

Raymond E. Crosby
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
March 25, 2013

DONIN: Today is Monday, March 25, 2013. My name is Mary Donin, and I'm here in the College Center with Ray Crosby, also known as "Collis Ray," an employee of the Dining Services—for how many years, Ray?

CROSBY: Seventeen.

DONIN: Seventeen years. And tell me—so 17 years ago, when you took this job at Dartmouth—how is it you knew about it? Did you have family members who'd worked here before you, or somebody told you about it?

CROSBY: Actually there was a gentleman here, Roland Whitney. He was a long-time friend—I went to school with his kids—who worked at DDS. And Roland put a good word in for me, and that's how I ended up at Dartmouth. Back then it was hard to get in. You had to know somebody or somebody had to know you—one of those deals.

DONIN: Put in a good word for you.

CROSBY: Put in a good word.

DONIN: But did you have a background in food services before?

CROSBY: You could say that. I've been cooking since I was eight years old.

DONIN: Oh, so you loved it.

CROSBY: My mother had two restaurants. I was born into it basically.

DONIN: Yeah. So this was definitely your career of choice.

CROSBY: Yeah. I mean I would have liked to have been a model or something. [Laughter] But you know that's not going to happen. So I had to go to the next best thing, cookin'. As you can tell, I really like cookin'.

- DONIN: Uh-huh. You're good at it.
- CROSBY: It's good. I'm not fancy. I'm not a big certified chef. I consider myself a good old-fashioned country cook.
- DONIN: Yes. And that involves lots of barbecue...all the kind of stuff that kids like to eat, right?
- CROSBY: Right. Lots of home-cooked meals.
- DONIN: Yes.
- CROSBY: I call it middle-class meals. I can do fancy stuff if you want me to, but I'm more barbecues, pig roasts, burgers, dogs, potatoes, all the non—how do we say—non-healthy stuff. [Laughter]
- DONIN: Comfort food.
- CROSBY: Comfort food, yes.
- DONIN: Isn't that what it is?
- CROSBY: That's what it is, comfort food.
- DONIN: Yeah.
- CROSBY: Yeah.
- DONIN: And did you know...when you came to work here, did you know anybody that was already working here who had sort of told you something about what the job was going to be like and what the culture's like at Dartmouth and all that?
- CROSBY: To be honest with you, no.
- DONIN: Wow!
- CROSBY: When I first came here, I got the job, and they told me to show up at Thayer Hall—now it's 53 [Class of 1953 Commons]. They told me to show up at six o'clock, I think it was. I got here 20 minutes early. And I don't know if you knew, but Thayer Hall was big. It's huge downstairs. And I walked around, and I was five minutes late on my first time here 'cause I was lost. [Laughter] Didn't know anybody. The time clock was upstairs. I didn't know. Nobody said anything.

DONIN: Yes.

CROSBY: But back then they throw you to the wolves. If you make it, you survived.

DONIN: Yeah. And clearly you've survived.

CROSBY: I faked it. [Laughs.]

DONIN: So do you think that the students here have changed over the years since you've been here?

CROSBY: The 17 years, the students that I'm acquainted with, seems like it's a time capsule. You know the students are very nice, very down to earth. Sure, you get a knucklehead once in a while; we all do. But it seems like everybody's nice and pleasant. It's upbringing. You can definitely tell, from where I'm from, the attitudes are different. You know I'm not sayin' money up in this area, 'cause down where I'm from, you know, minimum wage is seven, eight, nine dollars. Back then it was like four or five dollars.

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: And I thought I'd died and went to heaven when I came here because I was getting almost ten dollars an hour.

DONIN: Wow!

CROSBY: Of course, I traveled 40 miles each way.

DONIN: Where do you live?

CROSBY: I live in Charlestown, New Hampshire.

DONIN: Ooh.

CROSBY: So from there to here, you know, making almost three dollars more an hour is like, Wow! Whoo hoo! I'm ready! So I was gonna to make it work one way or the other. But then after I got to know the students and could relate to 'em, you know, here, Collis, I feel like...I don't want to say a grandfather, but I feel like a dad, their other dad or mum that, you know. Our other employees that I work with—we all have fun. But we all look out for them, too, you know.

The only thing different that I notice the last few years than when I first started is more gluten-free.

DONIN: Oh, yeah.

CROSBY: More allergies.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: Back then people were sick, but they didn't know... the education, I guess. That's what I'm assuming. But as far as the kids go, good attitudes, good outlook on life. And I think that's why Dartmouth is probably successful the way they are. And then if you look back in the past, how many people that was a Dartmouth grad, who's wow!

DONIN: Famous.

CROSBY: Famous.

DONIN: Yeah, yeah.

CROSBY: So it's a good start for these kids. I just hope they take advantage of it.

DONIN: And speaking of good starts, since you're on the morning shift, you're the first face they see in the morning.

