

Lucas Henderson, Class of 2009
Dartmouth College Oral History Project
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
October 25, 2012

DONIN: Okay. Today is Thursday, October 25, 2012. My name is Mary Donin, and I'm here in Rauner Library with Lucas Henderson, Dartmouth Class of 2009. Okay, Luke, just to get some context for the interview, I wonder if you could just give us a little bit about, you know, your life before coming to Dartmouth. You know where you grew up, where you went to high school. And how it is you chose to come to Dartmouth. You know whether there were people in your family ahead of you or not and what the research process was like to find Dartmouth.

HENDERSON: Okay, yes. I was born in California in the San Francisco area, the youngest of two kids; I have an older sister who's two years older than I am. And we lived in California until I was about 12. And then my dad got transferred to Connecticut for work. And so we moved basically from a pretty urban area out to rural Connecticut, which was a pretty big change.

DONIN: And you probably weren't very happy if you were a 12-year-old.

HENDERSON: I was kind of excited actually. I mean San Francisco was a really cool city to grow up in.

DONIN: Yes.

HENDERSON: And I definitely got a lot of cultural exposure that I definitely wouldn't have had in Connecticut and stopped having, you know, once we moved. I remember in my class in California, a good number of kids that I went to school with, you know, spoke broken English.

DONIN: Oh, yes. Sure.

HENDERSON: And it didn't seem weird to me at the time. But thinking back, it was kind of different.

DONIN: So it wasn't their first language.

HENDERSON: No. A lot of them were, you know, spoke Chinese.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Were you in a school right in downtown San Francisco?

HENDERSON: Yes, just a couple of blocks away from Chinatown actually.

DONIN: Fantastic.

HENDERSON: And it was cool, too, because the school, you know, definitely sort of embraced that aspect. And we always had kids' moms come in for Chinese New Year and definitely celebrated that aspect of Chinese culture.

DONIN: So what sort of school did you transfer to when you got to Connecticut? You really were in rural Connecticut—I mean not near....

HENDERSON: Yes, rural Connecticut. I mean the town that I moved to was, you know, 12,000 people. And the big population center was a town of 50,000, 20 minutes away. And that was a pretty big change, you know, obviously going from more of an urban environment to a rural environment. And even just all of a sudden having seasons was pretty different. No seasons in California pretty much. So I really enjoyed that and, you know, I loved having like a big backyard and woods in our backyard to just go run around in instead of our little 20-by-50 cement patch. [Laughter] And I think that was definitely something that I factored into my decision when I was looking at colleges. I definitely didn't want to go to school in a big city. I wanted another rural environment, and Dartmouth sort of fit that to a T.

DONIN: How'd you find out about it?

HENDERSON: About Dartmouth?

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: I had always sort of known that it was an Ivy League school and a very good school. My parents had always put a strong focus on education for us, both my sister and I.

DONIN: It was just out there.

HENDERSON: Yes. It was there, and, you know, it was on the list. It was sort of in that magic circle of schools that were not too close to home but not too far away from home.

DONIN: Right, right.

HENDERSON: You know a three-hour drive, whatever. And my sister went to Yale, and she's two years older than I am. Yale was a little too close and the frequency that my parents went down to surprise visit her was a little too much for me. [Laughter]

DONIN: So did you have other classmates that were coming to Dartmouth when you came?

HENDERSON: No, I was the only kid that I knew. I didn't know anybody else going to Dartmouth. I mean, it wasn't a new experience for me, being the new kid. You know I had moved. So I did that in going to middle school. And then I was the only kid from my middle school to go to the Catholic high school that I went to. So I did that again in high school.

DONIN: Oh, wow!

HENDERSON: Yes. So, you know, I was kind of an old pro at not knowing anybody.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. And when you were planning on coming here, did you have an idea of who—Were there certain things that you were going to pursue at Dartmouth that you felt would yield friends for you? You know, whether it was athletics or a hobby or some specialty that you were particularly interested in?

HENDERSON: Yes. I remember there were two things that I was certain I was going to do when I was at Dartmouth: One was club tennis; I'd always been a big tennis player. My whole family plays, and I played in high school. I was going to do that. And I was also interested in joining the Ultimate Team.

