it was like to be at college, so it was very—

DONIN: Did it feel strange to you?

CORNELIUS: Very strange, yeah. It wasn't what I was used to because I had always worked in warehousing, from the time I got out of school right up until that point, and it was a whole different environment for me, where we were always told in the warehouse, more or less, "Time is money," so the more you do, the more the company makes, and nobody drags their feet. And I get to Dartmouth, which is a whole different—you

know, Dartmouth's not here to make money. It's not a production warehouse. It was a 360.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: So remember I was talking about, like, being an outsider — that's when I totally felt like an outsider. I remember hearing—it seems strange, but the Baker Bells—you know, when they went off, it would be at the hours, and I'm, like,—it was really weird to me. It kind of put it—I'm, like, *Wow, I'm on a college campus*. But I didn't...

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

CORNELIUS: So there's little things like that that stand out.

DONIN: Did you work the night shift?

CORNELIUS: I did, yeah. I think I started out working—I think I did 10 at night until 6:30 in the morning, so I did the full night shift.

DONIN: Wow.

CORNELIUS: And then I just got lucky and got on a second shift, so it made it a little bit more normal.

DONIN: Is the second shift during the day?

CORNELIUS: No, that's 2 p.m. to 10:30.

DONIN: Oh, so at least you're sleeping at night.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, it was a good, happy medium. And then my squad leader left—you're probably familiar—you have a squad leader and then—

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: Okay. And Bill Flannigan encouraged me to apply for that. And I'm, like, "But, Bill, I've only been here a couple of months. How can I tell somebody—I don't even know what *I'm* doin' yet."

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

CORNELIUS: And he said, “No, no, there’s more to it than that” and blah, blah, blah. So I did—I talked to the people that I worked with, and I says, “Look, I’ll take the position,” because I knew it was a wise thing for me to do—

DONIN: Sure.

CORNELIUS: —in the long run, because I—you know, I didn’t know what I wanted to do at Dartmouth, but I knew there was a lot of potential here.

DONIN: Mm-hm.

CORNELIUS: So um... so I took the position and everybody worked with me. I think a lot of it—as you know, I’m easy-going and everybody helped me out, and we all worked together and...

DONIN: Is that when you started working at Rauner?

CORNELIUS: That was before Rauner, yeah. I slowly worked myself to first shift. I just kept—

DONIN: Kept getting promoted.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, more or less.

DONIN: Those were promotions, right?

CORNELIUS: Yep, yep.

DONIN: Well, they knew quality when they saw it.

CORNELIUS: Thank you. [Chuckles.] Yeah.

DONIN: Truly. Yeah.

CORNELIUS: I just worked hard. I knew—you know, I wanted to make the most—I’m not getting any younger, so —

DONIN: Yeah. For sure.

CORNELIUS: —I definitely wanted to make the most out of it. And let’s see, I was a custodian—I think after—I get moved around so

much. I worked on the same wing as Safety and Security. So I got to know everybody in Safety and Security, including Harry Kinne, who was the director.

DONIN: Yep.

CORNELIUS: And because I probably have the gift of gab a little bit,—

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CORNELIUS: —and I always used to talk to Harry, and just—he’s a great guy. And I could talk to him comfortably, and uh—great conversations with him. And a position came up, and he encouraged me to apply for it. And it was the same thing: I’m, like, *I’ve never done any security*. But the same thing: It’s not a lot of what it is. He—you know, “Dartmouth will train you in the right way.” And I’m always willing to be trained.

DONIN: So was this to be a night security officer?

CORNELIUS: Exactly. Yeah.

DONIN: Wow.

CORNELIUS: Yeah.

DONIN: So that’s a big promotion, too.

CORNELIUS: That was a *big* promotion, to go from that—

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: —from working FO&M, custodial, to that.

DONIN: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

CORNELIUS: And there’s a lot in between there; I’m just giving you a brief history of how it worked. But had I not—I look back on it now, and I’m, like, *Wow! There’s so many things that came together at Dartmouth that I didn’t plan on*. And the biggest thing: I love working for security. It fits me perfect. I like talking to people. I love talking to different students. And I’ve learned now, um, there’s so many walks of life here, and I find it so fascinating to talk to, you know, somebody that’s

had everything in life and their perspective, to people that are here working to get them through every day. I've seen, from the people that—the students that I'm thinking, *How did they get here?* Not in a bad way, but some of the things I've seen them do, and I don't know how many I've said, "You couldn't have possibly been brought up this way."

