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Dartmouth College Oral History Program  
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World  
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WOMICK: Today is Tuesday, May 7th. My name is Cally Womick, and I'm here in Rauner Library with Cameron Orth. So to get us started, why don't you talk about where you grew up?

ORTH: So I grew up in the Berkshires in Massachusetts for about six years, and then I moved to central Virginia, and I stayed there until, like, through high school and then came directly up here. I pretty much knew I was coming here for eight years before I came here.

WOMICK: Eight years?

ORTH: Yeah. 'Cause, so my mom was a Class of '76, the first class of women.

WOMICK: Okay.

ORTH: So I learned a lot about it.

WOMICK: Did you grow up visiting the campus?

ORTH: Yeah. Every, like, three or four years.

WOMICK: Okay. Well, that's cool! You didn't consider any other colleges?

ORTH: Tried not to, yeah. I mean, I dropped out of my high school so that I could come here a year early. This is the only one I applied to, early decision. I was going to hold off a year if I didn't get in.

WOMICK: That's a lot.

ORTH: Yeah.

WOMICK: So what was it like coming here for the first time as an official student?

ORTH: As an official student.

- WOMICK: Mm-hm.
- ORTH: I don't know. That was pretty rush, because I was—I mean, pre-matriculation was the Trips, so. But it was *very* awesome. I mean, visiting—like, I had never been inside a dorm, for example, even though I'd heard about the dorms that my mom stayed in. And they still exist, obviously, but very different from what I ended up living in, in East Wheelock.
- WOMICK: Yes.
- ORTH: It's a very cool experience to actually be a student here.
- WOMICK: What was orientation like for you?
- ORTH: I was lucky 'cause I had one of the first trips that you could stay for, so I got the whole pre-o. So I had already met, like, a good handful of people that were in East Wheelock, and I had my friends from Trips, so orientation was just really laid back. Like, I already had my feet on the ground, and I already knew where everything was, which was nice.
- WOMICK: Yeah, that *is* nice.
- So when you were thinking about coming to Dartmouth, how much of a role did the location play, or was it just the school and it wouldn't have mattered where it was?
- ORTH: I definitely prefer the idea of not being in a city, and having been here more than any other place, I definitely knew that I liked scenery and the locale.
- WOMICK: Were you interested in being involved in the DOC?
- ORTH: Not especially. If I were, it would have been just like Cabin and Trail, helping out there. I'm not necessarily an active person.
- WOMICK: So walk me through freshman fall. What was that like?
- ORTH: That was difficult in its own way 'cause—I mean, my big, I guess, mistake was to take classes that I already felt

comfortable with, so I got to meet some really cool professors, but I ended up not being motivated to do the homework week to week, so I fell very behind very fast, even though, like, I could go in and take the tests and do completely fine.

So I found myself with—by the end of the term, I found myself with a failing grade in my computer science class that I could have done five years earlier. And I actually met with Tom Cormen, who was head of the department and everything, and I knew his name before coming. I mean, it was a one-on-one meeting, and he just told me he had no idea how this happened ‘cause he was looking at my, like, final, and I did fine on everything that most people didn’t. Yeah, so I ended up getting an E on my first term here. So that was a little weird. And then that kind of set into place that I was gonna—I ended up dropping out, or taking a medical withdrawal, two terms later.

WOMICK: Wow.

ORTH: Yeah. [Chuckles.] But I met a lot of cool people, and during the time that I was falling behind, I was spending all of that time with, like, a bunch of friends that I had met. I ended up tutoring for more than 30 hours a week instead of doing work of my own.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.] Life decisions.

ORTH: Ironically, like, math ‘cause my other class that I was falling behind in was a math class that I had taken two or three years ago, before that. And so I ended up tutoring the intro math classes pretty much full time instead.

WOMICK: Okay. And so it was two terms later that you took time off, or the next term?