DONIN: That's Ultimate Frisbee?

HENDERSON: Ultimate Frisbee, yes. I loved playing ultimate in high school and summer camps and all that. So I was really excited about that opportunity. And I was equally sure that I would never join a fraternity.

DONIN: Why?

HENDERSON: I just had that sort of stereotypical image of, you know, like frat guys, you know, chugging beer. I definitely had a negative association with fraternities. And I assumed that that's what the Greek life would be about.

DONIN: Had you heard negative stories related specifically to Dartmouth about Greek life in general or—no?

HENDERSON: Not, specifically. I just had that sort of general idea sort of portrayed by the media and movies and stuff.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: And I knew that Dartmouth was a big frat school. But I didn't think that I would get involved.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. So you get here, and who was your first social group here, your community, when you arrived?

HENDERSON: I think—I mean this is probably true for most incoming freshman—but my first group of friends were kids on my DOC trip.

DONIN: Oh, of course.

HENDERSON: Because you get here, that's the, you know, eight or ten kids that you meet right away. And it's good because it's a small group; it's a manageable size. You don't feel like you have to— you're not juggling potential friendships with 50 or a hundred different people. It's definitely an accessible size. And, you know, you can get to know them. You're sort of pushed together, and all of a sudden you're sleeping in tents together and making food together.

DONIN: What trip did you choose?

HENDERSON: I went on rock climbing.

DONIN: Whoa! That's intense.

HENDERSON: Yes. I had never been rock climbing before, and, you know, I was thinking about just signing up for a backpacking trip and sort of

playing it safe. But then I just decided to make rock climbing my first choice.

DONIN: And you got it.

HENDERSON: Yes. And it was great. And it was definitely, you know, a new experience, and I really enjoyed it. And I ended up with a pretty good group of trippies.

DONIN: So when you get back to campus and classes begin, did that remain your group in the beginning, initially, while you were sort of getting your feet wet?

HENDERSON: Very briefly.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: Most of my trippies were, you know, lived in different dorms.

DONIN: Which one were you in?

HENDERSON: I was in New Hamp. So I was actually sort of separated from the bulk of the freshmen class. You know a lot of them are down in the River or the Gold Coast. So for me, my next group of friends pretty quickly became the other freshmen on my floor. And we formed like a very tight bond with the whole floor. That lasted throughout freshman year. Like they were definitely my closest friends.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: And they still are my closest friends, some of them.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. And how was the transition to life up here as someone who didn't know anybody? You were totally on your own. How did that go for you?

HENDERSON: It went pretty smoothly. You know, like I said, it's not the first time I had sort of had a change like that.

DONIN: Yes.

HENDERSON: And so, you know, I got up here, and I knew how to just reach out and make simple conversation with people. And everybody when

they first get up here is just looking—they're looking to make new friends.

DONIN: Right.

HENDERSON: So they're receptive. Yes, it was very easy, especially living on the same floor because you just kind of hang out in each other's rooms.

DONIN: Right, right. So did your plan to join the club tennis happen and the Ultimate Frisbee as well?

HENDERSON: Yes. Well, you know, I explored them my freshman fall, but.... You know club tennis was fun, and I went to that. But it was very disorganized. You know it was pretty much just scheduled hitting time with other kids as opposed to sort of a competitive team that went out and played matches. So I did that my freshman fall, but they weren't traveling and playing matches so I sort of lost interest in it. So I didn't end up doing that.

And then for Ultimate, I went to a couple practices, and realized that I really didn't like Ultimate Frisbee on like an organized sort of collegiate level. The Ultimate that I had played in high school was just sort of running around and, you know, like unorganized and not really playing by any rules. And the game that they play in college is different in a way that I didn't really like at all.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

HENDERSON: So those two things that I sort of knew that I was going to do, I lost interest in before the end of freshman fall.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. And so tell us about how—I happen to know from looking in the *Aegis* and other sources that you in fact did end up participating in the Greek system. How did that happen?