CROSBY: Oh, lucky them, huh! Yeah, first one in. We have a lot of fun. Even if you have a bad day, if you need a little pick-me-up, come to Collis.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: We'll do our best to hang out with you and have fun. We pick on you. I consider Collis Café the diner on campus.

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: For a lot of these kids, never even been in a good diner.

DONIN: They don't know what a diner is.

CROSBY: They don't know what a diner is.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

CROSBY: But, you know, I try to joke with them and have fun, and they give it right back. And it's a good time...especially when there's a lot of Yankee fans, and I'm a Red Sox fan. [Laughter] So we have a lot of fun. [Laughs]

DONIN: So what do you say to the kids who feel like they're sort of intimidated by coming into this big social scene here where everybody seems to know somebody except them. And they don't have anybody to sit with at the table. Or none of their friends are here. And they're all feeling shy and insecure. How do you help them with that?

CROSBY: Oh, trust me. We put our arm around 'em and say, "Come with me." And if I have to introduce them, I'll introduce them to people. I find out where they're from. I'm more curious where they come from, what their culture is.... I try to find out their secret recipes.

DONIN: Oh, yeah!

CROSBY: Oh, yeah. Like Devin [Routh]. There was a gentleman named Devin. He was from North Carolina.

DONIN: Oh!

CROSBY: And, oh, God!

DONIN: Southern cooking.

CROSBY: Oh, boy! And I learned a lot from him. And then he was more curious about New Hampshire. And, oh, I had a lot of fun with him. His famous word was "shootin' fire." "Shootin' fire, I'm—." Yeah, it was good. They were having a lot of fun. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Did that relate to food?

CROSBY: I hope not. [Laughter] But that's what he said all the time. I think it's like yahoo! or somethin'. That's their way. But what I liked about him is he'll find another person from North Carolina, and he says, "Oh, what kind of barbecue sauce do you like?"

DONIN: There you go.

CROSBY: He knew exactly where they came from, from the barbecue—

DONIN: Oh, isn't that interesting.

CROSBY: More vinegar, less vinegar. Some like it sweet, you know, hot, spicy. I was like wow! And he was right on, right there. Yep.

DONIN: So when you pick up these sort of hometown hints from these kids, are you able to incorporate that into some of the menus?

CROSBY: We do.

DONIN: Wow!

CROSBY: That's what makes us stand out, I think, a little bit. We get some kids come in that will buy a brownie, and just absolutely love the brownie. And out of the blue Mike [Ricker] he goes and names the brownie after 'em.

DONIN: Oh!

CROSBY: Well, when that kid comes in and sees his name on the brownie, oh, my God! You know...it's a little piece of Collis that he'll never forget.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: What we try to do is these kids are here, and they've got enough on their plates. But if they can take away Dartmouth with a little bit of fun and a little bit of a piece of Collis or a piece of Dartmouth with them. I've seen 'lums come back, and we'll take the Collis cards, and I'll just say, "Welcome home! Collis Café," and we all sign it and hand it to them. And some of the girls, the older women, "Oh, my— This is why we came to Collis. This is why." And they've got their families. They just happened to be driving by in Massachusetts. Make a special trip. It's really cool. It's nice to see that.

DONIN: So do each of the different dining halls around campus have a different kind of personality? Like Collis, you call it "the diner."

CROSBY: Yeah. Well, I believe our goal, our whole goal, is to serve the kids as best we can. That question can be touchy in certain places if people are having bad days and all this. To me, if you have personal problems at home or anything, as soon as you punch in you leave it at home. You come in, and you have a job to do. And

these kids, like I said, got enough on their plates. So the dining halls, like 53, beautiful, big; it's a beautiful place. It depends. You know some people have good days, some people have bad. Or you can see the different stations. But you can see, a lot of people come into Collis....

DONIN: It's not as warm and cozy welcoming there as it is here.

CROSBY: Well, you know, it depends. There's reasons, I guess. I'm not sure if they have stricter rules over there. As long as our jobs gets done, stations are clean, serve safe food, you know, food's safe, it's a laid back atmosphere. If we want to hoot and holler and raise heck with them, that's what makes us stand out.

DONIN: And that's what they like.

CROSBY: And that's what they need. These kids, they need that. I learn a little bit about their parents or something. Now, don't make me call your mother if you're not eating your veggies 'cause I'll get on the horn right now. Or you know that kinda idear.

DONIN: [Chuckles.] It's good.

CROSBY: Oh, yeah. We make them stand up and pay attention. [Laughs]

DONIN: Yeah, yes=ah. So what are their other dining choices? It's Thayer and Collis and then over at the Hop.

CROSBY: Uh-huh, the Hop. The Hop is nice.

DONIN: Now, are they warm and friendly place like here?

CROSBY: Yeah, they can be.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

CROSBY: I mean everybody's warm and friendly wherever you go. But we're the only one that's, I don't wanna say—stand out, but we're nonunion. The other places are union. So I don't know if they're stricter.

