

Timothy Kearl '13
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
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WOMICK: Okay, I am Cally Womick, and today is April 13th, 2013. I'm here in Baker Library with Tim Kearl [pronounced to rhyme with curl]. Is that how you say it?

KEARL: Yep, Kearl.

WOMICK: So let's start off. Tell me about where you grew up.

KEARL: I kind of grew up all over the place. I was born in upstate New York, in Lansing, New York. Lived there until I was four years old, and then I moved to Cuernavaca, Mexico, and then Lima, Peru, and then Gainesville, Florida, which is where I spent kind of the rest of my childhood until I came here.

WOMICK: That's a lot of moving around.

KEARL: Yeah, for no—it wasn't like a military family thing. I really don't have a good story to tell about it. It was all kind of in the dark to me as a kid. My dad got a job through some kind of history—you know, career history or something and we wound up in Peru.

WOMICK: [Laughs.] So what was that like?

KEARL: Oh, man! I wish it had happened later in my life 'cause I didn't really appreciate the opportunity to, like, see a different part of the world. As a little kid, I thought it sucked. You know, like, kind of uproot and you leave the things that you know and love. It's not like I had any Spanish under my belt at four years old. So it was, like—I don't know, it was frustrating and hard as a little kid, what I remember of it. But it's still, like, a really—it's a really cool thing to—a really cool perspective to have...now. I just wish I had been a little bit older and been able to see that at the time. Could have gotten more out of it, I think.

WOMICK: Yeah. So what sort of schools did you attend, growing up, with all that moving around?

KEARL: So in Mexico I was, like, homeschooled for maybe, like, six months and attended an international school in Peru that was taught half in Spanish, half in English. And I think—it was populated mostly by, like, international families and, like, middle- and upper-class Peruvian families who wanted, I think who wanted their kids to have sort of a—probably just have, like, some English background or something, 'cause I don't think, at least when we were there in, like, the mid-'90s, I don't think people who were, like, well off in Peru maybe wanted to stay around in Peru. It was kind of a dangerous place. But I've heard good things recently. Heard good things about Lima, Peru recently. It's on the up and up.

WOMICK: Think you ever might go back there?

KEARL: Actually, I didn't for a long time. I didn't really have—I didn't have anything to, like, to go back *to* there. And I guess I just had an idea of Lima in my mind as, like, a very—I don't know, like a kind of scary, dirty place. But that was—for no good reason. I don't know. Like I said, people that I've talked to since then who actually—who've been to Lima very recently, like, rave about it, so I guess I have to see for myself. I don't know.

WOMICK: So how'd you end up at Dartmouth?

KEARL: I wanted—I guess I want to go to a school that at least advertised itself as, like, a liberal arts college. But as a high schooler, I had—I definitely was in love with the idea of the Ivy League. You know, that's maybe not a very satisfying answer, but there was, like, in my mind, like, intellectual prestige associated with it. You know, this was like where you'd be, like, surrounded by kind of the best and the brightest, and I really wanted *that* out of college. And Dartmouth in particular was, like,—it was open to me not knowing what the hell I wanted to study, you know, starting off. So sort of process of elimination. Those were my criteria. [Laughs.] I don't know. Yeah, I guess that's—

WOMICK: Did you visit any other colleges, or was Dartmouth your choice?

KEARL: Yeah. So I did. I visited Chicago, which was the other school that I really liked the looks of. I visited Harvard. But that might be it. Columbia at some point 'cause I have an aunt that lives in New York and so just, like, visiting relatives, I, like, checked the campus out. But, no—I don't know. I didn't really have, like, the—didn't really have, like, the funds, I guess, to kind of tour around schools, I think. It was kind of an impediment. And so I applied to a lot of places that I had never seen but kind of liked the looks of on paper. I don't know. I feel like I was pretty under-informed in the whole college application process. Maybe that's not, like, peculiar to me.

WOMICK: But Dartmouth appealed to you.

KEARL: Yeah, yeah, it did, you know, for the reasons that I said. I did visit, and I visited in the summertime, so it was very nice. [Laughter.] And they did present themselves as this, like, kind of liberal arts institution and, you know, like, this really engaged intellectual and academic environment.

And I also played lacrosse in high school and thought that it would be awesome to try and walk onto the lacrosse team here. So there were, yeah, myriad factors. But at the time, I was kind of just bumpin' around. You know [laughs], I didn't have a very good sense of it, unfortunately.

WOMICK: Did you come to Dimensions?

KEARL: No, I did not.

WOMICK: Didn't. So coming here for orientation. What was that like?