HENDERSON: I mean even though I was pretty sure that I wasn't going to join a frat, you know, I still am curious. And I had that sort of realization that I had a lot more freedom than I did when I was at home. So I definitely went out freshman year and partied at the frats, you know, because that's really the only place that a freshman can go easily. And I realized that a lot of the things that I had taken for granted just weren't in fact true about the Greek system. And there are sort of those stereotypical frats on campus. But there are a lot more that don't fit that mold at all.

DONIN: And you're talking about the negative stuff.

HENDERSON: Yes, exactly.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: I mean with just sort of the prevalence of Greek life and just the high percentage of kids who are involved in it, it just follows that a lot of the fraternities have very different feels and different types of constituents.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: So I ended up finding one that I really liked the guys, really liked the attitude that the house had. It was just a lot of fun being there. So I was like, there's no reason not to, not to go for this.

DONIN: And how do you...I mean there's a lot of, and I don't mean this facetiously, but there's a lot of research involved in figuring out which house is the right fit for you.

HENDERSON: Yes.

DONIN: So you sort of go around and visit these other.... I mean, the houses have different reps, right? You can—not that labels are necessarily a good thing.

HENDERSON: Right.

DONIN: But I assume each one has a label.

HENDERSON: They're definitely a starting point, yes.

DONIN: Yes.

HENDERSON: Yes, they definitely do. You know certain houses are sort of... There's like the soccer team house and the team that all the guys on the baseball team are on. Or the frat that all the baseball guys are in. So there are definitely these labels and, you know, they're not of course 100 percent accurate all the time. But they're definitely a starting point, and you end up going to these houses and spending a couple of nights hanging out with the guys. And you just see how everything goes to see how you fit in—or not.

- DONIN: And when does the process of actually—I forget the terminology.
- HENDERSON: Rushing.
- DONIN: Rushing. When does that actually— Does that start in the fall of your sophomore year?
- HENDERSON: Yes. So you have to...I think the school rule is you have to complete three terms before you can join a house. So for the vast majority of kids, they're rushing their sophomore falls. So you have a whole year to sort of feel out which house is best for you.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Did you—does it cause you anxiety because you wonder if you're going to be selected or invited or whatever the right term is?
- HENDERSON: Yes, definitely. Not so much until you're actually getting ready to rush. You know you go around to the different houses and then, at least for guys, the way to sort of signal to the house that they're your first choice is you stay at the—you're there at the very end of the rush period which I think goes from like seven to nine. And then, at that point, all the brothers wind up outside, and you do what's called—you shake out, which means you go down the line, you shake everybody's hands. And that sort of indicates to the house that, look, you know, I think that this is the house I want to join.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: And that definitely factors into their decision, whether or not somebody stayed in and shook out.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- HENDERSON: And so, yes. I mean it's tough because looking back after I joined a house and I was part of the deliberations for younger classes, you know, sometimes guys shake out, but you don't really have room for them. You don't want to—you don't necessarily give a bid to every single kid who indicates interest.
- DONIN: Is it based on space, or is it based on a judgment about their suitability for the group?

HENDERSON: Sometimes both. Normally, at least for the house that I joined, which is Alpha Chi, for the record, we would go for classes between 20 and 25 guys. You know, we didn't want a class of like 50 kids. It would just be a little too big and would give the house a different feel. You wouldn't really get to know the other brothers as well.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: And sometimes, you know, there were kids who would show up on rush night, and you would have no idea who they were and nobody else would. Like, who are these people that are showing up?

DONIN: Oh.

HENDERSON: I mean, for the most part, I think the process sort of works well for both the rushees and the brothers. Where, you know, before rush night, the brothers have a pretty good idea of who they want to sort of join the house. And I think the same is true for the rushees as well. Like they have a pretty good idea of what house they want to join. And normally the two sort of images aren't really that far off.

DONIN: Right.

HENDERSON: So sometimes if an outsider is sort of looking at the process, it can seem like a pretty daunting...and has the potential to be sort of mean and cruel. But I think it's actually pretty rare that someone's feelings really get hurt.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: I mean of course it happens, but...

DONIN: Now among your sort of group during sophomore year, during this rush time, were all of your friends rushing? I mean, were you friends with people, non-Greek people, as well as Greek people? Or were they mostly—

HENDERSON: I had some friends who didn't rush initially. So a lot of my friends actually did end up joining houses. But some of them joined houses their junior or even senior years.