ORTH: It was about this time three years ago, so, yeah, I withdrew a long time. But I had been in close communication with my dean. Dean Pfister was a big deal. And so, I mean, I had a bad relationship on top of everything. And it just wasn’t workin’ out. I met professors that I still keep in touch with—and they all, like, understood my situation. I had a problem with sleeping through classes, especially my 9L freshman

fall. I still talk to Timothy Pulju, the classics and linguistics professor that I was with. And, like, he completely understood, so I ended up coming out with mediocre grades, but, like, really lasting, like, friendships. I pretty much spent the last two years recovering the grade part of that. But I've taken a second class with a lot of the professors that I took courses with the first year.

WOMICK: Wow. So how did the winter go after that?

ORTH: To some extent, it was more of the same. I came back from what used to be a short winter break, like, ready to seriously do stuff, so I did four courses for the first, like, three weeks or some—'cause I dropped the second—I dropped from four to two the second that you were allowed to drop one for free, essentially, for the fourth class. So I took a W and did okay in the other two.

But socially it was the same kind of thing. I spent every second I could with like, a large group of people. And jumping from group to group. So, like, I pretty much was never alone for—and I, like, was only alone when I slept, and I could only sleep during, like, times when other people had classes. I was sleeping during the day for a lot of winter.

WOMICK: So who were you hanging out with?

ORTH: Mostly people on my floor and the floor below me. And I got into a relationship with somebody on the floor below me, so, like—and we had a really close-knit floor, but I also hung out with the other floor, which kind of took me away from my central group of friends, I guess, for a while. But I had a really cool roommate I still talk to every chance I get. So that was a nice anchor, I think.

WOMICK: Great. And then the spring.

ORTH: The spring? It ended up being so much more of the same that I had already talked—I spent the first month essentially talking to Dean Pfister about the options. So I was going to counseling here, and that's how I set up the medical withdrawal. It was pretty much just a formality at that point. You know, I could sign the form anytime I wanted to. So I

had, like, all of May to decide when, or if I wanted to try to finish.

But academically it was the same kind of thing. I got an A on my first paper in my freshman seminar, and then I hadn't started the paper by the time the second one was due, so I knew that wasn't gonna happen. And then, again, I was tutoring. I started tutoring more than I had in the winter. And so by room draw is when I decided—'cause that was like kind of a good option to, like, look forward to the future, and I realized the future was not gonna be good if I didn't do something.

WOMICK: So what was that process like?

ORTH: Leaving or coming back?

WOMICK: Leaving.

ORTH: The leaving was interesting because it was so late in term that I kind of wanted to stay just through the end of term, but they have, like, pretty strict policies on that. So I was able to stay one week extra from usual. And so my whole floor like helped me move out, and it ended up being, like, really emotional for a lot of us, and I ended up going—my mom happened to be living in Maine just for that year, so I ended up being able to come back—I actually visited twice before the end of the term, so that was over, like, the last four weeks of class. But, of course, since it was freshman year, even though I was in Maine for June and July, nobody was here that I really knew. So I kind of fell out of touch in person with a lot of these people. Yeah. So then I started five terms off in a row.

WOMICK: Wow.

ORTH: So, that was pretty different, 'cause the policy to get back is to get, like, a lot of consec—pretty consec—a lot of consecutive meetings with the same therapist of some sort. Could be pretty much any kind of therapist. And then I also had to pass all sorts—I had to take all sorts of tests, but they're, like, neurological tests, even though they have, like, no direct bearing on—it's, like, one was, like, a basic intelligence test, which I hadn't taken in years. I'd never

taken a real one, I don't think. So I did all sorts of things like that. And I had to do some kind of work or education experience to prove that I *could* handle, like, the course load stuff.

So I ended up doing—I finished an associate's degree in business while I was away, over two semesters, and that was extremely different 'cause I was taking five classes or six classes in one case, and I got all, like, perfect A's without really trying, because that was the only thing I was doing, whereas even the second I got back, I was doing so many other things that—I was taking four classes my first term back in the fall of '11, and, like, that was actually significantly harder than taking six second-year business classes. I mean, I still did fine that first term—I mean, I knew I was back for real at that point.