KEARL: It felt like—well, I didn't—I had a great—I had a great trip I went on, canoeing. And, I don't know, we saw—I guess it was in, like, up in the Grant in Maine or something, so I, like—[Chuckles.] It was, like, one of, like, two bald eagles' nests in the state at that time. I don't know. There were, like, kind of really cool things that I'd never done before. And I—I don't know. I got along with and met a lot of different people on my trip. And getting back, it was—yeah, it was a really fun experience.

But, like, by the time the trips, like, got to the Lodge and then, like, coming back to campus—I don't know. [Chuckles.] I was kind of, like, ready—like, ready to *start* college. It felt—I don't know. It felt very—like, too much like a performance. I don't know. It was fun, but maybe lasted too long.

And orientation was—orientation was a mess! Like, you know, all these—if you—you take all these, like, 17-, 18-, 19-year-old kids and give them, like, a week of—it's, like, a weeklong free-for-all.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

KEARL: It's crazy, you know, like everybody experimenting with, I don't know, who they are, who their friends will be. Like—[Chuckles.] I don't know. Like, a lot of people—well, you know, the pong obsessions start at that time. It's, like, a really weirdly formative week. [Laughs.] I don't know. Maybe for some people. I'm projecting. I don't know. But, yeah, I had absolutely no expectations that—right. I did not expect at all that orientation would be like that or, like, that college here would be—would kind of start off that way.

'Cause growing up in Gainesville, Florida—it's where—the University of Florida is kind of sprawling—like, 50,000 undergraduates plus however many, tens of thousands of graduate students. You know, it's, like,—it's not like Hanover, where it's a town built around a college. It's, like, you just can't tell the—it's, like, you can't really tell where, like, town begins and college ends in Gainesville. It's kind of like sprawling. Everything is the University of Florida and everything is Gainesville, and—you know.

A lot of my friends go there, from high school, and kind of how—how college is, like, the capacity in their lives—for them, what college is—you know, it's, like, on par with a job or with a hobby or with, I don't know, any other number of things that are important in your life. And here it's totally, like, all encompassing. You know, it's, like—when people say it's a full-time job, I don't really think that gets at it. It's like a lifestyle, you know, being a student here, right?

WOMICK: [Chuckles.] Yeah.

KEARL: And I had no idea that it was gonna be like that, coming here, you know. Like, I was acclimated to this kind of—Well, it was a much more relaxed kind big research university vibe. Yeah. So—ramble-y answer is I had no idea [chuckles] what to expect.

WOMICK: So did you feel prepared, coming here?

KEARL: [Sighs.] I don't know. Prepared? I didn't know really what to prepare for. Like I said, I didn't really know what I really wanted to study. I just kind of wanted to be, like, engaged. I wanted to have, like, the freedom to study a lot of different things or maybe—whatever. You know, have the freedom to, like, commit intellectually to really whatever I wanted, not—you know, like, if I had gone to the University of Florida, you really have to, like, declare and go to a college within the university, and it's really—there's not a lot of mobility. And that idea, like, really freaked me out.

But I think I was more prepared than—I was more prepared than—oh, I maybe fell in the middle. Like, I know there are kids who go to like, very intensive boarding or prep schools and who've, like, told me how kind of really, like, easy—they shrugged off their freshman year. You know, like, “Oh, yeah, you know, just another day.” And then there seem to be, like, kids who maybe went to—often, like, public schools, like, in maybe, like, an under-resourced area or something. And that was, like, me for most of my high school. And so—kind of—I didn't take school very seriously as a high school student, and it wasn't very fun or challenging or stimulating or anything. And I actually switched schools my senior year because I wanted to—I wanted to try and make it that way. And it worked out.

So, at the very least, I ended, like, my high school career kind of accelerating. So in that sense I was prepared, but—it's like a yes—I don't know. It's a yes-and-no question with a wishy-washy answer from me, I guess. [Laughs]

WOMICK: [Laughs] That's fine. So what was freshman year like?

KEARL: [Sighs.] There were a lot of things going on. So I—yeah, freshman year was a busy year. I came in, and I did, like, walk onto the lacrosse team, and so, like, immediately that

was, like, —that was this goal I had set for myself, and I was, like, practicing and part of the team for a few weeks and ended up getting pretty badly hurt, subsequently getting cut. And so it was kind of like towards the end of my fall term having, like, a weird identity crisis. You know, like, in high school you have, like, this athlete identity or whatever. And all of a sudden, that's kind of turned on its head.

And, I don't know, I had, at the time, a girlfriend from high school that—and I maintained that relationship going into college, and so the maybe typical—like, the typical social and—you know, what people flag as, like, the hookup scene of whatever—I didn't really—I didn't really take part in.