DONIN: Oh!

HENDERSON: Which is pretty unusual, I think.

- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: Like most of the time, you know, kids join their sophomore year, and that's it. And if they haven't, then they're not going to.
- DONIN: Yes.
- HENDERSON: But the bulk of my friends from freshman year did rush, although a lot of them went to a different house than I did.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: Which, you know, I stayed close with them, but not as close as they did with each other. A lot of them went to the same house.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Did you have friends that did not make their—get their choice or whatever the right phrase is?
- HENDERSON: I can't really think of anyone who was extremely disappointed with the way that rush went.
- DONIN: Well, that's good.
- HENDERSON: Yes. I mean, like I said, I don't know a lot of people who sort of put all their eggs in one basket and were disappointed.
- DONIN: And did that become your sort of permanent community, your Alpha Chi brothers?
- HENDERSON: Yes. And that definitely became my closest group of friends. I mean I remained friends with the kids from my freshman floor and I made other friends just through class or like, my job on campus. But my sort of core group definitely became the kids in my house, in Alpha Chi.
- DONIN: Did you see your social life organized exclusively through your fraternity brothers, or did you ever socialize, say, with your coworkers from whatever your job was? Or people in a particular class that you—or people that chose the same.... We didn't even talk about your choosing a major yet, but when you choose a major. I mean, was that the sort of defining category in which most of your friends came from, was the Greek house?

HENDERSON: Yes, I would say so.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

HENDERSON: You know, I was friends with other kids. But it was more... Like, I went on an LSA to Berlin, and, you know, made some pretty close friends on that trip. And we continued.... That was my sophomore winter. So we continued to sort of hang out every once in a while, you know, for the rest of my time at Dartmouth. But I would say that sort of things like that, you know, hanging out with kids from my LSA or hanging out with kids that I worked with, those were sort of exceptions, and they were events that sort of got organized, you know. But if I didn't have like sort of an arranged dinner with one of those groups, then my default was Alpha Chi.

DONIN: Did you ever experience people reacting negatively when they learned you were part of the Greek system?

HENDERSON: Not seriously. I mean, you know, a lot of times people who were unaffiliated might give you a hard time, but in a good-natured way. You know, just kind of write you off as like a frat boy or whatever. But never seriously. I mean, I don't think I was...I never felt discriminated against in any real way.

DONIN: And did you ever experience people telling you that they felt discriminated against because they weren't in the Greek system?

HENDERSON: Because they weren't?

DONIN: Right.

HENDERSON: No, not really.

DONIN: Was there—I mean did you sense or is there a real divide between the affiliated and nonaffiliated? I mean, I hear that term a lot—

HENDERSON: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: —from both students and alums, that there's like, oh, you know, I'm a committed unaffiliated person.

HENDERSON: [Laughs] I would say not really, mostly because, at least in my experience, the majority of the people that I knew were in a house.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: And, you know, we all had one or two friends who weren't affiliated. But, you know, they were such a small group that there wasn't really any discrimination against them particularly. I mean to me the way that the social scene sort of broke down was: The majority of social kids were in a house. And there was that group of kids that you never saw outside of class or the library. And that's just definitely a group that I had very little interaction with or connection with. And then there was just a very small sliver of kids who were active socially; you know they would come and hang out with their friends at their fraternities or do a lot of different things. So they had this social life, but they just happened to not be in a frat. And that was, I felt, like a very small sliver of the Dartmouth population.

DONIN: That group did.

HENDERSON: Yes.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: And so, to me it was kind of like, this group is just so small that there's no—there's just not enough people in it to create any sort of tension between these unaffiliated social people and affiliated members.

DONIN: Right. And that was an affirmative decision they made, to be unaffiliated. They weren't people who hadn't been asked to participate; they just chose not to.

HENDERSON: Right. Some of them I know didn't want to join a frat because they didn't want to pay dues or some didn't want to tie themselves down to one social group. You know, they had friends all over the place, and they didn't want to make a decision that they felt would limit them socially. And you know that's perfectly understandable; I don't disagree with that.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: But that's just not what I chose to do.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Did you ever have experiences here where you felt as if you didn't belong based on some trait or—based on who you were, whether it was—You know, there are a lot of ways for people to feel

like they don't belong, and it's not just the Greek system obviously. It can be because you're not a legacy or you're not from a fancy private school, you're not an athlete, you're not whatever. There are all kinds of labels one can have.