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CORNELIUS: That type of thing.

DONIN: Yeah. But you're seeing the diversity that we're trying to document in this project, —

CORNELIUS: Right.

DONIN: —there isn't one kind of Dartmouth student. Like, there isn't one kind of Dartmouth employee.

CORNELIUS: No. No. We all—I've found—and that's why I feel like I'm—I know when I was reading the questions with community, that's where we feel like more community or part of the community because we all have a common ground where we're all—whatever we do, we all sort of live, work and breathe Dartmouth. We all do. We all come here, and whether you're a student or faculty or staff— most everybody has a—[Sighs.] Down deep, whether they admit it or not, you know, is proud to work here.

DONIN: Sure.

CORNELIUS: Or be here or be part of Dartmouth, so we all have a common base of... I don't know how best to explain it...

DONIN: Yeah. Well, it's a common—we're all bonding together—

CORNELIUS: Yeah. Yeah.

DONIN: —over the fact that we are serving Dartmouth in some way or another.

CORNELIUS: Exactly.

DONIN: And we're all advancing the mission, which is to get these kids educated and get them out of here into the world—

CORNELIUS: Right.

DONIN: —and watch the next batch come in.

CORNELIUS: Yup. It's—and I've—

DONIN: And you, especially, see that.

CORNELIUS: Yes. And now I feel like it's—it's actually pretty neat to look back at everything, and I feel, as—with security, we are—we pretty much know what makes Dartmouth tick. I know—if I knew then what I do now, wow! I had no idea really what Dartmouth is all about.

DONIN: So I've interviewed one other security officer, Dennis Brown, and—

CORNELIUS: Oh, Dennis is—yeah.

DONIN: He's the best.

CORNELIUS: He *is* the best.

DONIN: Besides you. [Chuckles.] And um, he said something I thought was really—really brought me up short, but seemed so true, which is Dartmouth is a very different place during the day than it is during the night.

CORNELIUS: Yes.

DONIN: It changes completely.

CORNELIUS: Yep.

DONIN: And those of us who are lucky enough to be here during the day and see the students sort of on their best behavior, so to speak,—

CORNELIUS: Right.

DONIN: —um, going about their day, getting their work done, going to classes, coming to the library, eating—you know, behaving like they're supposed to.

CORNELIUS: Right. Yup.

DONIN: And then suddenly the lights go out, and you guys see a whole different world.

CORNELIUS: We do.

DONIN: And how did you adjust to that when you, yourself, were not a college student and were feeling sort of funny when you came here in the beginning? Was that intimidating to you? Was that, like, scary for you to see these kids—

CORNELIUS: Yes, especially as a security officer, where I wasn't sure—we were trained for everything, but they can train you until you're blue in the face, but you have to actually be in that scenario where you walk into a fraternity house with 400 people, and it just—controlled chaos in some facets of it. And when I was an officer—I started out as an officer and I had to do party checks, and so I had to go right to the bar and the whole nine—um, so, yeah, it was—you always walk—I would walk in and do the best I could with making sure there'd be good visual and to make sure, for the most part, everybody is safe because that's our job, is to make sure—it's a snapshot of that evening, is what we do. We go in twice a night to check their kegs or whatever they have, if they have canned beer. It's always one source.

So, yeah, at first it was very hard for me to digest because it's not what you—during the day, you see everybody going to class, doing what they're supposed—You think they just go to their dorms at night and study. And there are the students that do that. And then there's the students that do like to party while they're here. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: The whole range of—

CORNELIUS: Yes.

DONIN: —student behavior.

- CORNELIUS: Yes. So, yeah, it's—
- DONIN: Were they respectful of you? *Are they respectful of you?*
- CORNELIUS: Very respectful, yeah. There's—
- DONIN: I mean, obviously alcohol probably makes them not so respectful,—
- CORNELIUS: Yes.
- DONIN: —but generally speaking.
- CORNELIUS: Yeah. Always the brothers of the house would always bend over backwards to help you out if you had to shut down a party or close it down or get rid of some people in the house or whatever. Yeah, very helpful. Not always, but I'd say 95 percent of the time, um, because sometimes, obviously, they don't—you know, they don't want to acknowledge that there is a problem in the house, um... [Sighs.]
- DONIN: What do you say to people who feel that the sororities and the fraternities um, are sort of a bad influence on a number of different levels, but the one that we're interested in mostly is that it makes a lot of kids feel like they don't belong because they're not—
- CORNELIUS: Not part of the Greek system.
- DONIN: —part of that system.
- CORNELIUS: Right.
- DONIN: Yeah.
- CORNELIUS: I guess I can see that. I personally—I don't think the Greek system is a bad thing. It's part of Dartmouth and it always will be part of Dartmouth, uh, good or bad. And there's good and bad in both. But I do think, just from what I—as far as being a student and, say, you're a brother or a sister or a fraternity, it's a strong bond, and you can see where—so that's a tough question because I've seen a lot of good and I've seen a fair share of bad things that. And obviously

everybody's heard some of the stuff that's going on at fraternities and sororities—

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: —and stuff.