So there was, like, a lot of jockeying around, trying to figure out—you know, figure out a good place for myself. And it was, like, hard to find a good fit. And by the end of the year, I thought, for a long time—well, for a long time—by the end of the year, I finally talked myself out of it. I was gonna transfer, really for reasons of cost—like, at the end of my senior year of high school. Just like—my dad had, like, a stroke and so couldn't work anymore, and the financial aid didn't reflect that. You know, like, I was here—

I decided to come to Dartmouth over other schools because Dartmouth gave me kind of like the best financial aid package, right? And then all of a sudden—all of a sudden, at the end of my senior year, after I've already, like, you know, committed—just there's, like, this big family—like big family upset, which, as a consequence, was, like, a financial upset. And it actually took—just like, filing—you know, filing, like, taxes and stuff. It took until the end of my sophomore year before, like, my financial aid reflected kind of the difference in income.

And so, yeah, my first year was, like, really—I was, like, made—I was—I was pretty thoroughly challenged by, like, trying to—trying to find a fit on campus and then trying to kind of justify in my head, like, *Well, you know, is it, like, worth it to be here with—you know, with maybe the added stress and added costs of having a price or, like, having a financial aid package that didn't reflect actual need or something like that.*

Yeah, so it was, I don't know. It was stressful. But, you know, here I am. Yeah, in the end I convinced myself that it would—it would be worth it, or, at the very least, the other alternatives had—like, there was no—there was no clear alternative that would—that could, like,—that could fix all the problems or something like that. And so I had no good reason to just uproot and leave. You know, it's, like, a place that affords a lot of opportunity if you—you know, if you work at it or whatever. You know, like, that old—like, the old motto, right? You know. Yeah. So by the end of my freshman year, I had kind of like settled into myself a little bit and decided to stay here and, like, give it a shot.

WOMICK: Wow, glad you did.

KEARL: Hmm, cheers, yeah. [Laughs.]

WOMICK: So how did you find friends your freshman year?

KEARL: Well, I actually became really close with my freshman roommates. They—I don't know—for whatever reason, we lucked out. We were in a triple in Russell Sage, and we—I don't know, we got along really well. Spent a lot of time together, and we're actually all in the same fraternity, weirdly enough... Well, anyway, so that was, like, one resource.

At first—one of the reasons it was frustrating at first was because I tried—you know, I had, like, the kind of sports identity, and I didn't really find that I fit with the lacrosse team socially, either.

So it was, it *was* kind of—it *was* kind of difficult to—you know, there was no—there was no community, like, waiting with open arms. You know what I mean? And ended up [chuckles]—a weird way to make good friends, but I ended up taking my—I took, like, this linear algebra class. It was, like, kind of a gateway class into the theoretical math major, which I ended up doing in my freshman spring. And it was, like—oh, my God! There were a couple of people that I worked with regularly in the class, and we would spend tens of hours each week together, like, trying to get through these problem sets. And, like, subsequent classes, did the same thing. I don't know, through—yeah, like, through [chuckles] battling over course work and stuff, like, really long math

problem sets is I think a good way to—a good way to get to know somebody pretty closely. I don't know.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KEARL: Maybe that—I feel like that's not—that's not too alien a thing to say. Like, if you have to, like, work on a project with two other people for 20 hours a week, you get to know them pretty well. And I made a few close friends that way. And actually, some of them kind of like adopted me into, you know, their little—you know, their little groups. Like, those are the people saying—you know, there with open arms or whatever. [Chuckles.] So—I don't know. Yeah. Those are two ways that strike me, I guess.

WOMICK: What about sophomore year?

KEARL: Yeah, so sophomore year I decided—okay, so also freshman year, I—in the spring, I played—I joined the rugby team just for, like, winter and spring term. And it was great fun. Yeah, I made a handful of really good friends that way, actually. But decided—I don't know. I decided to retire from team sports. I don't know. It was—at the end of my freshman spring and into my sophomore year, I ended up getting a job off campus to kind of help chip away at, like, you know—at the bills, whatever.

And so it just became a matter of—a matter of time commitments. It was, like,—I don't know. There was some super—superhuman people that walk around this campus and do everything, but it was, like,—I was in a situation where I enjoyed rugby. I wasn't in love with it. You know, I always compared it to, like, how I felt about lacrosse, which was, like, a really—really important thing to me. And so rugby was, like,—it was fun, but expendable.

And then I had to get a job, and I was working a lot off campus, and so it just—it was more commitment than I really wanted to take on. And I did that most of sophomore year until, like, financial aid reflected actual financial need and was able to—I was able to just, like, work a job on campus, like, at the library, which was sweet. Yeah.

WOMICK: What was your job off campus?