HENDERSON: Right.

DONIN: Did you ever have any feelings like that?

HENDERSON: No. Honestly not really.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

HENDERSON: I feel like a lot of the labels, you know, like athlete or super rich kids, you know, they're all the minorities for the most part on campus. And I didn't necessarily fall in any of those groups, so a lot of the times, you know, I felt like I *was* sort of in the majority. I don't ever remember an instance where I felt uncomfortable just like being myself.

DONIN: That's interesting. So your view of the Dartmouth population when you were here was that all these silly labels that people use really describe a minority of the people rather than the majority of the people.

HENDERSON: I think so.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: Yes. I mean definitely. Because sticking a label on a group of people for one quality, most people in the whole Dartmouth population aren't going to have that quality. You know it's not like— There's never an official label for just sort of your average student, which I think a lot of people would fall under. But, you know, athletes, a small percentage. People who are at the extreme ends of the socioeconomic scale, a small percentage.

DONIN: First-generation college student.

HENDERSON: Yes. People who aren't legacies? Plenty of those.

DONIN: Yes, yes. Interesting.

- HENDERSON: So, you know, I felt like the Dartmouth community was just very easy to fit into.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: You know, that being said, I'm a white male from the middle class.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: So my whole life I've never felt discriminated against.
- DONIN: It's fair to say then that you established your community pretty early on, you know, from the fall of sophomore year.
- HENDERSON: Mm-hmm.
- DONIN: Did it alter in any way? Did it expand, contract, change in any way? I mean where do the women fit in, for instance? If your social group was your frat brothers, you know, this is a coed school. Where are the women in your life? And I'm not asking about your love life. I'm asking about your social group.
- HENDERSON: Right. I mean, yes. A lot of times the girls that I would end up being friends with I would meet somehow through Alpha Chi. They would be friends of other brothers that would hang out there. And you would start talking to them and strike up your own friendships. And then, you know, through them you would meet sort of other people.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. So let's envision, say, your final year here when you were a—not a senior; they didn't call you seniors. You were an '09. What was the gender breakdown between.... If you had to think of who your best friends were whom you were saying goodbye to at graduation, what was the gender balance between the women and the men?
- HENDERSON: Definitely tilted towards the men. I had a lot more closer friends who were guys than girls.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. And do you think that's because of the Greek system, or just because.... I mean, did the Greek system facilitate the fact that you had this close group of guys, but didn't really help you have a close group of women, the same sort of balance.

- HENDERSON: Yes, definitely. That's definitely true. And before I came to Dartmouth, you know, just thinking back to high school and elementary school, you know my group of friends was definitely a lot more balanced in terms of gender. In high school I had a lot of close female friends and a lot of close male friends. But the ratio was pretty even. But in Dartmouth, yes, that's not the case. My close friends were definitely a lot more guys than girls.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: And thinking about it, I would say that's true for a lot of the guys that I was friends with, too.
- DONIN: But you all live in.... I mean, all these dorms are coed here, right, aren't they? Most of them?
- HENDERSON: Yes.
- DONIN: But do you actually—I should know this— How many years do you actually physically live in a frat?
- HENDERSON: I lived there all of my junior and senior years and my sophomore summer. So, you know, freshman year— Freshman year was the year that I had probably the most female friends that I hung out with.
- DONIN: Which makes sense.
- HENDERSON: A high percentage of time because I was on the coed floor. And then sophomore year, you know, I lived with a bunch of guys. But then, all of a sudden I had this new social circle of other kids in my pledge class.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: And that quickly became my sort of new core group of friends.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: And, yes, being heavily involved in Greek life and spending a lot of time with your brothers definitely skews the time that you spend with your male classmates as opposed to your female classmates.
- DONIN: So you had a pretty stable group here, it sounds like.

HENDERSON: Mm-hmm. Definitely.

DONIN: A lot of people sound like they transitioned from maybe an athletic group or theater group or music group or whatever, to something else. And then they go, as you say, on an LSA, and they changed. But you were pretty—it sounds like you were pretty stable.