DONIN: Oh, that's interesting!

- CROSBY: Yeah. We're the only nonunion place left, as far as I know, on Dartmouth.
- DONIN: Why is that?
- CROSBY: If—what's the old saying? If it's not broke, why fix it? You know.
- DONIN: Oh, yeah. So it's always been nonunion, Collis?
- CROSBY: It's always been nonunion. When I started...I was in the union.
- DONIN: So you can't like move around and go over and substitute in Thayer.
- CROSBY: No. I've asked many a time to help 'cause they were short. I remember years ago they used to close down a station because they didn't have enough cooks. And I'd go to Dave [Newlove], I'd say, "Mr. Newlove, would you like me to help—I'd love to go in there and help you out." And he said due to the politics they just couldn't.
- DONIN: Oh, interesting.
- CROSBY: Yeah. Yeah.
- DONIN: Oh.
- CROSBY: Nothin' against the union. I think the union's a very nice thing. Certain places needed it. I worked...years and years ago at the Hop, they weren't union. And it was tension; it was a lot of...attitudes were different. You can catch stuff in the air, you know what I mean?
- DONIN: Wow!
- CROSBY: Yes, first time in a long time that I...I got along great. But if certain persons did like you or management at the time didn't like you or that kind of thing. And then after she left, I found out why. I wish I woulda known. If I coulda helped, I woulda. She had problems at home. But, yeah, it was tension.
- DONIN: Oh, that's interesting.

CROSBY: And then when they went union, for them I was glad it happened, in a way. Now, I don't know if it's any better because I left there and came to Collis.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: And I thank my lucky stars I did.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

CROSBY: You know.

DONIN: Oh, so the DDS workers are not all one big happy family.

CROSBY: Oh, we're all one big happy family. But just some are union and some aren't. [Laughs]

DONIN: Right, right, right. And you're not...I figured you guys and women could all float back and forth.

CROSBY: No, no.

DONIN: So you really are your own little family right here.

CROSBY: Yeah. That's it. And if people come in and they're upset, we all work damn hard, What's your problem? Let's get your smiley face on and get out, and let's do it. You know?

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: Let's have a good time.

DONIN: Yeah. Now how about...how do you manage to break down the really, you know, the really sort of macho-kind-of frat-boy guy who thinks he's gonna be a tough guy, but you know he's just....

CROSBY: Those are fun. [Laughter] 'Course they always come in with their buddies because they're trying to impress their buddies.

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: So we kind of.... I don't want to say make them stand them out. But in a way I do.

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: For instance, I had one young man that he had these three girls around him; he was God's gift to women type of thing. He come in, and he started bragging how hot sauce.... "This isn't hot enough" and this and that and everything else. And I'm like, "Okay. How about tryin' this hot sauce?" "Oh, that's not hot enough." And finally this little old lady—bless her heart; she had to have been in her late sixties, early seventies?

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: She'd come in off the street. It was in the summertime. She says, "Is the hot sauce hot?" And he says, "It's really hot, ma'am." You know trying to be macho to her. So I said, "Ma'am, would you like to try some?" And I put some on a plate. She went up and took her two fingers, slapped it on the plate, and she put it in her mouth. "Heck!" she says. "That's not hot." She says, "I'm from Texas. That's nothin'." [Laughter.] Well, that guy there was just shot down like crazy. Oh, it was awesome. Put him right in his place. And I just said, "Yup. Thank you, up above," you know. That's how we do it around here. [Laughter.]

DONIN: So you see all sorts of types here.

CROSBY: Yes. Green Key weekend I see a lot of parents...oh, yes.

DONIN: Oh!

CROSBY: Yes, yes. I really—I see a lot. If I could write a book, it would definitely be a novel. It would be funny as heck. Serious, but a lot of fun. I really don't feel the age that I am because you work with younger kids.

DONIN: Yes.

CROSBY: Am I right?

DONIN: Right.

CROSBY: And I think that's what makes Dartmouth, the community, the way it is. Because we kind of relate to the kids. And as soon as those kids leave, you've got some more right behind them that take their place.

DONIN: Right.

CROSBY: But when they come back, that's when you feel old, you know. When they have the family and kids and all this, you know, that's when you feel old.

DONIN: Right.

CROSBY: I welcome them all back every time with open arms.

DONIN: Yeah. And I'm sure this is the first place they stop when they're back on campus.

CROSBY: Well, we'd better darn well be the first place 'cause we're the closest point to the intersection, you know. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: [Laughter.] It's true. It's true.

CROSBY: We've got a good crew.

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: Everybody helps each other. Everybody helps with dirty dishes here; I'm walking by, I grab some or somebody else does the same, you know. It's a well-oiled machine. And that's why I don't think we have a union.

DONIN: Do you have trouble getting them sort of trained up about how they're supposed to behave in here, like clear your plates and all that kind of stuff?

CROSBY: No, no. Usually the students take good charge of that.

DONIN: Do they?

