

Thomas Herman '69
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
April 8, 2013

DONIN: Today is April 8th, 2013. My name is Mary Donin, and we're here in Northampton, Massachusetts, at the offices of Thomas Herman, Dartmouth Class of—oh, I've blanked out. Sorry.

HERMAN: Sixty-nine.

DONIN: Nineteen sixty-nine. Okay, Thom, first thing, just to sort of set the stage, is where did you grow up, and how is it that you learned about Dartmouth? Was it through a high school guidance counselor or someone you knew who went to Dartmouth, or how did that happen?

HERMAN: I grew up on Long Island, and I believe back then—I'm not sure if it's still the case—I was registered at Dartmouth when I was born.

DONIN: Ho-ho-ho!

HERMAN: I come from many relatives: my father, my uncle, a cousin or two of his, and so Dartmouth was in the picture from the very beginning. As a matter of fact, as I understand it, I was given first choice in choosing a dorm room for freshman year because of the fact that I had been registered at that early stage.

DONIN: Had you visited the campus before you actually matriculated?

HERMAN: Yes. I think there was a lot of nostalgia from my father, and we had summered up in places in Vermont, and we had visited the campus, yes.

DONIN: Ah. So it was familiar to you. You knew where you were going.

HERMAN: Yes.

- DONIN: Okay. Your parents must have been delighted.
- HERMAN: Yes. Indeed, they were.
- DONIN: Did you have siblings?
- HERMAN: I have two younger sisters, one of whom did apply to Dartmouth prior to coeducation really being in place and was not able to go.
- DONIN: Mm. So tell us what you found when you got there, when you arrived. Who was your roommate? What dorm were you in, first of all?
- HERMAN: I opted, for several reasons, which we may get into, for a single. That's what I wanted. And I had the wonderful single above the front door of Hampshire Hall.
- DONIN: Oh, New Hampshire. Okay. Yeah, right on Wheelock Street.
- HERMAN: Right next to—near the museum and then the Hop.
- DONIN: Yep, yep. Great location.
- HERMAN: I was very pleased with that location.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. So you didn't have to worry about the awkwardness of getting to know a roommate. Now, did you choose to do an Outing trip?
- HERMAN: I did not. I did not.
- DONIN: They weren't as popular back then, maybe.
- HERMAN: This is a long time ago, now, Mary [chuckles], but that's my recollection.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. And did you have an idea of what it is you were planning on majoring in when you got there?
- HERMAN: I think beginning, I thought I would be pre-med. My father was a doctor, and so following kind of in his footsteps. But that is not what transpired.

- DONIN: And ultimately what was your major?
- HERMAN: I majored in French and also minored in education.
- DONIN: So how was it for you as a freshman, settling in, finding a social group and adjusting to classes and all?
- HERMAN: Well, let's just say that shortly after arriving on campus as a freshman, fraternity rush was happening—
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- HERMAN: —for the upperclassmen, and shortly after that—I think my wording is correct—was Sink Night.
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- HERMAN: And I had no idea that apparently there was a long-standing tradition in New Hampshire Hall called the peter meter contest.
- DONIN: Oh, my God. I've heard this story. Okay.
- HERMAN: So as a young male, not completely settled in his sexuality and at that point even having a girlfriend in a Vermont college—what I experienced was being pulled out of my room, along with the other freshmen, lined up in the hallway and asked, or told, to strip. And then, of course, as the name implies, the peter meter contest took place, with the idea that whoever won the contest had to tell a joke, and if the upperclassmen didn't like the joke—at this point, we're all standing in a mixture of beer on the floor and vomit—that we would have to clean up the mess, which, of course, we had to do. So that was pretty early on, a welcome to Dartmouth College.
- DONIN: Oh! You must have been terrified.
- HERMAN: I had no idea what was going on. It was like a very difficult, bizarre time for me. And what happened, in terms of the theme of not feeling part of—obviously, that was a beginning—feeling part of came through association with Dartmouth theater.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

HERMAN: Because Dartmouth theater, because we weren't, unfortunately, coeducational at that point, involved community members, women and some men and very important people to me in those days. There was a Peggy Cooperman, there was a Winnie Downsborough, there was, especially, even to this day, contact with Dottie Campion. There was a feeling within that group of beyond the college sort of. It was a community of like-minded folks who were very accepting of all of those who were participating.