DONIN: So did you ever—you said when you came here, it was a big adjustment to you because you'd—it was a totally different kind of job that you were doing, and you were in an atmosphere that was sort of unfamiliar to you, being on a college campus.

CORNELIUS: Right.

DONIN: How were you accepted by your peers, the people you were working with, especially when you started out as custodian and you immediately got promoted? Did that put you in a difficult position, or did you—

CORNELIUS: You know, not really. I always try to be honest with—I told everybody, "Look, we're all here to do a good job. Let's make the best out of it. It's not like we all want to be here, so let's try to just find some common ground." So I would always get the respect of everybody and I would never make anybody do anything that I wouldn't do, and that was from working as a custodian to working in Security. I would take the worst of calls, I guess some of the most horrendous calls, or I'd take the best calls—you know, it's— So, yeah, I never had a problem. I never felt like I didn't have the respect. I just did things the way I always do.

And with, like, the students and stuff, I would just—when I went into a house, I just did things the way I was trained to do. Dartmouth and security—you know, we do have our standard operating procedure. And as long as you follow that, you're always safe, and so I— There's always variances to the whole thing, but there's a good guideline, so I always felt comfortable. And, um, as far as respect, I really never had any problems. You would get challenged a few times, you know, with the students and alcohol. Obviously, they might be a little more vocal than normal and you would always have a few students and the next day they apologize.

They knew what they did, but at the heat of the moment, it's a whole different ballgame.

DONIN: Mm-hm.

CORNELIUS: And Dartmouth students are very smart, and you're dealing with a different caliber of person, and so when I say "challenging," sometimes I'm like, *Whoa! Boy, they caught me off guard* with something they might have said or whatever, but they can hit points that you might not think of, so—

DONIN: Right.

CORNELIUS: —to get out of trouble or whatever, so—

DONIN: That's pretty overwhelming sometimes, isn't it?

CORNELIUS: It is. It keeps you on your toes. And I always say, "Aw,"—or people say, "Oh, you must have seen it all." And I am, like, "I have not seen it all." There's always something that I learn with this job that I—that I—good or bad. Most of it's just entertaining stuff. You know, and, "What were you guys thinking?!"

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CORNELIUS: But I tell them, "You know, I was 18 before, too, so I—you got to kind of put it in perspective.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: So, yeah, the respect thing's a tough—I never really went into anything and tried to earn anybody's respect. I don't know if that's the right—I just did things the way I'm supposed to do, you know?

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: And sometimes when you get thrown in those scenarios, you just—it's just sink or swim.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: You make do. And I enjoy—you couldn't do the security job, or probably any job, if you didn't like what you were doing. You couldn't do it well. And I enjoy my job. I don't hate coming to work. There's days where I'm, like, *Oh, boy, I wouldn't mind watching TV tonight* or something like that. But I don't hate coming to work. I'm not—I hear people that are griping. Sometimes it's just the nature of the way people are.

DONIN: Yep. For sure.

CORNELIUS: But I enjoy coming to work.

DONIN: Do you feel that the sense of community and people belonging here—has that changed over the last 13 years?

CORNELIUS: Um...yes.

DONIN: In what way?

CORNELIUS: When I first started, like, the sense of family was stronger—and I could—This is just my perspective of it. I would say the economic downturn and we had the major layoffs, that really changed gears for every- —it didn't matter what you did here at Dartmouth. And I'm sure you remember, it was an everyday thing where people were—"Who's getting laid off today?" Everybody was running scared. And that was definitely a turning point for Dartmouth, in my opinion. Whereas before, you always had that safe feeling, like, *Oh, I work for Dartmouth. I have nothing to—it doesn't matter what happens in the world; I work for Dartmouth. Dartmouth's not going to close their doors.* It's, you know... And then when that happened, it really turned—changed everything.

DONIN: Shocking.