WOMICK: Okay. What was it like coming back after so much time off?

ORTH: Very strange, especially since—I mean, I decided to come back to East Wheelock just for familiarity of location. Unfortunately, like, Dean Pfister was on his way out from East Wheelock by then, so it was kind of a different climate. But because I knew a couple people, I got introduced to all of their friends really quickly in that first term, in the first couple of weeks of that term, including the sister of one of my floor mates was a UGA, so I ended up meeting her entire floor of freshmen, and now one of my best friends, Jeremy Whitaker ['15], was on that floor. So that first term back was definitely formative for the last year, the last two years now.

WOMICK: Yeah.

ORTH: Yeah, pretty much all my closest friends I hung out the most with that year, that fall.

WOMICK: Did you have a roommate?

ORTH: Not that—well, I had a single that was attached to another single, and so I got to know that '14, 'cause I missed the entire freshman year of the '14s, so I knew almost none. So I met him, I met some of his friends, I met—that UGA was a '14. I met some of her friends, so that was—pretty much all the '14s I know, I met that one term. And all the '15s. And I

had to take my freshman— ‘cause I dropped out during a freshman seminar, I had to take a freshman seminar, so I took a freshman seminar with '15s, and got to, like, lead that class, essentially. And I got a citation that, like, cited the fact that I was, like, leading the younger kids or whatever, even though they're not any younger than I am. Like, maybe a year. But, yeah, that's pretty much how I got all the friends I have now, reconnecting with everybody. Again, so, the whole time I was gone, I was visiting pretty much every time I could afford to, which—and a few more times after that. So I was here every couple months the entire year and almost a half I was gone.

WOMICK: So you weren't that disconnected.

ORTH: I tried not to be, yeah.

WOMICK: And did you keep in touch with the friends that you'd made?

ORTH: Unfortunately, mostly I was just keeping in touch with the girl I was with, which—yeah, which was probably a bad decision in the end. Luckily, during the summer right before the fall I came back, because it was sophomore summer, when I did visit her I managed to visit a lot of people that I knew, and that's when I reconnected with people like Cooper Stimson ['13], who wound up being my roommate for this last year. And we realized that he was switching to a math major, and I had started my math major but hadn't really made progress in my two terms, my two and a half terms. So we ended up being in the same boat essentially, even though he had had to start at Math 3. And now we've taking a bunch of classes together and worked on a lot of projects together, so that was nice. And I reconnected with a couple of other people that ended up helping me a lot during fall term.

WOMICK: Cool. So going through the rest of what was your second year here, how did it go?

ORTH: I'd say pretty well. I mean, that first term back was actually by far my best term here in terms of, like, grades and in terms of making friends and still being able to manage classes.

WOMICK: And did you keep all four classes?

ORTH: I did.

WOMICK: Wow.

ORTH: I let one kind of fall to the side, and I got, like, right below the median, but everything else I did really well in. Again, it was easier classes, on purpose, because I got used to taking a lot of easy classes at the community college that I was at, so I, yeah, stuck with that model and did fine. And then I did end up doing the same bad decision next spring, taking four classes and dropping down to two. But I've done fine since then to make up for it. Had a couple bumps along the way. In terms of academics, that's pretty much it.

But then that fall I decided to go back into College Bowl, which I had done very briefly in the fall of my freshman year, even though—I was very active in my high school, and the year I dropped out and did home schooling for a year in high school, I became really active at the college level as well. And so it was kind of expected that I was gonna continue, but I didn't. Pretty much once I got into a relationship and once I fell behind in my classes, I just quit, and I only went to, like, one tournament that first year. But now—I became the treasurer very quickly, and then—and I've been the president for the last year, and I will be the next year. And under my leadership, we've actually grown for the first time in forever. We'd always maintained the same size, from about, like, five regulars to about fifteen regulars.