CROSBY: Oh, yeah. You know you look at the students in here, they say, "Hey, we're not raised in a barn, pick that stuff up," you know. "Come on. Everybody else is doin' it. What makes you special?" So we...I don't want to say rub off on the kids, but we do, I think.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: And they rub off on us, too, you know. We try to help them out. We try to help 'em as best we can and they try to help us here and there. I don't know what else to say. But we appreciate 'em very much. And I think that's what shows...you know, it isn't like, "Oh, what do you want?" Or, "Next, please." It's "Okay, oh, hey, come on. What do you want?"

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: You know it's all attitude. It's all about the attitude.

DONIN: It sure is.

CROSBY: And the one thing I tell the kids, especially when I teach the ice fishin' and fishin', money isn't everything. If that's the case—it costs me almost ninety dollars a week to come to work. Money isn't everything. If you can find a job that you're comfortable and you enjoy—and like I think I died and went to heaven when I came here, you know. I enjoy the kids, I enjoy my workers. I enjoy the whole outlook on the Dartmouth community. If they can find that, they've struck gold, you know. It isn't all about money. It's nice to have. But with that money comes a lot of headaches, a lot of, how would you say?—BS stuff. [Laughs.]

DONIN: It is fair to say that you could be described as like an additional parent to these kids?

CROSBY: Absolutely. Not just me, all the Collis staff—we have been introduced to parents, I feel, more than anybody on campus, especially graduation. I've met more people from all over the world, shook their hands. If I had not a dollar but a nickel for everybody I've said "Hi" to and met their parents and their parents coming and thanking us for taking care of their kids—"We didn't know who you were, but now we've put a face with Collis. Thank you so much. We appreciate it." Oh, yeah. We're their other parents. I don't know if you remember. We had a couple of triplets the first triplets.

DONIN: Oh, yes!

CROSBY: You remember?

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: And I found out that their mother was recently divorced, and she was single. And she had a hard time. And the girls were tellin' me, she would call every two or three hours, and she lived in California, I believe. And after she came out and introduced her to us, the daughters, all three of them, thanked us for making her at ease, you know. And as the years—or the months—went on, she wouldn't call every hour. She would call once a week maybe or that kind of thing. And I brought in a little thing of maple syrup.

DONIN: Aw....

CROSBY: And I said, "I'm not trying to butter you up or anything. But," I said, "this is a little gift from all of us at Collis." I said, "I understand you like pancakes. Try some New Hampshire love."

DONIN: Aww!

CROSBY: So, you know, ever since then, when they were talkin' to their mom, I'd say, "Hey! Tell mum that Ray from New Hampshire says hi"—or "Collis Ray said 'Hi,'" Or, you know, that kind of thing. So, yeah, I want to say we were like their other parents.

DONIN: Another parent.

CROSBY: 'Nother parent. Thank God I don't have to pay—

DONIN: The tuition. [Laughter]

CROSBY: The tuition. Oh, goodness, yes!

DONIN: So how would you.... If you needed to describe the Dartmouth community to somebody who wasn't associated with Dartmouth—

CROSBY: Right.

DONIN: You were just describing your job and the people you work with and the College you work at, how would you describe the Dartmouth community? Does it include like the parents and the alums and the workers and the students?

CROSBY: I would say all of the above because it takes all of us to make Dartmouth the way it is.

DONIN: Mmm.

CROSBY: But not so much...I don't know about the parents' part. But the 'lums. If it wasn't for the 'lums, we wouldn't have the beautiful kitchen we have today; if it wasn't for Mr. and Mrs. Collis.

DONIN: Right.

CROSBY: And, you know, and other people, not just them, but other folks that came by. Especially when you see all the Class of '53 for over there that donate money. Yes. The 'lums are special, special people. But the community, the people? I see every now and then, you get one person that comes in that thinks we're a number.

DONIN: Oh.

CROSBY: But not your name, my name. You see those folks come in, and they don't last long, looking at history. The 17 years I've been here, for example, Mr. [James] Wright, President Wright—

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: Beautiful guy. Love the guy to pieces. Just because he's a Red Sox fan, you know. But, no, he treated you like a person, not a number.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: And Mrs. Collis, she does the same thing. And, you know, Mrs. Wright. I used to have fun with him and her. Oh, God, yes. Every day he'd come into Collis.

DONIN: Did he, when he was president?

CROSBY: Yes, he would. And get soup, homemade soup, or a salad, you know.

DONIN: Your soup is famous.

CROSBY: Well.....

DONIN: The Collis soup is famous.

CROSBY: That's because everything's from homemade, from scratch. Nothing out of the bag, say. Yep, its homemade. And that's what makes us a little special.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: Dylan does a great job down there, the new cook.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

CROSBY: Does great sauces, soups, and entrees.

DONIN: And it's a big draw to the community as well. I mean you have a lot of non-Dartmouth people who come in here for your food.