CORNELIUS: It was. So that's the biggest change, I think. They're headed in the right direction now. And you can talk to most anybody, and they wouldn't even think, *Oh, layoffs?* But a couple of years ago, that was the number one thing.

DONIN: It was hard.

CORNELIUS: It doesn't matter where or who you were working for or what department.

DONIN: And nobody was safe from it.

CORNELIUS: Nobody was safe. Yes.

DONIN: So that whole concept of sort of “Mother Dartmouth”—

CORNELIUS: Yes.

DONIN: —seemed to go out the window.

CORNELIUS: It did, yup.

DONIN: And she was gone.

CORNELIUS: Yup, yup.

DONIN: And nobody was safe anymore.

CORNELIUS: Yup, and I think—you can probably ask anybody that’s been here a long time, it’s true—before that, you wouldn’t even—you were here until—as long as you wanted to be here, until you retired or you found—whatever. You never had to worry about getting laid off. So...

DONIN: Right.

CORNELIUS: And then, like anything, rumorville makes it even worse for people that are saying, “Oh, I heard this department—they’re gonna get rid of the whole thing and redo”—and then when you did see it actually happen—some of the stuff came true, where they would get rid of half of departments or, um, like, with us, as night security, there was at least eight to ten people that just did night security, and we’re down to four now.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: Um, we’ve made do. Is it perfect? No. But we do the best we can. But I can see growth again. You can see it across the board.

DONIN: Recovery. Sure, sure.

CORNELIUS: Yes.

DONIN: But it had an impact.

CORNELIUS: It had a huge impact.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: Yeah. So, that's...

DONIN: Do you think there is one sort of Dartmouth family, or are there separate families between, you know, the staff and the faculty and the students? Or, when you think of Dartmouth, how would you describe the—what the Dartmouth family is? Is it all one big group, one big group, or are they sort of divisions?

CORNELIUS: It's divisions, but everybody has a common goal, common ground. Uh, like, my daughter wanted to come to Dartmouth. I wish she did because she's a smart cookie, but she's...she has different values of somebody—she's, like, "Oh, would I fit in, Dad?" And I says, "Yeah, there's something for everybody at Dartmouth. It doesn't matter what walk of life you came from, what you believe in, your value—whatever. There is a part of Dartmouth for everybody. You will find a place at Dartmouth." So Dartmouth's great community in that respect, where you can—

And then I think anybody—you see two totally different people, but they both had a part of Dartmouth—they're going to have a sense of, you know, of comfort or —

DONIN: That's interesting. So just to put it in another way, all the diverse students that you see, the diverse workers that you see—the thread that ties them all together is the fact that they're all at Dartmouth.

CORNELIUS: Exactly. Yup, yup.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: Because everybody knows—I mean, you'd be hard pressed to find a job in the Upper Valley that literally pays as well as

Dartmouth does, treats you as good as Dartmouth does—
um, benefits, the whole—you know.

DONIN: The whole package. I guess I should ask, first of all: You
encounter students one on one, right?

CORNELIUS: Yes.

DONIN: On your rounds?

CORNELIUS: Yes, yup.

DONIN: You probably see some on a more regular basis than you do
others.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, I've definitely got to know a lot of people, a lot of
students. First hand—and I know that there are students that
don't fit in, but I've never really had to have, like, a
conversation with anybody to—

DONIN: Boost them up or—

CORNELIUS: Yeah. For me, a lot of it is the stress, because Dartmouth—if
you're a student here, the pressure is on to do well. Um, so a
lot of what I talk to a student—around finals and that time,
where they just need somebody to talk to, to vent. I had—
just as a quick thing: When this happened, I didn't think
much of it. I was doing a transport for a student and it was
during finals. This was about, like, five years ago, maybe a
little bit longer.

DONIN: When you say, "doing a transport," does that mean that they
were drunk?

CORNELIUS: No, no, no. They just wanted a safety transport.

DONIN: Oh, safety transport, yeah.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, safety transport. They were coming from, I think it
was Baker down to the River Cluster, which, as you know, is
a long—

DONIN: Yep, it's a long walk—

CORNELIUS: —walk in the dark. And anytime somebody is not comfortable, where they—

DONIN: They can call you?

CORNELIUS: Yep.

DONIN: Oh, wow.