HENDERSON: Yes, pretty stable. I mean there's turnover—

DONIN: Sure.

HENDERSON: —within the fraternity, you know, like kids graduating and new classes coming in. So there is that. It doesn't feel like, thinking back on my time, it doesn't feel like you had a stagnant group of friends. It's just that a lot of them happened to be, you know, in my frat.

And also, thinking back, as I got older, I feel like I almost became less open to making new friends. Which sounds weird, but I remember my senior year I wasn't really that interested in meeting new people. I had a really close friend group, people that I really cared about. And that's who I wanted to spend time with.

DONIN: Was that because...let's see, (A) you were lazy, (B) you were a senior, an '09, and you realized you were cherishing this last year together with this group of guys, (C) I don't know what other reason. What do you think caused that?

HENDERSON: You know I think it's probably a little bit of both.

DONIN: Yes.

HENDERSON: You know I had this close group of friends, and I didn't necessarily feel like making the effort all the time, reaching out and meeting new people. And, yes, I knew that...I was very conscious of the end of college coming. I think all of senior year it sort of felt like something hanging over my head. And I wanted to make the most of it with the close group of friends that I had sort of formed over my previous three years.

DONIN: Now I was reading in *The D* that you were on a softball team, weren't you, that was pretty successful?

HENDERSON: Yes. [Laughs]

- DONIN: Were those Alpha Chi guys?
- HENDERSON: Yes. That was our house team.
- DONIN: Oh, I see. Okay. So that wasn't a new group. That was a different group....
- HENDERSON: More of the same, yes.
- DONIN: [Laughs] Now does Alpha Chi have a label?
- HENDERSON: Yes. I think the image that the rest of the school sees is sort of dorky guys but pretty nice. And we definitely do have a reputation of sort of being a little like, inward-focused. You know, where we're really tight with each other but— Not that we're unfriendly or anything.
- DONIN: Right.
- HENDERSON: But, you know, we're not always as welcoming, I think, as other houses are perceived to be.
- DONIN: And that's not intentional. That's just the personality of the place.
- HENDERSON: Yes, I think it is just the personality, and the type of guys who do end up there are, they're just not the social sort of—they're not necessarily at the top of the social chain in terms of being all these alpha personalities or being the most outgoing people in the school. So it sort of is a—I guess it felt like a perpetuating sort of—type of personality that we would get. Where that personality attracts the same type and, you know, just sort of keeps going.
- DONIN: So now that you've been out, what, three years, how do you think the experience of having belonged, and been, it sounds to me, so secure and stable in this community, how has that impacted you functioning out in the big, bad world now that you've had to separate from this group?
- HENDERSON: I don't think I had trouble sort of transitioning to the real world. I mean Dartmouth—and a lot of people describe this, that it definitely has that bubble-like aspect where, you know, the four years you're here, you're just in this little town up in New Hampshire. And the

campus is very well defined. And you don't really do much outside of the campus all the time.

But, you know, the kids in my class, the other Alpha Chis, ended up going to a lot of different places after graduation. You know a lot of kids went out of the country or went to the West Coast, or stayed on the East Coast, whatever. So it wasn't like this group was physically close to each other anymore. But, you know, we had a lot of sort of like Facebook like group chats, and we had walls that we'd all post on. So we stayed close that way. And since graduation, two kids have gotten married, or three kids now. And we all go to each other's weddings, and it's a big fun reunion.

But the fact of the matter was there was one other kid from my class in Boston, which is where I ended up after graduation, and we definitely hung out. But we hadn't been the closest of friends in our class. And once again, I felt like I was in a situation where, new place and like new life, the next step in my life, and I didn't know anybody. And I ended up moving into an apartment with people I didn't know and started a job that I of course didn't know anybody at. And that didn't really affect me at all. You know, I made friends in both of those places, and I think I sort of hit the ground running.

DONIN: So you're...I mean, given your experience of being a newcomer in places, you're pretty skilled at making these transitions.

HENDERSON: Yes, I think so. I'm not the most outgoing person. Sometimes I think I'm a little shy, but I'm able to sort of overcome that, I think. And I'm never worried, you know. I don't go in and make 20 million friends on the first day.