CROSBY: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we do. And it's because we open it to everybody.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: And, you know, now they make access for like Parents' Weekend. That's when we see a lot of parents.

DONIN: Sure.

CROSBY: They all come in and, "Oh, hey. How are you doing? Pleased to meet you." And now they've got a face in Collis, you know. It's really nice. Everybody works well together. But as far as that question goes, I think we're a special breed, I want to say, up here in the Upper Valley.

DONIN: Yep, yep.

CROSBY: As I live on the outside lookin' in, I'm just proud to say that I do work at Dartmouth, 'cause I never went to college. This is my college.

DONIN: This is your college.

CROSBY: I'm the oldest freshman you're gonna meet. [Laughter] And keep on goin'. I haven't graduated yet, and I don't wan'o.

DONIN: Well, that's how you identify so well with the students.

CROSBY: Yep, pretty much. Down to earth.

DONIN: But do you ever have—do you have experiences here or did you maybe in the beginning, that you didn't feel that you were sort of.... You know the reason we're so interested in talking to the dining

service workers and the safety and security officers and the people who take care of the buildings, sometimes, you know, there's a sense that maybe the staff who do those jobs are not acknowledged as being part of the Dartmouth community. You know, do you ever have times when you feel like you're sort of an outsider looking in? You said that because you don't live here, but—

CROSBY: In the beginning I did.

DONIN: You did.

CROSBY: Because I was kind of—you know never been to college and not knowin' what to expect.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: Mr. Tucker [Rossiter] at the time, he took me inside and told me...he treated me like a person, you know. When he told me that six people got laid off the very first time ever, I guess, and I was number five on the list.

DONIN: Oh!

CROSBY: He put up a list on the wall. And I remember we had a whole line of people, and everybody left their station to go see the list. I stayed and worked.

DONIN: Wow!

CROSBY: And Mr. Tucker come up and said, "I'm sorry to say, Ray, you're on the list." And I said, "That's okay, sir. No problem." I said, "I'll have a job before I get home." I had to. I had two kids, married. Fifteen minutes later Mr. Tucker called me to his office and says I'm working at the Hop. So I was laid off for 15 minutes. But it was good. I had more respect—treating me like a human being, not a number, like being on the wall, you know.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

CROSBY: And I just kept working; that's all there was to it. That's the only other time I ever really felt like an outsider. When I felt like that, treating me like a human being, I tell people "please" and "thank you" go a long way, especially in the Dartmouth community. Now, if

I go out and hold the door open or help someone, you know, I don't mean like a Boy Scout, helping the lady across the street. But if she needed it, we would be there, you know.

But I think that's what Collis does. I compliment the janitors. I know they work hard. I tell the kids, "You know what? When you're at your dorms, if you see the janitor or whoever's mopping the floor, just thank 'em. A please and thank you. They would appreciate it much." They bust their you-know-what.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: From there all the way up the staff. But that's what makes us Collis, I want to say. You know, we work hard, but we try to do our best to treat people like human beings, not a number.

DONIN: Mmm. So it sounds like the Collis staff here is its own little community.

CROSBY: We are. We're a community inside the community.

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: Yeah.

DONIN: You support each other.

CROSBY: Yeah. You got 'o.

DONIN: All the time.

CROSBY: You got 'o. When you've got that many kids comin' through, and never mind the parents, you got to—one falls, the other one helps him up.

DONIN: Yep. And let's face it, providing food to human beings is one of the most important things you can do in life.

CROSBY: Yes. Safe food.

DONIN: Safe food.

CROSBY: Safe food is very important.

DONIN: Good food.

CROSBY: Yep.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: Lot o' love, as we call it.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: Lot o' love. [Laughs.]

DONIN: Lot of love.

CROSBY: Need a little love, come to Collis.

DONIN: Yeah. You're serving up food with love.

CROSBY: That's right. That's right.

DONIN: So do you have any relatives—I mean you've loved it here for so long, for 17 years.

CROSBY: Yeah.

DONIN: Do you have any relatives who work here?

CROSBY: I got my uncle, I don't wanna say I got him a job, but I gave him a good reference. He's my uncle, Uncle Farrell. He married my aunnt. He's a custodian. He does the dorms now, I believe.

DONIN: Wow!

CROSBY: But he's a real good worker.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

CROSBY: When I give a name or a reference, that person is representin' me.

DONIN: Absolutely.

CROSBY: Because if I know they're not going to work out, I'm sorry, the job's not for you. I don't have the right to tell you that. But I won't give 'em my reference.

DONIN: Right, right. But that's a big piece of getting an interview here, I'm sure, is a good reference from somebody who's on the inside.

CROSBY: Right. Well...I know, given the reference, that they might have taken the folder, the application, and put it on top or on the side or someplace where it got noticed before the other ones. I don't know what goes on behind closed doors. But I do know after I talked to a few people, he got a beautiful interview. And then once you get your interview, it's up to you, you know.

DONIN: That's great.