KEARL: I worked at, like, this place called the River Valley Club. It's just, like, this gym and spa. I don't know. The strength coach for the rugby team was, like, —was a trainer there. And, I don't know, he and I got along pretty well, and I asked him, you know, if there are any positions or something one day. And he looked into it, and it was just—it was a really nice thing to have work out. You know, I worked nights and weekends, and it was really empty, and I could do my homework.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KEARL: Yeah, it was sweet. And it's only five minutes away, so—yeah, but—so anyway, sophomore year I had all that going on in the background. I decided to rush, to, like, give it a chance. Coming in, I was really anti-Greek. I don't know. Maybe everyone who's affiliated here claims this, so [chuckles]—but, like, the Dartmouth Greek system is—you know, it's, like, —it's different than your standard Greek system, you know? Blah, blah, blah. There's maybe some truth to that. I don't know.

A couple of guys on the rugby team or just friends that I'd made, upperclassmen who were affiliated, didn't, like—it wasn't like, pressured into it thing. They just said, “Look, we'd really love to, you know, have you join this thing. It's important to *us*. You know, there's no obligation, but if you wanted to try, we'd love to have you” kind of thing.

And, I don't know, at the last minute I said, *Shit, okay, I'll go. Like, shake out and do it and see—you know, try it on and see if it fits*. And I don't know, it was, like, a lot of people get a lot out of rushing, or their pledge term or whatever. And I didn't. I didn't like being a pledge. [Jones Media Center night message goes off; acoustic guitar; woman's voice: “Good evening patrons—”] [Laughter.] [“—closing in thirty minutes—”]

WOMICK: Oh, good. That'll be in my recording. [“—working on a project in the Jones Center—”]

KEARL: Yeah. [The announcement continues.] You think it does that live every time, just strikes up this little guitar he's strumming on?

WOMICK: That would make it better. [Laughter.] [The announcement continues, ending with "—Jones in the next fifteen minutes. Thank you."] Thank you.

KEARL: Jeeze. Thank you, yep.

Yeah, anyway, I don't know. I didn't really like being a pledge. I didn't like, you know, being told to do this or that. And I didn't—frankly, I just didn't like spending all my free time, like, *in* the frat. And when—when I would, like, miss things for work, really—like, I don't know. I would miss things for work, and it would—you know, like, other pledges or other brothers would, like, not realize that I had, like, other commitments that took precedence or, like, in my mind they very clearly took precedence, but maybe not in everyone's mind, you know. Different priorities for different people. That's fine.

Yeah, and so, like, I joined to give it a shot, and then never really warmed up to it and was never totally invested in the process or anything. So, you know, by the time, like, pledge term was over and, like, I don't know, I was officially a brother, I tried to spend—I tried to, like, spend time there and hang out, and it just—it didn't really suit me.

So I kind of, I don't know, stopped going and eventually, like—I would, like, work off dues, and then eventually I just kind of phased out and didn't really go to meetings or pay dues or anything. And that's kind of—that's where I've been since, like, sophomore summer, just sort of—I don't think there is an inactive status, but effectively—you know, just inactive.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KEARL: Like, on clerical—like, clerical purposes, I'm on the roster, but, you know, I don't think anyone but, like, the '13s know who I am or anything like that. [Laughs.] It's kind of funny.

Yeah, so sophomore year was, like,—it was tough, like, balancing work and school and kind of, you know, trying—trying to see if, like, I would be interested in, like, doing the fraternity thing. I don't know. Like, looking back, it all seems very busy. You know, looking back on your terms of—it seems, like, really busy and doing a lot of things at once. I think sophomore year was like that in a big way. I don't know.

WOMICK: Yeah. What about your last two years here?

KEARL: So my last two years. Actually, I think junior year was—junior year was great. I was in Scotland in my junior fall on the philosophy foreign study, which is also another thing that I'm studying here. And Edinburgh is, like—[Chuckles.] It was, like, May—I felt I got there and I was, like, *This place is made for me*. You know, like, *I am like a native*. I felt—it was awesome.

And, like, I actually joined—[Chuckles.] I joined the Olympic weight lifting team at the university, which was, like, something that I—yeah—something that I, like, did in high school a little bit, and on a whim ran into—ran into one of the guys on the team, and he was, like, “Oh, you should come to one of our”—like, “You should come to our training, like, this Friday,” blah, blah, blah.