And the other thing that came along—I'm not exactly sure which year, that I thought of last night when I knew we were going to have this time together, Mary—was the Ram's Horn Coffee House.

DONIN: Oh, I've never heard of that.

HERMAN: Okay. So the Ram's Horn Coffee House was a really important experience for me in feeling part of and in teaching me a tremendous amount about volunteerism. The Ram's Horn Coffee House was situated as you're going down the hill towards Norwich, towards the Connecticut River, it was in a building on the right. And it was open in the evenings, and the staff was made up of college professors and administrators and secretaries and students and community members who would volunteer once a week, and there would be a community life for those staff members a half hour or 45 minutes before we would open, because the idea at that point—I remember Dean [Thaddeus] Seymour was at one point on the staff I was on.

The idea was that we would open the doors, and of course we would serve hot chocolate and banana bread and cider and coffee but that we would be available to, in a sense, do a ministry, although it was nondenominational. We would be available to talk with students, mostly, who would come in, who were lonely or needed someone to talk to or needed a place to be. And it taught me a lot about the idea that, you know, just because it's volunteer and you're not being paid, it's a commitment and what does that commitment mean, and can you keep that commitment, and what it's like to

support each other, to then be available to the larger community.

So the community of the Dartmouth Players and the community of the Ram's Horn Coffee House—these were the things that I remember most about the college years that were supportive, helpful and made me feel part of something greater than myself.

DONIN: And it sounds like it gave you some relief from that sort of hyper-masculine pressure that was around you in the dorm and in the Greek life.

HERMAN: Well, as you know, I went from that experience to—I can't remember. Can you, from the articles? Was it my sophomore year that this began or my freshman year? I'm not remembering.

DONIN: This event gets written about in *The D*—it is 1967, so that would be sophomore, right?

HERMAN: You see, the first—I'll talk about it this way, and maybe you can fill in the dates, but the first year of the event, what I remember was it was fall, it was football season. I wasn't going to be a football player, and traditionally, with no women on campus, people who were part of the Dartmouth Players were recruited or thought to be the potential cheerleaders. So I thought, *Here I am. The whole campus is—the spirit of the fall is about football. I'll try out and see if I can become a Dartmouth cheerleader.* And I did, and I was.

And at that point in time, as the pictures will show from *The Dartmouth*, I had sideburns. And I was very excited, but the guy who was the head of athletics at that time didn't like the fact that I had sideburns. The quote back then was, "If he's out there in the green and white, there's no reason why he should look any different from anyone else." But because of a technicality, there was no coach of the cheerleading squad. They couldn't get rid of me, or he couldn't get rid of me that first year.

And then the second year came, he appointed a coach, and they were able to get rid of me on that technicality that the coach, I guess, could do it. I did have some wonderful

support from fraternity members of mine. I was in what was DU and became Foley House. But there were some really difficult times for me: people threatening to come in at night and shave my sideburns while I was asleep or—you know, it was a very controversial issue that took up a lot of psychic space for me during those years. So that's my recollection. I mean, I did a whole season of cheering, going around to the different football games and being part of the squad and then, come the following year, I was dismissed.

DONIN: Well, the irony of it is that you had—I mean, if these articles are to be believed, you had a fair amount of support from your cheer team members,—

HERMAN: Yes.

DONIN: —who said you were one of the leaders, you were one of the best, and also that you were totally appropriately dressed. You know, Seaver Peters, who then was the brand-new athletic director, said you needed to look like a Dartmouth man, and that meant no sideburns, when in fact you *did* look like a Dartmouth man. And you had a lot of support and push-back to Peters, it sounds like, from your teammates.

HERMAN: Yes.

DONIN: But they were stuck in this sort of administrative problem with the fact that there was no coach to enforce any of these—well, there were no rules to enforce because there was no coach to make the rules.

HERMAN: Exactly.

DONIN: So this sort of thrust you into this uncomfortable role that you didn't bargain for.

HERMAN: Exactly.

DONIN: All you wanted to do was be one of the cheerleaders.