CROSBY: That's the way it is.

DONIN: Yes, yes. So you recommended—not recommend meaning giving your recommendation—but you would tell people that this is a good place to work.

CROSBY: I tell a lot of people, if you can get in, please get in. You know it has a lot of good—everyplace has its bad, but it has a lot of good points that outweigh the bad. So the insurance, the benefits, if you have that all in, you make pretty good...especially when you live outside o' town like I do.

DONIN: For sure.

CROSBY: You know 40 miles is a long drive...but it's nice. It's a nice 40 miles. I look forward to three-thirty in the morning, come to work. And then go home at two or two-thirty, whatever it is. When I leave, I've got a half hour to leave Dartmouth behind. And when I get home, it's family time, you know; it's my time.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: I don't bring work home. Like five minutes away [snaps], like Oh, my God! you know what happened? Blah blah blah. No. When I go home, it's family time.

DONIN: It's gone. You've cleared your head.

CROSBY: Cleared your head, right.

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: Do a lot of singing on the road. [Laughs]

DONIN: Oh, yeah, yeah. Do you do anything here downstairs?

CROSBY: Oh, no, no, no. I can. I do singin' in the kitchen just to get the girls going, you know. That's how we do things, Dylan an' I. We've got a good harmony going.

DONIN: So how'd you get this fishing gig going with the students?

CROSBY: Some kids would ask me what I'm doin' this weekend and I tell them "I'm goin' ice fishin'." "Oh, I would love to go ice fishin'." So I took some kids with me, not knowin'—this nine, ten years ago—not knowin' the legal aspect, you know. If they got hurt, it woulda been bad—I didn't know. I just said, "Oh, God, yeah. Come on. I'd love to take you."

DONIN: Great.

CROSBY: So I took him ice fishin', and his name was John. And believe it or not, he drilled holes—big guy; he was on the football team.

DONIN: Oh, yeah.

CROSBY: This was in 1996.

DONIN: Drilled holes in the ice?

CROSBY: In the ice to do the holes to fish in.

DONIN: Oh, oh, oh.

CROSBY: And I want to say about eight, nine years ago or ten years ago maybe, I happened to get on the webpage or whatever, and I found him.

DONIN: Oh!

CROSBY: And he was in North Carolina. No, actually he was in the South Pole. And he says, "OMG!" [Laughter] "You'll never guess what I'm doing down here at the South Pole." I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm drilling in the ice. I'm drilling holes." I said, "Well, you

are welcome.” You know? [Laughter.] Who would ever thought that—

DONIN: Oh, my goodness!

CROSBY: —ten years later he’s digging big holes in the ice.

DONIN: Yeah, yeah. So are you still doing this, these trips?

CROSBY: Oh, God, yes! Yeah. Every year we do—I teach two classes—take a weekend to fish. I do ice fishing, spring fishing, summer and fall.

DONIN: Amazing!

CROSBY: Yeah.

DONIN: And are these phys. ed. classes?

CROSBY: Yeah, PE class, and you get credit for it.

DONIN: Fantastic! So you’re a teacher at Dartmouth.

CROSBY: Oh, yeah. Well, they call me, “Professor Ray.” But, no.... No, that’s okay. [Laughter.] No, but I’m certified with the Fish and Game. I had to go take a class and everything at Concord. I enjoy doing it. And they do a Let’s Go Fishing Program.

DONIN: Wonderful!

CROSBY: And they’re ecstatic knowin’ that it’s on the college level.

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: I mean I’ve got kids from Hong Kong, from Africa, to, you know, who knows?

DONIN: And they’ve never done this before.

CROSBY: Never done it. Like the guy from Hong Kong had a bamboo pole.

DONIN: Oh, yeah.

- CROSBY: And didn't know what a regular fishing rod was. And I was more curious how he fished, and he was more curious how I fished. So we had a good time.
- DONIN: Oh, that's great!
- CROSBY: And they provide lunch, and I do a little barbecue on the ice or tailgatin', and I'd call it. But not the tailgatin' that everybody hears about. I'd get the burgers and dogs and cheddarwurst. And sometimes I'd have some venison. They'd never had venison before.
- DONIN: Oh, yeah.
- CROSBY: Onions and peppers. Oh, yeah, there's a little carnival thing going on.
- DONIN: That's great!
- CROSBY: I teach the kids how to cook.
- DONIN: Mostly guys or women, too?
- CROSBY: Both.
- DONIN: Great.
- CROSBY: Both. And then the people that get disappointed, that, "Oh, my God! Eight minutes both classes, all full. I never even got in. Blah blah blah." And, oh, yeah.
- DONIN: [Laughs.] So do you cook the fish after you've caught it?
- CROSBY: I have done that. I've showed them how to clean them.
- DONIN: Right.
- CROSBY: Either fillet them or however. And clean 'em up. Fry them right there. They try it all. We did perch this winter. Sometimes in the spring we do trout. One kid caught one. Soon as he caught it, did it right there and put it right in the frying pan. You couldn't get any fresher than that. Less than 30 seconds.
- DONIN: Great experience...great experience.