And I ended up joining and, like, had—I had an awesome time. Like, went around Scotland with them in competitions and stuff. And actually, had a totally different experience on the FSP than I think most of my classmates really—most people who go on the philosophy trip—you know, in the history of the philosophy trip have had. It's like, I didn't really spend a lot of time with other Dartmouth students. You know, we did things, like, as a class every week and, like, outside of school. And we had a class together a week and everything, so it's not like I went under the radar or something like that. But I really, like,—

And my social experience in Scotland was, like, really authentically Scottish. [Chuckles.] It was cool. And it was just, like, wonderful to get—to get space from Dartmouth and the busyness. You know, it had been, like, kind of a stressful first two years, and it was, like, a really great way to step

back from that and have a really positive—like, a really positive term. And, yeah, to do something that I loved and was, like, totally different than what I'd done before.

And my junior winter, I was off. Just home. I thought— [Sighs.] Well, I don't know. I wasn't totally proactive from Scotland, trying to, like, find something to do for the winter. And I told myself that was because it was, like, really hard to coordinate with time zones and stuff, but—[Laughs.] But I think I just wasn't being very diligent. And so—yeah, I decided to just kind of spend the term at home and, I don't know, try and help out, be, like, a positive influence, I guess.

It was—I don't know. I think I—I think I did help out. I think I was, like,—I'd like to think that overall I was a positive influence in, like,—you know. But I was *bored*. Oh, my God! I was, like, academic calendars don't line up, and all my friends—you know, all my friends were, like, in the middle of their terms and, like, you know, working—you know, working part-time jobs and just—I don't know. They, like, very clearly had lives. [Laughter.] And I was, like, “Look, guys, I got ten weeks off. Let's hang out every day.” [Laughs.]

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

KEARL: So it was—maybe—maybe the important point is, like, by the end of my winter term, I was, like, actually really excited and ready to come back. And, yeah, in the spring—was, like, after—oh, damn—we got out for summer and—after not seeing my close friends at school for, you know, six months or more, it was—you know, it was, like,—it was really great, and it was really great to come back. And kind of validating. You know, like, I was, like, back, and I was happy to be back. You know, felt like—felt good to be here, which was, like, validating in the sense that, like, maybe my freshman and sophomore years it was, like,—it was really frustrating. Like, it was really frustrating to be here, and I was, you know, kind of always, like, weighing options. Like, you know, *Is it worth it? Is it worth it?*

So junior year was really *good*. [Chuckles.] And this year has been—yeah, totally—totally positive, I guess. I guess I spent enough time kind of like bumping around wherever I found—like, I really found people that—like, I really—I have, like, a

group of people that I spend time with, are really important to me here. And sort of like coming into my own, like the things that I care about studying and maybe issues that are important to me, you know.

Yeah, if you try and—the idea was, like, if you try and—try on enough—if you try on enough, maybe one of ‘em will fit. You know, I finally found one that fit. You know, the group of people or, like, a course of study or whatever—you know. So, yeah, my senior year’s been, like, actually really satisfying.

WOMICK: So how did you meet the people that have been most meaningful to you here?

KEARL: Oh, my God... [Sighs.] One of them is—was my freshman roommate. A couple, I did meet through, like, math class—like, problem sets, battles of attrition, you know.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KEARL: And really—I don’t know, just through—through friends of friends, being kind of adopted by [chuckles]—being adopted by a little different friend groups, I guess. You know, I’m not—I’m not particularly group-oriented. Like, I’m not really a member of any clubs or [chuckles] any organizations. So I didn’t—you know, I didn’t have, like, a ready-made kind of network, you know, to meet people and mingle, stuff like that. So I have, yeah, no good answer. Just sort of going—you know, going through the process.

WOMICK: Here and there, the ones that fit?

KEARL: Yeah, yeah. Here and there, the ones that fit. And, I don’t know, I kind of—I like it that way. You know, everyone that I spend time with, I really value the time that I spend with them, so it’s worked out well.

WOMICK: Have there ever been any times while at Dartmouth that you felt like you didn’t fit in here or like you were an outsider?

KEARL: Yeah. I guess—[Sighs.] I don’t know. I guess when I—it was, like, especially—a feeling that was, like,—I’m trying to articulate this. Maybe—I don’t really feel that—I don’t know. I

don't really like the inside-outside kind of dialectic. But if I ever felt it, it was really my freshman year. I don't know. I didn't—I didn't really feel like—and maybe this is a totally unfair thing for me to think, but I didn't feel like people really knew where I was coming from. You know, a lot of people fall in love with this place right away, and I didn't get why. I had reservations or why there were things—like, why I wasn't so excited to be here, as excited as they were.

And there was, like, a culture shock, totally. Not like the—not like the social culture. I mean, that was—that was, like, a culture shock for me. But I don't know, I—I guess I had never—I had never been exposed to—and this is, like—you know—like, pardon any judgmental overtones here. I'd never been exposed to, like, a very, like, wealthy, WASP-y community.