HERMAN: Exactly. But it was my first experience, and although very difficulty and still there's some remnants of it within me that gave me an experience of standing up for what I believed was right and finding my voice at the ripe old age of 18 or 19

or whatever I was back then, so I'm grateful for that, you know? I sometimes chuckle about the granite in our brains.

DONIN: [Laughs.]

HERMAN: And so, you know, this was a very important part. I mean, here I was, finding out who I was within my sexuality as a gay man, and I wasn't even dealing with that; I was simply dealing about the fact that I had sideburns that might have been a half inch or an inch longer than somebody else's, or something like that.

DONIN: Right, right. And, you know, I think of the '60s—I realize you were there sort of in the middle, started there in the middle of the '60s, but I think of the '60s with, you know, shaggy hair down to the shoulders and Afros for those who could grow Afros, and the notion that someone would have a problem with the length of your sideburns was just—

HERMAN: But, Mary—and I say this a little bit facetiously and a little bit bitterly—this was Dartmouth.

DONIN: Yeah.

HERMAN: Dartmouth was not ahead of its time.

DONIN: No. For sure.

HERMAN: Dartmouth wasn't the first to institute coeducation.

DONIN: [Chuckles.] You're right. And so you got caught in that.

HERMAN: I did.

DONIN: So let's back up for a minute. So you talked about having to endure the peter meter measure, but that wasn't enough to put you off the whole notion of joining a fraternity.

HERMAN: No. I'll tell you what I did do, which I'm now recalling as we sit together, is I never lived on campus after that.

DONIN: Really!

- HERMAN: You had to live on campus for freshman year. Every year after that, because of that experience, I was off campus.
- DONIN: Oh!
- HERMAN: Yeah. Well, it was the thing to do back then—(I'm now talking about the fraternity)—if you wanted to have any kind of a social life. And so luckily for me, with some very wonderful fraternity brothers, I found a place that felt comfortable to me.
- DONIN: It was DU at that time, or was it Foley House?
- HERMAN: It was right in that transition, I think.
- DONIN: Changing, yeah. And Foley House still has that reputation.
- HERMAN: Does it? I'm glad to hear that. Obviously, they're co-ed now, but they do wonderful things like, you know, have meals together on a weekly basis, and it sounds fairly civilized as Greek life goes,—
- HERMAN: [Laughs.]
- DONIN: —compared to some of the other houses.
- HERMAN: Right.
- DONIN: So you decided you'd move off campus. That was so you could feel safe,—
- HERMAN: Yes.
- DONIN: —away from the attacks that you were—or threats, I guess we should call them.
- HERMAN: I rented rooms in people's homes, mostly. Yeah, there were some benefits. By the time I was a sophomore, I was allowed to have a car, and I also could have dogs, which I had.
- You know, the people who were the most supportive to me, other than the Players, as I said, and the community around the Ram's Horn Coffee House, people like Mary Blodgett,

who had the horse farm just outside of town—she's still around in Hanover, and her mother was Gracie Guyer, who was the costume person for many years with Players, and that's how I met Mary. And Mary and her family—her two sons and two daughters—became very important people in my life. As a matter of fact, I at one point was teaching her youngest daughter 'cause I became—junior and senior year, there was a shortage of teachers in Hanover, and so I was hired as a full-time teacher in the local school system, in the fourth, fifth and sixth grade, teaching French and drama.

DONIN: Oh! This was at Richmond Middle School.

HERMAN: Well, you know, I was trying to—yes, it was Richmond Middle School. The Ray School hadn't been built at that point. So, yes, that's exactly where it was.

DONIN: Uh-huh. How unusual!

HERMAN: It was unusual because it was with John Rassias, who, on several different levels—I think the reason I graduated was because of the combination of John Rassias and who he is as a human being and was for me, and the support of Mary Blodgett and her family. I think the reason that I majored in French was because for me, in my experience, I saw a man walk into a classroom full of life and love and energy and excitement and passion for what he was sharing, and that was an amazing thing for me to experience.

Those years were pretty tough years, you know, Mary. Those were the years of the lottery and the draft and being fingerprinted and not knowing what was gonna happen with Vietnam and all of that stuff. And I was not making it personally academically, a lot, I think, because of the trauma of what was going on for me, and so my dreams at that point of being pre-med went out the window because of the level of my grades that I received. But with the support of John and Mary—(interesting that it's John and Mary! [Laughs.]—

DONIN: Uh-huh. [Chuckles.]