CORNELIUS: Now we have Safe Ride, and it's student run, but back in the day, it was just—and we still do that when Safe Ride isn't going. So this student—we had a van then. She gets in the van, and I could tell she was upset, and so I just—not thinking much of it, I was, like, “Everything fine?” And I always offered, you know, college counseling services if... I says, “There's always somebody here to talk to. She, like, “Aw, I don't need anything like that.” But I could tell she was upset, so almost an hour had passed I had been talking to her. Didn't even think anything of it. And what it boiled down to was she was so stressed out. She was a freshman, and it was her first—she had no idea—she was overwhelmed by finals.

DONIN: Oh, yeah.

CORNELIUS: And she felt like she was pretty much going to bomb everything, and it was just too much for her to digest. She had too many different things. She was, like, “How am I gonna learn this?” And I said little things like, you know, “You got—you made it to Dartmouth. You can do it. You made it this far.” I says, “You're a freshman, but Dartmouth doesn't just take anybody.” And I don't remember, honestly, everything else we talked, but it was good—it was about an hour.

And maybe a week later, give or take, my sergeant came up to me and said uh—she goes, “Do you remember that student?”—I don't know what her name is. She came up and told her [my sergeant] that she made it through that evening. You know, it was, like, *Who!* That made me feel good.

DONIN: That's great.

CORNELIUS: Yeah.

- DONIN: It seems like you have to be—and this was also the case with Dennis—you all have to learn to be —you have to be multi-talented to be a little bit of, like, psychologist or a therapist—
- CORNELIUS: Yes. More than I have ever thought I could be.
- DONIN: Yeah! And a little bit of an M.D.,—
- CORNELIUS: Right.
- DONIN: —to assess when somebody needs to go to the hospital.
- CORNELIUS: Right, right.
- DONIN: In addition to all the security, sort of policeman kind of responsibilities that you have.
- CORNELIUS: Right. Yeah.
- DONIN: It's a broad set of skills that they teach you, I guess,—
- CORNELIUS: They do.
- DONIN: —and that you learn.
- CORNELIUS: A lot of it's learn as you go, but um, yeah, Dartmouth is great with the training that we get. I could not do this job without the training that Dartmouth has supplied me, without a doubt. They sent us to an academy. So we're well trained in what we do. But a lot of what we do comes from the heart, too. You can't just—you could read off a book and say, "This is the way it's supposed to be." It doesn't always work that way. So...

And my daughter being—she's in the same age as a lot of these kids, so I—
- DONIN: You're familiar with it.
- CORNELIUS: Yeah. So I can kind of put myself—you know, like this girl. This was probably one in the morning. She couldn't call home to talk to somebody. So, um... I didn't think like that

then, but now, after, I was, like, *Wow, that was great*. And for her to take the time to say something after with my sergeant was very nice.

DONIN: It was really great, yeah.

CORNELIUS: Yeah. So there's been little things like that, but that one stands out. So...

DONIN: So do you find most of your interactions in the evening—I mean, is it safe to assume that most of your interactions in the evening are with students, not with faculty, not with staff?

CORNELIUS: Yeah, the majority is with students.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: Yeah. You know, obviously some faculty working late, —

DONIN: Late.

CORNELIUS: —retired faculty, believe it or not—they're here—

DONIN: Really!

CORNELIUS: Yeah. I've run into quite a few retirees.

DONIN: Wandering the halls.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, just working on their special project after they've retired, and you can tell they're very sincere about whatever they're working on, above my ability of even acknowledging what—[Chuckles.] So I've learned a lot in that respect. You know, people are talking like I understand them, but, *Whoo, this is*—you know, X³—some—that type of...

DONIN: Oh, gee. Yeah. Over one's head a little bit.

CORNELIUS: Yes.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: But, yeah, the majority is with the students. I made a point to talk to the students—to make—not really to *make* them talk,

but a lot of times the students won't say much, not that they're intimidated by us, but they won't say much, but once you start talking to them, it's a whole different ballgame. They'll open right up, for the most part. They're always respectful. And then sometimes if they have been drinking, obviously they want to avoid us. Like, I don't know how many times I—you know, I'm night security, so I go through all the buildings. I walk literally five to ten miles a night, and I go through—in a week's time, I go through everything on Dartmouth.

DONIN: You walk five miles a night?

CORNELIUS: Yup, at minimum of five miles a night.

DONIN: That's great exercise.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, I'm getting—that's another reason I love my job, where I—

DONIN: You don't have to go to the gym.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, working nights is terrible for you, but realistically it's probably the best thing for me.

DONIN: You get a workout.

CORNELIUS: Yes. Yep. So...and it is kind of a lonely job sometimes.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: It's just me, so it's great to—

DONIN: Run into students.