WOMICK: Yeah.

KEARL: It was [chuckles] kind of startling, and not that that necessarily makes up the majority of—you know, of the student body or something like that. I'd just never seen it so concentrated, you know? And I don't know, those people are, like, very visible, and maybe a lot of them are—a lot of them are—well, maybe some of them are legacies or even, you know, you see athletes who immediately—you know, you're sort of absorbed into the team. All these people who had—who were very comfortable and very happy to be here, and I was really frustrated and really questioning whether or not I should be here. And so, yeah, in that sense, I kind of felt on the outside.

You know, sort of like the people didn't understand—like, a lot of people didn't understand where I was coming from, and also because there were, like, problems that were, like, so recent and so, like, close—I don't know, I didn't really sit down and, like, talk to people. Like, "Here's where I'm coming from." You know, like, "These are the challenges I'm facing." You know, I wasn't—you know, I wasn't mature enough as a 17-, 18-year-old kid to look at things that way.

WOMICK: Well, that's tough to do, even as a grownup.

KEARL: Yeah, I guess so.

WOMICK: Have you ever felt like Dartmouth's location impacted your experience here? Did that have any role?

KEARL: Yeah. I guess—sometimes it feels isolated, isolating. But maybe it—it seems a lot worse than it is. I don't know, like, when people come up to—I don't know, you, like, fly to Boston, you take a three-hour bus, you're, like, *Oh, my God, where is this place?* And, you know, most people don't have a car, and so you, like, I don't know—[Jones Media Center announcement begins] [Laughter] [Acoustic guitar; woman's voice "The Jones Media Center will be closing in 15 minutes. If you are working in the Jones Center, please begin shutting down equipment and bringing materials to the front counter. All videos should be returned or checked out in Jones before—"] It is just consistent, with how well he plays that. ["Thank you, and have a great evening."]

WOMICK: Gets lots of practice. [Chuckles.]

KEARL: Yeah, every day, like clockwork.

Yeah, I think—like, sometimes it's frustrating. You know, you feel—you feel isolated or kind of immobile. You know, if you don't have a car or if you don't live nearby—you know, like, I have plenty of friends who are from New England, and if they have a free weekend or something like that, like wonderful, poetic free weekend—

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

KEARL: You know, who the hell has that? But, you know, like, you *hear* stories of someone who, like, went home on their free weekend and, like, saw family and friends from home.

WOMICK: Right.

KEARL: Yeah, right. [Chuckles.] But, you know, like, that was usually out of the question for me, just—you know, it's hard to make the commute up and down the coast, right? Expensive. Like, it's not a nice thing to say, but, you know, you pay a couple of hundred bucks to spend a day with your family. You start to say well, like, *Jeez, is this really worth it? I'll see you guys in a month.* You know. [Chuckles.] Not to sound cold, but,

you know, those are, like, how the decisions played out in my head.

But, like, I don't know, when you're in this—like, the throes of the term and stuff, I don't think you often, like,—or for me—I don't think I often, like, had enough free time kind of lined up where I would sit and, like, bang my head against the wall, like, *I wish we weren't out in the middle of nowhere so I could go do something*. I don't know. It seemed like when you're here, you're sort of stimulated from start to finish.

And, yeah, so—I don't know. I never—you know, when people ask, like, “Oh, my God!” you know, like, “What do you do?” Like, I'm a student. Like, you know, I do school when I'm at school. Yeah, if I weren't a student here, if I just lived in Hanover, I might be, like, really frustrated and feel really lonely, you know, because it's three hours to the nearest city or—I don't know. Something like that. But, like, while you're doing it,—like while you're doing sort of like the academic term here, I feel like you're kept stimulated. Or that's been my—you know, that's been my experience.

WOMICK: So have you had many opportunities to go home and see your family?

KEARL: Yeah. Most—I've gone home most breaks—you know, most breaks in between terms. Like, when, you know, whenever, like—whenever it's budget-able. You know, if you're gonna spend your money on something, I think it's a good—I think it's a good thing to spend money on, try and go home. So, yeah, I don't know. Not every break. And especially before this year, when we had, like, the quick Thanksgiving. You know, it was, like, *Oh, gee, it's two days and you're back for a week and then*—but, yeah, most breaks are spent home.

And I guess—just before, I was talking about, you know, sort of the intermittent or, like, the inter-term—here you're, like, *Oh, yeah, like, I want to kill a Friday afternoon. Like, I'll go drive two hours and see my family*, or something like that. Yeah, I've never done anything like that. [Chuckles.] Like, a casual—a casual, *Oh, yeah, I'm gonna, like, fly down to—fly down to Gainesville this weekend*. Yeah.