HERMAN: And Mary, of course, being also—not Mary Blodgett, but also Mary Rassias, and opening their home and their hearts to

me, I was able to graduate pretty much by the skin of my teeth and go on to create a life beyond Dartmouth.

DONIN: Well, and the pressure to stay in school was tremendous during those years.

HERMAN: Tremendous pressure, yeah.

DONIN: Because of, as you say, the war.

HERMAN: Yup.

DONIN: Did you get involved in the politics of the antiwar movement while you were there?

HERMAN: Not so much. I mean, I was aware of people who were involved with SDS, and there were some—was it the Wooden Shoe?

DONIN: Yes.

HERMAN: There was a commune.

DONIN: Out in Canaan.

HERMAN: In Canaan. That's right. Tangentially for me, not directly. I think I was having my own war with what was going on inside—[Laughs.]—

DONIN: Personally.

HERMAN: —my personal life or my life at Dartmouth as a student, yeah.

DONIN: Were you able to have a group of friends who were supporting you in your search for who you were, so to speak? I mean, were you able to share your sort of sexuality search with anyone there?

HERMAN: You know, I'll tell you a quick story. I think the quick answer is not really, but I did have the feeling with the Players and with the Ram's Horn that none of that really mattered, and that was supportive.

But I also will tell you a story that I remember going to Dick's House when I wanted to deal with my sexuality, and I can't remember the name of the doctor there, and I said to him something like, "I'm pretty sure I'm attracted to men." And he was wonderful with me. He said something like, "Well, the walls didn't fall down" or something like that.

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

HERMAN: But then a story I will never forget is he referred me to a psychiatrist at Mary Hitchcock, which was, of course, right there in Hanover. Her name was Katherine Swift. Now, what I recall is that she gave me a little box with a battery-operated thing in it, and I was supposed to shock myself any time I thought of being attracted to men. So that's how far that support went for me.

DONIN: Oh! Well, how ironic that this doctor was so supportive but sent you to this person. Unbelievable. They were still doing that kind of stuff in the late 1960s?

HERMAN: It had to be '67, '68, yeah.

DONIN: Well, that wasn't much help, obviously.

HERMAN: [Laughs.]

DONIN: Oh! That's horrendous! So you didn't—there was not—

HERMAN: I wasn't really out. If anybody asked me or there were appropriate moments, I would share. And I wasn't hiding. But there was just not much of an opportunity. It was a very alcoholic campus, as I remember it back then, a tremendous amount of alcohol. Drugs were beginning to be on the campus in the way of LSD and marijuana. It was very difficult times, I think because of the war, and there wasn't much in the way of safety around any kind of coming out. I don't even remember any professors. I mean, there were rumors of certain professors who were most likely gay, but I don't recall anybody being out that I was aware of that could have been any kind of a model for me at all.

DONIN: What was your social life?

- HERMAN: Well, as I said, when I started I had a girlfriend, who was at college of—Vermont College, and so that kind of went on. The Dartmouth Players had parties, and I was invited or part of those. They were off campus, in people's homes. That's what I recall, mostly.
- DONIN: Did you have any classmates that you were close to?
- HERMAN: There were some classmates I was close to, yeah.
- DONIN: In the Players?
- HERMAN: Yes. There actually was a classmate—I don't think I ever came out to him during that time, but he and I actually had been at summer camp together prior to Dartmouth. Then there were two classmates who had been in my high school with me, —
- DONIN: Oh.
- HERMAN: —who were there. So there were some folks that I knew. The gentleman who had been in summer camp with me and then actually was in Foley House as well.
- DONIN: Oh, great.
- HERMAN: And I saw him at the most recent reunion I went to, the only reunion I'd ever gone to, three or four years ago.
- DONIN: So it must have been lonely for you.
- HERMAN: Absolutely. That's why the Ram's Horn appealed to me, and the Players. It was an incredibly lonely time. And scary, as you said, because if you dropped out of school, which I might have been inclined to do, given all that was going on, you were pretty well assured you'd be drafted.
- DONIN: Yeah. Horrendous pressure.
- So the Ram's Horn sounds like it would almost be something that would be under the umbrella of the—was the Tucker Foundation in existence when you were there?
- HERMAN: I'm not sure, but I think—

DONIN: Or the Dartmouth Christian Union?