CROSBY: Yep, it was a good time.

DONIN: Now, I've read about also some barbecues at Alpha Chi.

CROSBY: Yes.

DONIN: What were they called?

CROSBY: Pig Stick.

DONIN: Pig Stick roast?

CROSBY: Pig Stick roast. I'm very proud to say that I cook their food for them. There's a good bunch of guys that like to have fun, but to a certain level. Don't really go over the boundaries. I'm not over there all the time, so I'm just goin' by that one day that I'm there. But they're all down-to-earth kids. Yeah, they put on a heck of a spread. And it's free. And a lot of the parents come up for the Kentucky Derby next door.

DONIN: Oh!

CROSBY: And all the girls are all dressed up in beautiful gowns. And the guys dress up.

DONIN: Oh, I see!

CROSBY: Yeah, they really play the part. They're just missin' the horses.

DONIN: Yeah, yeah.

CROSBY: Then we get the other frat houses that come in and join in. Yeah, they serve on a pretty good spread. It's a pig roast.

DONIN: I should think you'd be—

CROSBY: About a 300-pound pig.

DONIN: Oh!

CROSBY: Yeah. We stuff it with more pig. Bonus.

DONIN: Oh, you stuff it with pork. Oh.

CROSBY: And then the burgers and dogs. Then we've got the Italian rope sausages, peppers and onions.

DONIN: My goodness!

CROSBY: Fried bread dough, hand-cut French fries.

DONIN: Oh!

CROSBY: Yes, it's a pretty good little spread. Chicken.

DONIN: So what about if anybody's a vegetarian around here? What do you feed them?

CROSBY: We have—Mike, my boss and I—came up with a Collis veggie burger.

DONIN: Oh, good for you.

CROSBY: It's a black bean burger.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: It's handmade. It's baked in the oven. It's pretty good.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: I try to keep it separate.

DONIN: Oh, I see. Oh, yeah.

CROSBY: I can't guarantee what's on my hands, you know what I mean? I try to change my gloves. But, no, they don't care.

DONIN: Something for everybody.

CROSBY: We had this fancy lady come up one time. She says—a very sophisticated lady—she says, "Is this stuff free?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." "Do you have any utensils?" And I was just waiting for her to ask me—Grey Poupon, you remember? [Laughter.] "Ma'am," I said, "no, we don't have 'tensils." But I said, "This is a pig pickin', they call it, and you have to use your hands." And she rolled her eyes, and she said, "Do we have any napkins?" And I says, "No,

ma'am." I said, "But if you look right down on that table, there's a whole roll o' paper towels. Go help yourself, kiddo." I said, "But, you know, if you want to hang out here, you gotta have a little barbecue sauce on your shirt." I said, "Just hang out." And her husband come by, and he thanked me up and down. [Laughter] And she came back, and she did have a little barbecue sauce on her.

DONIN: She got into it.

CROSBY: She got right into it, yep.

DONIN: Great!

CROSBY: She did, yep.

DONIN: You've got to do it the New Hampshire way when you're up here.

CROSBY: Aye, yup. You've got to do that.

DONIN: Don't you think there's something.... One of the things that makes Dartmouth special is its location.

CROSBY: Oh, yeah.

DONIN: Don't you think?

CROSBY: Yeah, you get these city folks, and they come up here, and it's like "where's the sirens?" or whatever. I say, "Oh, we turn them on every now and then just to make you feel like you're home. But, you know, not too much." If something happens, boy.... It doesn't happen very often, but when it does, the whole community's like, Alright, how can we help? Everybody stops, pays attention.

DONIN: For sure. And some of the kids probably have an adjustment to make when they come here if they're from the city.

CROSBY: Oh, yes, yes. Very much so. They do.

DONIN: Weather, if they've never been in winter.

CROSBY: I had one kid who worked with us, and I said, "Why'd you come to Dartmouth?" He was over at the Hop. And he said, "To be honest with you, I coulda gone out West, UCLA." All these big fancy schools. I said, "Why'd you pick Dartmouth?" He said, "I never saw

snow before.” I said, “Son, you spent that kind of money just to come up here to see snow?” I said, “I woulda sent you some down just for five bucks.” [Laughter.] I said, “That’s no problem.” And I said, “But, you know, when you have the first snowstorm, you’ve gotta get on the Green and do your snow angels.” He didn’t know how to do those. And he came back.... That weekend it snowed, and they had the snowball fights and all. He came back, and he thanked me up and down. He couldn’t believe it. He had a ball. I wish I was there with him.

DONIN: Yeah, yeah. So how much do you think the presidents, whoever the president is, how much impact do you think that makes on how much of a community this place feels like? Do you think they have much impact on that?

CROSBY: I’m not gonna mention too many names.

DONIN: No, without naming names.