CORNELIUS: There's always somebody here to talk to. If it's 11 o'clock at night or 3 in the morning, I'm going to come across somebody on this campus eventually. Um, but uh, the funny thing is that sometimes—like, I'll take the elevator if I go to, like, the fourth floor, and then I'll just walk my way down. And no matter how many times the elevator doors open and a couple of students are there, probably after they've had a few drinks, and they're like, “[Sharp intake of breath] Well, we'll take the stairs.” “No, no, get in!”—you know. So it's just

funny that—and I don't do it to intimidate them. But, you know, it's, like, "Hey, you guys, it's fine." Obviously, if somebody is really intox- —it's a whole different ballgame, which does happen, but usually it isn't. So it's kind of funny to see the reaction. I look back on it now when I was that age, and I didn't realize how guilty you look.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CORNELIUS: If somebody—Say somebody had a 12-pack of beer and they just walk by me like they were supposed to have it, even if they weren't, they were 18—I wouldn't think anything of it. But when somebody stops [imitates someone stopping, with a sharp intake of breath] or they look straight ahead and don't—

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CORNELIUS: The guilt. And I'm sure that when I was that age, too,—but you think, *If I don't look at him, if I don't—they won't*—you know.

DONIN: Right.

CORNELIUS: And I never thought about that till I worked here because I see it, good and bad.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

CORNELIUS: So it's kind of funny.

DONIN: So speaking of belonging—now, when you came here, did you have to join a union? Is there a union?

CORNELIUS: Yeah. Yep.

DONIN: Was that weird for you, or were you already—were you in the union when you were a warehouse worker?

CORNELIUS: No, we were—that *was* kind of weird for me because when I worked in the warehouse, they were very anti-union. They used to actually get us in the break room and—because the warehouse I worked for, they used to take over these—more big chains of grocery stores, which are always all union.

DONIN: Oh.

CORNELIUS: So when they did, obviously the union would come to protest and try to get us to get *with* the union. So to make a long story short, the warehouse I worked for, the grocery chain would basically sit us down and say, “Don’t sign cards. Don’t talk to these people. They’re crazy.” You know, “It’s no good. It’s bad for us. It’s bad for you as a worker.” So I was always programmed, “Whoa! No union.”

Then you come here, and this is the union ...work in facilities, where I started. You basically—you had a choice, but once you went full time, you’re in the union, and just pay your dues. And so it was—yes.

DONIN: Did it make you feel separated from the rest of the workers? Or the rest of the campus?

CORNELIUS: Somewhat, because it felt sometimes, I guess, like maybe we had a few extra privileges that somebody that wasn’t union got.

DONIN: Ah.

CORNELIUS: And maybe that was the way that it was portrayed to us a little bit or the way I took it. But I have no complaints. The union is great. It’s another part of Dartmouth—you know, like, the Greek system is part of Dartmouth. And I think the union has learned to work with Dartmouth and not in a controversial way. They always try to find a happy medium, and uh, good for the workers and—like, as security work, union also.

See, at first I was going to sign up for the union anyways, but it was very weird where I was programmed to not even... Literally you don’t talk to anybody that’s part of the union, and here I am, you know, “Where do I sign my card? When do I pay my dues?”

DONIN: Another change.

CORNELIUS: Yeah.

- DONIN: Just another change.
- CORNELIUS: These are all little things—it was very rough, going way back. When I started, it was hard at first because it was a shock for me to leave what I knew.
- DONIN: Yeah.
- CORNELIUS: I was definitely really out of my comfort zone. But it really didn't take me that long to adjust.
- DONIN: Look how far you've come.
- CORNELIUS: Right. I look back, and I'm, like, *Thirteen years? Where did 13 years go?*
- DONIN: Well, how do you think—how has Dartmouth changed you?
- CORNELIUS: I am definitely more well rounded, without a doubt, which I never would have been, working in a warehouse. There, I dealt with the same people every day, and a truck driver from the West Coast maybe might get a little something different, but there is—yeah, there is no doubt, just from the students, all faculty—whatever Dartmouth brings in makes me a—enriches me.
- DONIN: Well, and it's broadened you.
- CORNELIUS: Yeah.
- DONIN: I mean for all of us, it broadens your view of the world—
- CORNELIUS: Yep.
- DONIN: —because of the different people that you encounter here.
- CORNELIUS: Yes.
- DONIN: And you don't—every night, you're going to get something new.
- CORNELIUS: Right. Exactly. I don't—I just don't know—that's what I love about my job, I don't know what—It could be just a run-of-the-mill, boring night, or we could have the biggest—And I

could tell you some stories of stuff that's happened that I could never have even dreamed up. I wish I *could*, but I don't know if—

DONIN: Right.