WOMICK: No big.

KEARL: Yeah. [Both chuckle.] Yeah, nothing like that, no.

WOMICK: So how do you think your time at Dartmouth has changed you, or not?

KEARL: Hmm. Well, maybe—first and foremost, it's made me, like, work much harder and commit myself—commit myself to whatever—you know, whatever projects I take on. Like, in this case, maybe they're mostly academic, but I think maybe the pace you have to operate—the pace at which you have to operate here and maybe the particular people that I've been surrounding myself with all operate at a really high level, and, you know, it kind of raises—it like, raises your bottom line. And, yeah, so I—I think it's prepared me to kind of work on much bigger—much bigger problems or, like, much more demanding problems and actually, I don't know, be really, like, invested in doing good work and learning. Those were, like,—it's kind of weird to say, but those were, like, not things that as a high school student, I really cared too much about until really the end—you know, until I was, like, put in a position where I was, like, challenged and interested.

Yeah, so I, like, care about—care about learning and, like, doing good work and, you know, being a part of—like, having—like, being invested in some kind of project for yourself or something. You know, always working towards—you know, working towards some goal or—you know. Blah, blah, blah.

I think—I don't know. There are, like,—there are, like, cynical things, too. You know, you see, like, there's a lot of, like, cronyism at, like, an Ivy League institution. You know, people—you know, people have friends or family, and they get internships and jobs, or you see—I don't know. You see, like, really, things that make you uncomfortable. Like, I don't know, if you go out—you go out and you see, like, a binge-drinking culture or—I don't know. Like, a social scene that gets very often pinned as, like, a disrespectful one—you know, a lot of people have qualms with. I don't know, like sexual violence on campus and stuff. And these aren't, like, causes that I champion or anything like that, but, I don't

know, you see a lot of things that make you uncomfortable, and they kind of challenge—challenge the way you think.

Maybe the biggest takeaway is, you know, you're—it's like a community—it's like a community made up of—you know, the campus is made up of a lot of different—a lot of different backgrounds, and kind of wading through all that, you're forced to kind of look at things in a lot of different ways, some of which you don't like, but even so, it's, like,—it's challenged you to think or to consider another perspective or something like that.

And—yeah, I don't know. A lot of ways that I probably am not even equipped to articulate. Like, probably most of the ways it's changed me, I have no idea. I couldn't tell you. Certainly, like, the friends that I've made have been, in part, like, one of the biggest reasons that I decided to stay here. You know, it was, like, a huge factor. You know, like, finding people that were—you know, that really mattered to me. And, I don't know, maybe you'd have to ask them.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.] What would you say has been your most challenging experience at Dartmouth?

KEARL: Man...Well, I guess—I guess it was sort of like a—it was, like, an emotional one for my first kind of year, year and a half here. Yeah, it wasn't really, like, oh my—like, *I want to join this club* and blah, blah, blah. It was really, like, a kind of a step removed from that. It was like—my biggest challenge at Dartmouth was, like, whether or not I should even be at Dartmouth. Yeah, dealing with those questions. Yeah. Which was—I don't know. Maybe that's not a very satisfying answer, because it was really like—those problems were more, like, personal and emotional and dealt with things at home, not—you know, they manifested here, but they weren't, like, Dartmouth problems.

WOMICK: Were you able to talk to anyone here about them or talk to your family or friends from home?

KEARL: Yeah. I talked to my family and friends and kind of eventually became comfortable. Like, yeah, for a long time it was, like, my—you know, it was, like, my struggle, or whatever. Was my cross. It was stupid. I eventually kind of grew up about it

and, yeah, like, became comfortable telling people—there's—it's—it's a weird—weird reaction that I don't think is just me. [Chuckles.] Where you go through something where, you know, you face some challenge or some emotional strain and you just—you don't think that anyone else will be able to empathize—you know, it's, like, *your thing*. And so I had that—I had that mindset for—for quite a while. And it certainly—you know, all it did was, like, kind of insulate the problem, you know. Even if—when you talk to somebody, even if you—I had this idea, like, if I told anyone that they would go, “Oh, my God! Like, I'm so sorry. Like, do you need—like, do you need anything? Do you need help?”

And that answer really frustrated me. “No, it's not—you know, it's not that I want you to tell me what to do. It's just, like,—can you understand where I'm coming from?”—that kind of thing. And I didn't think that people *could* understand where I was coming from, for a long time.

And so—and so eventually, like with some of my closer friends it came up, and I became more—more comfortable, like, sharing and, you know, understanding that, like,—like, people—I don't know, people can still kind of put themselves on a level with you emotionally and be supportive even if—you know, it's not about whether they, like, have the right answer or, like, have some advice or something, you know. Just, like, having—yeah, like, some emotional support network or something like that. I don't know if that makes sense.