CROSBY: But if you take President Wright and the other president that took over, the attitudes in the places.... Of course we’ve had a lot of cuts and stuff, but that’s when I felt like a number, I’m sorry to say.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And how about the previous presidents here before Mr. Wright?

CROSBY: I felt good. I felt honored, you know. Felt really honored when President Wright was here. But the new president, they treat you just like a number. And I’m not a number but a human being. Gonna do real well.

DONIN: He’ll do fine.

CROSBY: He’ll do fine. No problem. He’ll have my back up. You know if he needs backup, Bubba’s here for him. You know what I’m saying?

DONIN: Yeah.

CROSBY: But if you treat people like numbers, it’s not gonna be good.

DONIN: Right, right.

CROSBY: Lot of hardship, lot of negativity.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: You felt in the air at least.

DONIN: They can really have an impact that way.

CROSBY: Yes, yes, they can. Yeah. And it was, for a couple of years there, pretty touch and go, as we say.

DONIN: Yep, touch and go. Touch and go.

CROSBY: But I feel better now.

DONIN: Yes. It's gonna be better, I think.

CROSBY: Oh, yeah. I thought we—I don't wanna say hit bottom, but we got knocked down, and we're getting back up. Brushin' ourselves off.

DONIN: Well, and the cuts were pretty scary, the job cuts.

CROSBY: The various cuts, yes. And I felt terrible for everybody, you know. But you have to do what you have to do, I guess.

DONIN: Right, right.

CROSBY: It's hard no matter how you look at it.

DONIN: Right, it's true...it's true. So do you think the Dartmouth community changed much from the time when you first started here to now? Overall.

CROSBY: Overall? I don't wanna say changed much. Maybe buildings. New technology. But overall, the attitudes are good. There again, if you enjoy that you do, it's all goin' be the same.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Don't have to fix it.

CROSBY: Don't mess with it.

DONIN: Don't mess with it, you know.

CROSBY: Yeah. I think overall, it's pretty good, at least from my aspect, you know, lookin' at the kids and when the kids come back and the feedback. You know, the spirit. I've seen up and high and low as far

as school spirits, you know, that kinda thing. When I first started, '96 or so, the football team was undefeated that year. And I was cookin'. And the spirit then was like, Oh, my goodness! And when the band comes marching through the hall 'cause they won, I'm like, What the heck did I do? You know. Did I do something wrong? And then after I figured out what was going on, it was really cool.

DONIN: Yep.

CROSBY: You know you have your bad years, but you have good years, too.

DONIN: Yeah, yeah. So I know your focus is on the students here. But how about the faculty and staff. Do you feel that they're part of your community here?

CROSBY: Oh, God, here, yes.

DONIN: Do they come in as customers a lot?

CROSBY: Every mornin'. Oh, yeah, yeah.

DONIN: Yes? I know we talked about members of the community, the non-Dartmouth community coming in.

CROSBY: Yeah. Those people come in.

DONIN: Faculty and staff?

CROSBY: Faculty and staff. They're welcome. We don't show no favoritism, you know. We pick on them just as well as the next person. [Laughter.] When you pick on President Wright, you can pick on anybody. [Laughter.] I remember I was fillin' the salad bar, and this gentleman, one of the professors, come in. Hadn't seen him for a while. He said, "How're you doing, Ray?" And I said, "Doin' well." But I said, "I was in timeout there not too long ago." He said, "What'd you do?" I said, "Well, be honest with you," I said, "President Wright and I, we were playing Pong on the Green." I said, "and S&S came and got me in trouble." Next I heard this lady's voice, and she's laughing. And I'd never met Mrs. Wright before.

DONIN: Oh!

CROSBY: And she was on the other side of the salad bar. And she goes, “Oh, that is fantastic! I gotta tell James this.” I’m like, Oh, dear God! I’m done, you know. And sure enough, Mr. Wright comes in about ten minutes later, and he says, “How’d we do, playing pong?” “Pretty good,” I said. “To be honest with you, I think we did all right. But Mrs. Wright was keeping score, and she cheated.” [Laughter.] Oh, yeah. It’s a good time. But we do—

DONIN: Treat everybody the same.

CROSBY: Treat everybody the same. There’s nobody different. Sorry, that’s the way it is.

DONIN: Well, it works.

CROSBY: It does. It seem to work, anyways.

DONIN: Works for you.

CROSBY: Have a good time, you know.

DONIN: Yep. You’ve become famous by treating everybody the same.

CROSBY: Well, I don’t know about famous. But we appreciate everybody’s love and support, as we say.

DONIN: Yep. Well, the feeling’s mutual, I think, too.

CROSBY: Well, good. We work hard at it.

DONIN: Yeah, you sure do. Well, Ray, I’ve kept you off the food line too long.

CROSBY: Okay. Thank you very much for your time.

DONIN: Alright? So I’m going to turn this off. No, I wanna thank you for your time.

[End of Interview]