CORNELIUS: Yeah. So it is—it's really—it's neat 'cause it's—the job doesn't ever get stale. I learn something almost every day, something different, so I find it very, very exciting.

DONIN: And the stuff that happens to you—it's not necessarily all bad; it's good stuff, too, sometimes.

CORNELIUS: Oh, yes. Yep.

DONIN: Happy stuff.

CORNELIUS: I'd say the good outweighs the bad.

DONIN: Does it?

CORNELIUS: Yes, yes. I mean, we have to have the security, we have to see it all, but the good far outweighs the bad, and we're here to make that bad kind of turn into good [chuckles], if we can.

DONIN: Or keep the bad from happening.

CORNELIUS: Yeah. Yes.

DONIN: Right. So do you think the students—Dartmouth has changed you. How do you think—I mean, you must see the students sort of change and evolve. Do you think they've changed in the 13 years you've been here, or are they sort of the same, or have they—have more different kinds of students been coming on campus over these last years? I mean, that's what we're exploring in this project, is—it's not just the white, rich kids that come to Dartmouth anymore.

CORNELIUS: Right.

DONIN: First of all, there are women,—

CORNELIUS: Right, right.

DONIN: —obviously.

CORNELIUS: Yeah.

DONIN: But people from other countries, who look different, who speak different languages. Do you experience that, yourself, as well, that you meet a lot of different kinds of students, more different kind of students?

CORNELIUS: [No immediate response.]

DONIN: Or maybe it's always been—

CORNELIUS: Yeah, it's always—yeah, nothing really stands out that's changed that much. I think Dartmouth has always been very good about bringing a lot of diversity here.

DONIN: Yep.

CORNELIUS: So I don't think there's any big change of a different type of student that I've seen. It's been pretty standard. I've—it's—I deal with the same—a different student, but maybe the same incident I did two years ago or that type of thing.

DONIN: Right.

CORNELIUS: So there's many times I'm, like, *Whoa! Reality check. Or, I've dealt with this once before.* But uh—it's the same students, you know.

DONIN: And what's your take on—uh, things seem to go in waves here, and this last spring we had a lot of rough situations with the students and racial tensions,—

CORNELIUS: Right.

DONIN: —and the whole thing that happened with the Dimensions program. What's your take on that? Why does that sort of ebb and flow the way it does? You know, things will go along, and the water's calm, and then suddenly it gets all stirred up again. What causes that? And maybe you don't know. It's okay to say you don't know.

CORNELIUS: Yeah. You know, when you're young you want to have a— I've learned, especially working at Dartmouth—I think everybody wants to have a cause, and you have plenty of people to pick from here on this campus that might be part of your cause, and if you get enough people, then they are more sincere about it.

DONIN: That's an interesting—I see that, yeah.

CORNELIUS: Yeah. You can have your view, and then it doesn't go anywhere, but yet you have 50 other people that are, like, "Yeah, that's—this is not right!" And then what's been happening—so I think that's—I don't know. You know, that's just sort of my theory of how things play out.

DONIN: And that's what kids are supposed to do on college campuses.

CORNELIUS: Right. And that's what it is, because we've said I don't know how many times, "Well, what's it going to be?" Because there's going to be something. There's always something that somebody is going to feel very passionate about. And um...I remember—what was it?—two years ago, when—I forget, when they were camping out in New York?

DONIN: Oh, oh, the Occupy movement.

CORNELIUS: Yes, you remember? All of a sudden.

DONIN: And the tent in front of Collis?

CORNELIUS: All of a sudden.

DONIN: Yes. Yes. Right.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, we have a bunch of students—and it was a handful, but it was enough of them that were passionate about their feeling, so, yeah,—

DONIN: You're right: There's always a cause.

CORNELIUS: Yes, and it's not a bad thing. I think it's great for the students to feel that. Right, wrong or indifferent. Um, it's something they'll remember as part of their Dartmouth experience.

“Remember we slept in the tent for two weeks?—or three weeks?” So—yeah.

DONIN: That’s true. I hadn’t looked at it that way, but that’s what they’re here for.

CORNELIUS: Yep. And the Dimensions—you know, that’s still a controversial thing.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: I’m not sure where that’s all going to go.

DONIN: No.