Yeah. I think I've lost track of the question and that I'm rambling.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.] That was fine. That was fine.

How do you think Dartmouth has changed since you've been here?

KEARL: [Sighs.] I don't know. The bonfire kind of sucked the last—this past fall. I don't know. I don't know if I'm totally equipped to answer that. Like, there are a lot of traditions that this place seems to have and hold onto really tightly, and I don't know—it's hard for me to separate—like, qualities about Dartmouth that have changed and qualities about Dartmouth

that have sort of been there that I just noticed later. You know what I mean? It seems like—it seems like maybe there are more—there are more discussions going on about stuff like sexual assault on campus. That's like one thing that comes to mind. But, again, maybe I just wasn't—you know, I wasn't paying attention to those conversations when I was a freshman or sophomore or something.

But maybe—you know, maybe the sort of like immunity—like, the Greek system immunities is somehow trying to be addressed or dismantled. But, I don't know, new president coming in. Who knows how it's going to be handled? But that seemed like at least a direction things were going when Jim Kim stepped down. Like, all the new policies were put in place.

But, like, grand scheme? I don't really know. I don't think I could pick out the—pick out the trends very well.

WOMICK: It's a big question.

KEARL: Yeah.

WOMICK: So moving forward for you, with graduation coming up, what do you see as your relationship with Dartmouth after that being?

KEARL: Honestly, not a very big one with the college, itself. You know, a handful of people—more than a handful. You know, there are plenty of people who—you know, have already graduated, graduating with me, who are younger, that I am—you know, that I'm, like, bonded with, and that won't change. And, like, a lot of professors that have, like, really—really affected my experience here and really made me sort of invest myself in my education—so, like, those relationships I'll maintain. But, I don't know, with the college, like, as an alum or something, I don't see myself as having much of, like an alum identity, like, with a capital A—you know, like back on the weekends or, like, big—like, a big presence, you know, ten years down the line on, like, you know, like, at the bonfire for, like, the 2027th or whatever. [Laughs.]

But, yeah. I mean, it depends on—like, what—maybe Dartmouth for me—the big takeaway has been just those

relationships—you know, sort of the friendships that I've made and, you know, the connections with students and faculty. Like, those—that's what really Dartmouth has amounted to for me. And so if you look at it that way, yeah, my relationship I think will be strong. Like, those things are really important, and I value them a lot and don't intend on—I don't intend to, you know, kind of let them—like, let them slip by or, you know, forget about them or something like that.

But if you want, like, *the* college—I don't know. Not a very strong connection for me, just the fact of the matter, I guess.

WOMICK: Yeah. So I think we've covered almost all of the questions on here. Is there anything that I haven't asked about or that you would like to talk about that we haven't covered?

KEARL: Oh, man! I didn't know I had time for—[Sighs.] Do you field questions?

WOMICK: [Laughs.] We can after the recorder is off.

KEARL: [Laughs.] Man! No, I don't—I don't want to rant. I think that my experience here has maybe been atypical. Maybe a lot of people say that, so maybe it's not [chuckles]—whatever. Yeah, I think my experience here has maybe been atypical, and I've, like, tried on a lot of different things that didn't fit or that I didn't like. And, like, now, kind of like at the end of it, I really, like, cherish the relationships that I've made with a lot of people here. And there's space for you to *make it* into something that fits. There's, like, there's space for you to—you know, like you appropriate Dartmouth to kind of suit your needs. That's been—that's been my takeaway, so I—yeah, I'm just gonna ramble. I don't know. [Laughs.] There's no good content left to come, I guess.

WOMICK: What advice would you give to someone just coming into Dartmouth?

KEARL: [Sighs.] Oh, man! What advice would I give? Okay, so, I'm, like, doing this—it's, like, this first-year peer mentor program, and this guy, Colby Ye ['16]—he's awesome. He's a freshman. When I met him in the fall, he was, like, clearly really, really intelligent, really motivated, which, you know, you can find just about anywhere you look around here. But

he—maybe I—my advice to anyone, and this is stealing—totally stolen advice from, like, what I see in Colby, which I do not at all take credit for; he's just, like, totally on an awesome track. But to just try everything and to, like—like, there'll be time—challenge yourself in as many ways as you can, and it might be frustrating because you might fail at a lot of those things, but you kind of have—cast a wide net. There, that's my slogan: Cast a wide net, incoming freshmen.

WOMICK: Great.

KEARL: Yeah.

WOMICK: Anything else before I turn it off?

KEARL: Nope.

WOMICK: Okay.

[End of interview.]