HERMAN: Yeah, there may have been some outreach. I remember a wonderful man, and I actually ran into him about 15 years ago, Harvey Pinion. He was a minister in one of the local churches, I think. And somehow he and they were somehow involved with I think this outreach of the Ram's Horn, but you might do some research.

DONIN: Uh-huh. I have to look into that.

HERMAN: My memory is not so good.

DONIN: Your memory is amazing. Are you kidding? It was a long time ago.

So if you had to describe who your community was at Dartmouth to start out with and how it evolved and what you ended up with as a community four years later, how would you describe it?

HERMAN: I say to people that I really don't feel like I went to Dartmouth. I feel like I went to Hanover—

DONIN: Yeah.

HERMAN: —and that the Hanover community, the folks that I met and worked with, welcomed me and extended their homes and hearts to me and that what was at the Dartmouth community was solely, for me, around John Rassias and his family.

DONIN: That's pretty sad. And that's the case all the way through.

HERMAN: All the way through, yeah.

DONIN: So was it with a sense of relief that you graduated and got away from there?

HERMAN: Couldn't wait.

DONIN: Wow.

- HERMAN: And very little interest in going back. That's why, after many, many years I thought I would see what it was like to go to a reunion, and there were a couple of folks that I did want to touch base with and did, but it's still difficult to be in Hanover for me.
- DONIN: The hurt is still there.
- HERMAN: I mean, I work on it, and I do what I can with it, but it still re-stimulates, yes.
- DONIN: You need to come back and see John Rassias.
- HERMAN: Well, I did that time, with the reunion.
- DONIN: Oh, that time you came back.
- HERMAN: I did. Yes, I did see him then, and Helene. For sure. But, see, what I remember way back when, John's mother was alive and living with them, and Mary, sweet Mary was there, and the children. They were just delightfully engaged in life and welcoming, and it was a life saver for me.
- DONIN: And they still are.
- HERMAN: I'm sure.
- DONIN: And the children are there as well, or at least two of them are there.
- HERMAN: Athos.
- DONIN: Athos is there, yes, and Helene. Both very engaged in the community and in Dartmouth. So you made a good choice.
- HERMAN: [Chuckles.] Well, somehow angels or whatever you believe in supported me to find them.
- DONIN: To stay there.
- HERMAN: It was wonderful, yeah.
- DONIN: So I can't even ask you how it's evolved over the years 'cause it hasn't evolved.

HERMAN: Well, as I said to you before we began the interview, it was touching for me to just get the contact from you that anyone affiliated with Dartmouth would be interested in my story. You know, I often felt, in the years immediately after, as time went on, that I would have loved to receive some kind of an apology.

I mean, one story I'll tell you very briefly is—I mentioned to you that I come from a long line of Dartmouth folks within my family, and at one point, my father, who had graduated from Dartmouth, specifically went up—and you may need to help me with the terminology, but they sometimes run seminars for alumni. They invite—

DONIN: Oh, yes. Well, for a long time they ran something called Alumni College.

HERMAN: I think that's what it might have been. So he came up at one point, and this is to show you what it meant to him, 'cause this is now years later, and he specifically went to some kind of a presentation that Seaver Peters was making, and when it was all over, as I recall the story, he raised his hand, and he said, "I want to ask you a question, Mr. Peters. Why is it that the Dartmouth athletic association discriminates with their athletes?" And I think Seaver Peters answered something like, "Well, we don't." And he said, "Well, I beg to differ with you." And he said, "Well, whatever may have happened may have been years ago, and we really didn't discriminate." And my father said, "I'm sorry. I'm Thom Herman's father, and I beg to differ with you." So that was my father's moment [chuckles] of sort of having *his* story be told, because they were helpless to support their son, really, when all of this was going on.