CORNELIUS: And... it’s a tie—you could throw a lot of the views out there on it, but—

DONIN: But these causes that are adopted—they need to have a platform.

CORNELIUS: Right. They have to start somewhere. There has to be a reason for them to do it.

DONIN: Right.

CORNELIUS: And we’ve learned that they don’t just pick something out of the air. There’s a reason that... And so there is—whether it’s a big problem or a little problem, there is some sort of problem that started somewhere, and that’s planting a seed, and then—

DONIN: It grows.

CORNELIUS: Yeah. And sometimes it explodes, and sometimes it kind of...like the Occupy thing that just—it was kind of a big thing, and then it just kind of fizzled out. It was getting close to commencement, I think, and we were wondering, “Is that tent going to—it just doesn’t fit.” And it kind of just went and passed. And Dartmouth’s very good about accepting all of these different things as best they can. I would not want to be in a position to—it’s a tough one.

DONIN: Yep.

- CORNELIUS: We've said that many times, where—and especially in the past year, where so many things have happened, I'm thinking, *Who's the poor soul that had to send that e-mail out?* And it was, like, a weekly thing.
- DONIN: Well, speaking of that, the person who has to be in charge here—how do you think, if at all, that whoever the president is—what kind of impact do they have on the overall atmosphere of the college? I mean, do you think that trickles down to people like us, the workers?
- CORNELIUS: Definitely.
- DONIN: And the students?
- CORNELIUS: Yep, yep. Jim Wright is the only president I really knew, because I think he started pretty much when I started in 2000.
- DONIN: Yes, he'd been here since—he started in '98 [as president].
- CORNELIUS: Right. And so he's the only president I really knew, and he definitely—he was out there. He made the sense of community for Dartmouth 100 percent. I mean, I remember seeing him walk across the Green, shaking people's hands, talking to them. He would go out of his way to stop and talk to us, shake our hand. I know that there were workers—I remember something about him giving, like, baseball tickets to some workers. But he was genuine. Because we cover all the reunions.
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- CORNELIUS: I could hear—obviously, I'd see, like, five of his speeches in a night, and even though he'd say sort of the same thing, it was passionate. It came from the heart and it was sincere. It wasn't out of a book. He was—And when everybody left, they had sort of a warm and fuzzy feeling, I think.
- And then President Kim, who—a very smart man; a different caliber of person, not as personable. You could read *The D* and see the flak that he caught because he just wasn't out there. Like I said, great person, great for Dartmouth, but it

changed—and that was part of the economic downturn, so it was a tough time for him anyways, but you could see where he was trying to fit in, but it wasn't the same.

And I—this is my personal feeling. I think with President Hanlon, picking somebody that has Dartmouth roots is so good for Dartmouth.

DONIN: Yep.

CORNELIUS: And President Jim Kim didn't have Dartmouth roots, so you don't have that feeling. And I feel that way because I've done so many reunions, and I can see how passionate people are, or alumni are, for Dartmouth. And when a Dartmouth alum is talking to you, speaking to you and saying, "If you give to Dartmouth, this is great"—and they feel it, and I've seen some of those checks. So uh—

DONIN: Yeah. There's something about those Dartmouth alums, isn't there?

CORNELIUS: Right. Yep.

DONIN: Something in the air up here; something in the water. I don't know what it is. [Laughs.]

CORNELIUS: So, yeah, definitely the president makes it—I really think—I can see in President Hanlon a lot of Jim Wright. He seems—

DONIN: A lot of the same characteristics.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, same qualities.

DONIN: Yeah.

CORNELIUS: So—

DONIN: I think everybody's looking forward to the inauguration—

CORNELIUS: Yep.

DONIN: —and getting started with—

CORNELIUS: I think...I feel good. I think we're turning a new—a turning point for Dartmouth.

DONIN: Yes. Right.

CORNELIUS: It's been a rocky road for the past few years.

DONIN: Yeah, since 2008, now, isn't it?

CORNELIUS: Yeah.

DONIN: It's five years.

CORNELIUS: Yup. But I still think, at the end of the day, if you ask anybody that works at Dartmouth, the majority are still happy to work here and are proud to work here.

DONIN: Right.

CORNELIUS: Some more than others—but—

DONIN: [Chuckles.] Okay, Officer Cornelius—

CORNELIUS: Okay.

DONIN: You have to get back on the job, so I'm going to turn off the recorder here.

CORNELIUS: Okay, great.

DONIN: Thank you.

[End of interview.]