DONIN: Right.

HENDERSON: But I'm definitely comfortable being in that situation and just sort of finding my way.

DONIN: Did you ever experience the sense that you—You know, the theme of this project is the insider and the outsider at Dartmouth. Did you ever have experiences of feeling like an outsider when you were confronted by a particular group? Obviously not your fraternity brothers, but early on, where, I don't know, in a class or in some other social situation or—There are all kinds of possibilities. But I think all of us have moments when we think we don't belong for one reason or another. But does anything stick in your mind?

- HENDERSON: No, not really. You know, going over these questions beforehand, I knew that I was going to struggle with a lot of these outsider questions because, looking back, I didn't always feel like an insider. But that was usually in a circumstance where nobody was an insider. Where, you know, when we got here, everything was new.
- DONIN: Right.
- HENDERSON: And I never had that sort of struggle where I felt like there was a group that I didn't belong to that I wanted to belong to and wasn't able to break in for some reason, which I guess is pretty lucky in some ways. But, I guess those experiences are important to have, too.
- DONIN: You were one of the lucky ones.
- HENDERSON: I guess so. It's sort of funny to think back on that. I remember being... obviously having a lot of anxiety, you know, beforehand, coming to college. I remember driving over that bridge from 91 and being real nervous about being left at school and my parents driving away.
- DONIN: Was that the first time you'd spent any time away from your parents, when you got here?
- HENDERSON: No. Growing up, I'd always gone to summer camps away.
- DONIN: Sleep-away camp, yes.
- HENDERSON: I'd be away for three or four weeks. And, you know, I never had any issues of severe homesickness. I mean I was excited. But you can't sort of stop yourself from having those butterflies.
- DONIN: Absolutely. But it sounds to me, you know, almost everybody we've talked to has said that the [freshman] trip thing really breaks the ice quickly.
- HENDERSON: Yes.
- DONIN: And it doesn't necessarily—That doesn't necessarily become your group but it really eases the pain, big time.

HENDERSON: Yes. I mean you get there and you sign into your trip. And ten minutes later, you know, they have you playing these games or dancing to these songs. [Laughter] And, you know, you realize that everybody else, all the other kids, are feeling as awkward as you are maybe. But you just go for it, and you have a good time, and that helps other people have a good time. And it's just such a good way to break the ice.

The students who run those, the upperclassmen who run those trips are so excited to have you there. And it just, that emotion just sort of like boils over. You can see it, and you get excited, too. It's impossible not to. And for my section, since I live in the New England area, after my trip ended, I had to go home for a couple of days.

DONIN: Oh.

HENDERSON: And then come back because the dorms weren't ready. And for kids who lived far away, they wanted, for the later sections, they wanted them to go on a trip and then be able to move into the dorms. So I had to go home for a week or so and just sit there with ants in my pants, waiting to get back.

DONIN: Sure.

HENDERSON: And all of my high school friends had already gone to college, you know, gone off to their schools.

DONIN: Oooh, that's tough.

HENDERSON: Yes, it was tough. But it was only tough because I was excited, not because I was scared.

DONIN: Yes. I mean you wanted to get back here.

HENDERSON: Yes.

DONIN: Get going.

HENDERSON: Yes. Had that first taste, and then you're only on your DOC trip for three or four days.

DONIN: Right.

- HENDERSON: You just want to get back.
- DONIN: Yes. So what kind of work did you do? What was your job?
- HENDERSON: I worked for a psych professor. I was a math major, and I worked for Professor Kralik who I think is still here.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: Doing data analysis on his results. So, you know, I obviously had... I was a math student, had a math background and was familiar with the software that he was using to analyze his results. So I did a lot of programming for him. Learned a lot, and it was a good way to spend ten or 15 hours a week.
- DONIN: Yes. So that's a pretty solitary job, though. Were there other students there, working?
- HENDERSON: Yes. There were other students. So there'd be a bunch of us in the lab at one time doing one thing or the other.
- DONIN: Oh.
- HENDERSON: Not everybody was in the same work as I was.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: And there were also grad students who were doing a little bit more advanced work.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- HENDERSON: So that was actually a pretty social—it doesn't sound like it, but it was a pretty social environment. And we'd usually be playing some music or something and just talking about whatever it was.
- DONIN: Right.
- HENDERSON: Because a lot of that work is pretty—it can get a little tedious.
- DONIN: Yes.
- HENDERSON: So we definitely found ways to amuse ourselves.