DONIN: Do you think Seaver Peters was reacting to you because of who you were or the sense that there was something about you that didn't represent Dartmouth more than just the sideburns? I mean, did he—

HERMAN: I don't really think so. I mean, I don't really even get that it was personal. You know, I told you I was—this was happening either freshman and sophomore year or sophomore and junior year, and by the time junior year, I

was teaching in the local school system full time and either had some of these folks' children as my students. So I was good enough to teach in the local school system but not good enough to be on the cheerleading squad at Dartmouth, because I had a sideburn—I mean, two sideburns.

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

HERMAN: [Chuckles.] But I didn't get the feeling that it was anything personal, because I don't even recall having any personal contact with him.

DONIN: Yeah. It was purely the sideburns.

HERMAN: As far as I know.

DONIN: Yeah. And how did this impact your father's relationship with the college?

HERMAN: Well, I think he, like I—I mean, he, along with his brother and some of his relatives—I even think there's a chair named after one of his relatives, in Baker Library—but he stopped any kind of support of the college, and I have never given any support to the college because it was just too traumatic an event, with no due process. I mean, you know, if something like that were to happen now, we'd all be embroiled in huge lawsuits, *huge* lawsuits. And then, it was just swept under the rug.

DONIN: So did you eventually return to cheerleading after it was all over, or did he permanently—

HERMAN: No, it was done. I was—

DONIN: That was it.

HERMAN: That was it.

DONIN: And you were so good! According to *The D*.

HERMAN: That's interesting. I don't have any recollection of that, so that's interesting to hear. [Laughs.]

DONIN: I'll leave these for you. I'll send you better copies of them, too, but I'll leave them with you. I mean, it was— Yes, well you'll have to read the articles.

Well, if you had nephews and nieces that wanted to go to Dartmouth, did this ever come up?

HERMAN: It did. I had a niece who was considering it, and what I said to her was, "I have to tell you, dear, that my story is not a positive one. I am truly hoping that Dartmouth has come a long way since then, and from everything I'm able to understand, it has. After all, it's now coeducational. And I think part of the macho bravado had to begin to go out the window as soon as that happened, thank goodness. And I wouldn't discourage you from going. I mean, it's a fine school, it's a beautiful location, and I think they've come a long way. But if you're asking me *my* story, I wouldn't want anyone to experience what I experienced."

DONIN: Mmm. You came out a different person than when you went in. And obviously, some of it was developmental, but I imagine that this experience changed you in ways that you had no ways of anticipating.

HERMAN: Exactly. Exactly. I mean, I lived many years both in Hanover and in New Hampshire, and I tell people I'm very grateful for all the lessons that I learned, and learning opportunities, but I also found that if I was going to do the work I wanted to do in the world, I needed to find places for me that were more supportive to who I am as a person. There was very little— certainly no institutional support. None. Individuals? Absolutely. Friends, people I'd known, people I got to know, the Dartmouth Players, the Ram's Horn, Mary and John Rassias, Mary Blodgett and her family—these were folks that made life supportive for me while I was there.

But I absolutely was a different person. I was a person who knew that it was very important to stick up for values and ethics and integrity, and I was very pleased that—I mean, I could have cut off my sideburns. I could have assimilated. I could have tried harder to become one *of*, part *of*. And I learned the importance of not.

DONIN: Being true to yourself.

HERMAN: Exactly.

DONIN: So your Dartmouth community just didn't exist, as you said. It was more the Hanover community.

HERMAN: Yes. Now, there are a few individuals. There were a few classmates. I even had a distant relative who was a classmate, and we've been in a little bit of contact even recently. But not in general.

DONIN: And those individuals can support you personally, but, I mean, there's not that much they can do to—

HERMAN: No. I had wonderful—some of the fraternity brothers, upperclassmen particularly—it was wonderful to me that they were supportive to me when I was going through this, but there really wasn't much they could do.

DONIN: Mmm.

HERMAN: All of the power was in the athletic director and then passed to the coach in terms of that incident.

DONIN: So did you have any personal interactions with John Dickey?

HERMAN: I really didn't, no, not that I—no. I had some personal interactions with Dean Seymour. My memory isn't good in terms of the actual conversations, but I liked him as a person, and I do remember him being on the staff with me at the Ram's Horn Coffee House, but, again, I feel almost like—and I may be wrong—that *his* hands were tied, that nothing could override that existing process at that time.

DONIN: Right.

Take a break. Yes, we'll definitely take a break. Turn this off.

[End File 1. Begin File 2.]

DONIN: So this is probably a question you can't answer because of what you've told us already, but did you ever have the

experience of feeling like you belonged at Dartmouth or that, you know, you were an insider, so to speak?

HERMAN: I felt like I was important and of value in my relationship with John Rassias. I became a French major. He had me teaching one summer Peace Corps volunteers who were gonna go to French-speaking Africa to teach English, so I was teaching them French, using the Rassias rapid-fire method. So I felt as though, because of my relationship with him, of value and of service and that there was some importance to the energy I brought to the academic life. But that was all I remember, really.

DONIN: That's pretty significant, that relationship.

HERMAN: Yeah. Absolutely.

DONIN: I mean, to have a professor of his stature select you to do—I mean, I realize students *are* trained to do the Rassias method, but that's pretty remarkable for someone who's, you know, not even a college graduate yet.

HERMAN: Right. And they were some of, I think, the earlier years for John Rassias, too, you know? And so it was just wonderful for me to experience the whole thing with him.

DONIN: Well, it's good—at least you came away with some positive memories.

HERMAN: Mm-hm.

DONIN: Otherwise, those could have been pretty scarring years.

HERMAN: They were. It's a simultaneous truth, Mary. They were scarring years, and there are some wonderful memories.

DONIN: Great. Well, I think we can close unless you have other comments you want to make or thoughts you want to share. We can also add an addendum, which has happened. People have thought through these things afterwards and wanted to add something, so that's also a possibility.

HERMAN: Let me take a moment and think.

DONIN: Mm-hm.

HERMAN: [Short pause.] I'll tell you one more story that wasn't so pleasant. [Chuckles.] Although these days I identify myself as a spiritual person, my background or my heritage is as a Jewish man, and there was an open house at one point on campus for all the different student organizations. And I decided, well, *I wasn't raised with any particular tradition. It isn't how my family raised us. But here I am, I'm on my own. Let me at least go and check out the—whatever it was called, the Jewish Life organization on campus back then.* And what I remember was being confronted at the door and someone saying to me, "You don't look Jewish. What did you do, come here for the food?"

DONIN: Amazing.

HERMAN: So that—you know, you can imagine [chuckles], with the other experiences I was having, it was not, in terms of what we're doing here today, welcoming and helping someone feel part of—if you follow me.

DONIN: There wasn't a very big Jewish population there during the '60s, was there? Did you have a sense of that?

HERMAN: I didn't, no. No.

DONIN: I mean, it was during the '50s that there were still stories of discrimination against Jews trying to get into fraternities, not to mention other people of other races and colors.

HERMAN: Right.

DONIN: And John Dickey does get a lot of credit for correcting the quota systems in the fraternities, and they had to change their bylaws.

HERMAN: Yeah.

DONIN: But I imagine these events of feeling unwelcome if you were Jewish are not insignificant in—well—

- HERMAN: Well, it was just at that point—I guess that happens freshman year, I’m thinking, that they would have open houses—
- DONIN: Yep.
- HERMAN: —to join the different student organizations. It was just, again, like joining the cheerleading squad: just something on my part to see if I could join something or find out what there was in the way of support. And, you know, since graduating, there were a couple of years where they invited me up to psychology classes to be the token homosexual and answer questions, and I gladly did that, and I still—as I think I said to you before we started—I’m beginning to at least be open to see if there’s some way in which I could be useful or support the organizations on campus that support diversity.
- DONIN: Right, of which there are a number.
- HERMAN: Yes. Yes.
- DONIN: And I think you *would* be welcomed. I mean, I can’t speak for them, but my experience with them is—obviously, times have definitely gotten better in that respect.
- HERMAN: Well, one of my thoughts as we’ve been sitting here today would be I would love for John Rassias or Mary Blodgett or whatever organization is, in your mind, an organization or several with diversity today at Dartmouth to be made aware of this interview.
- DONIN: Great. Well, they *will* be because it’s going to be showcased on this website, and it will have its little 15 minutes of fame at some point, when we get more robustly populated.
- HERMAN: Uh-huh. Okay. [Chuckles.]
- DONIN: So all right, Thom. I think I’ll turn off the recording, then. Thank you very much.

[End of interview.]