DONIN: Oh, that's great. I was picturing you, you know, busing trays in the dining room.

HENDERSON: No. [Laughs]

DONIN: This is a lot better.

HENDERSON: Yes.

DONIN: A lot better. So do you think—you sort of alluded to this—Dartmouth's location has something to do with people's sense of community up here, because of the isolation?

HENDERSON: Yes.

DONIN: Did you experience that?

HENDERSON: Yes. I mean, talking to some of my high school friends who went to school in Boston or in New York, I mean there's just so many other things to do there. And, you know, sometimes it's hard to draw a line between campus and the city. And there's just all this other stuff pouring in.

At Dartmouth that's obviously not the case. So sometimes as a student you feel restricted—and that's not necessarily the best word. But it's sort of like Dartmouth is what's here, and there's a lot of hikes to go on. But for cultural and social opportunities, Dartmouth is it. And, you know, I knew that coming in, and that certainly wasn't a negative, and it was almost a positive for me because I wanted that. I wanted to experience college and I didn't really want like that blurred line between just living in a city and living in a city and going to college in the city.

DONIN: Distracting from....

HENDERSON: Yes. That's exactly what I thought. And faced with that same decision now, I would make the same one. I wouldn't want to go to school in New York City.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Yes. So how has this experience of having identified this group and stuck with it the whole time—Did that change you in any way? Did it change your perspective of...Once you went away from here, is that a source of strength to you, this experience of having this incredibly close group of brothers for four years?

HENDERSON: Yes, definitely.

DONIN: Do you feel now that you can always lean on them?

HENDERSON: Yes. Like some of my closest friends, you know, are kids from that class and people I still keep in touch with or live with. [Laughs] And I know that some of the kids—not all of course—but some, I'm going to keep in contact with the rest of my life. And I feel really like grateful for having the chance to have formed such close bonds here that are going to last the rest of my life. And, yes. There are few things that I would change about the way I was socially at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HENDERSON: It's hard to imagine sort of a better outcome than what I had.

DONIN: We didn't talk about the academic piece. But that was obviously successful for you as well.

HENDERSON: Yes. It was. Actually coming into—Growing up and through high school, you know, academics had always been really important to me. But I remember when I got to college, making the decision that, yes, I wanted to focus and do well in school. But I wanted to sort of explore outside the classroom and do other things and learn things about myself.

So I always made sure that I was doing well enough in my classes. I definitely didn't slack off or anything like that. But I didn't let myself get stressed and always feel like I had to get straight As and stuff like that. And, you know, I didn't. But I'm also not unhappy with the way that I did academically.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. You were probably well prepared by your high school as well, right?

HENDERSON: Yes. I mean, I went to Catholic school actually, K through 12. And so, while I never went to the public school to have a reference point to compare against, I definitely felt very prepared once I was at Dartmouth. I mean just to function academically.

DONIN: Does religion play a part in.... Was it your sense that religion played any role in the social life here? I mean, do people identify? Did you

search out people who were going to belong to Aquinas House? I mean, not just you personally, but was that a currency that people used in their social lives? Do you go to church? Or do you belong to Aquinas House or anything?

HENDERSON: Not really. I felt like there was a good variety of different religious beliefs, you know, amongst my friends. And it was never a point of contention or disagreement. It was just something that was different about somebody or.... And that was it.

DONIN: Right.

HENDERSON: It's like, oh, that person is Jewish or that person is Buddhist. You know. Some of my friends were Buddhists.

DONIN: Just curious.

HENDERSON: Yes. No, it definitely didn't have any sort of strong—it definitely didn't build any walls.

DONIN: Right. Okay. Unless there's something else you want to add, I think we're done.

HENDERSON: Cool.

DONIN: You all right?

HENDERSON: Yes.

DONIN: Okay. I'm going to turn these off then.

[End of Interview]