WOMICK: Mm-hm. How often does the group get together, and what do y'all do?

ORTH: Originally it was two times a week, Mondays and Thursdays for two hours each, and part of that time was spent practicing what's called trash, which was just kind of—it's not academic; it's, like, a bunch of pop culture kind of stuff with no real canon. Like, it could pretty much be anything, which makes it hard to compete. So that was part of my role of taking leadership, was to get rid of that or at least move away from that. And now this year, starting in the fall, we practice four times a week for a minimum of two and a half hours, usually three or four hours.

We're missing our best player right now, who was a '15 that I met that fall and kind of helped coach 'cause he hadn't been exposed to like college-level material. And between the two of us, we were practicing at least 20 hours a week. And we went to five tournaments in one term, which was the first time that Dartmouth had done that in years, possibly ten years. Yeah. So now we're on our way to being the top undergraduate team. If he had been here this—he's in Italy right now, but if he had been here this year, we would have been in the top ten overall, in the top three undergraduate, so.

WOMICK: That's impressive.

ORTH: It would have been pretty nice.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

ORTH: Instead, we did, like, very middling.

WOMICK: Next year.

ORTH: But I think we made people notice the fact, 'cause they knew that we were missing our best player. Like, in the collegiate rankings that were just based on other teams and other people that are active, we were placed 25<sup>th</sup>, which is the first time that Dartmouth had been ranked in a while. But I think everybody realizes that it's a pretty low ranking, 'cause we got better than that without our best player and without our like third-best player.

WOMICK: Mhmm. Wow.

ORTH: Yeah, we're doing pretty well now. The main thing is now to try to recruit more '17s 'cause when we recruited '16s, we managed to get 25 new faces, at least, over the fall, but not—very few kept with it, so we're gonna try to work on retention rates, especially—we really noticed that they're about—a little more—like, five or six girls versus about twenty guys, and of the twenty guys, like, eight of them stayed, at least sometimes, whereas out of the five or six girls, only one has been regular, and she'd already been involved in high school. So we're trying to figure out what that problem is. But now, I mean, that one girl became very

active. I mean, she's my roommate for next year, and I think she'll be pretty active for the next year. And the second-best player on our team is a '16, so we definitely have younger players now. But yeah, that's pretty much, I think, 90 percent of my time, is something related to College Bowl.

WOMICK: Uh-huh.

ORTH: Like, right now I have a CS class, where it's an open-ended project and I'm doing something for College Bowl.

WOMICK: [Chuckles] Really?

ORTH: Yeah. So—but yeah, I'm even getting credit now.

WOMICK: That's terrific.

ORTH: Yeah.

WOMICK: So I know your time at Dartmouth's been kind of chopped up, but when you think about the college as a whole, how would you say it's changed since you came here as a first-year student?

ORTH: It has been kind of chop-chop, but, like, now I've been on—this is my seventh term on out of eleven in a row, so—

WOMICK: Oh wow.

ORTH: —so I'm getting pretty consistent now. But it's really hard to say if it's—there's no one way that it's significantly changed. To me, that's actually a good thing. There are definitely issues on campus that, as far as I know, people are more aware about, but, at the same time, I feel like you have to be here for a while before you find the circles where people actually talk about it. But, I mean, I'm pretty adamant about if you want to be involved in issues about, like, sexual assault and racism and homophobia on campus, like, there are so many ways you can get involved. But the recent things on campus now, I was actually pretty surprised that so many people didn't know basic, like, facts and stuff about—and statistics, because, like, I said—I mean, I've met so many people that are involved, like actively trying to fix these things for the last three or four years now.

I think certain things are getting better. Like, I think a lot of the frats actually now have stances on sexual assault and like what they're doing about it. As far as I know, very few of them did a while back. And now that I know people at, like, almost every frat and people that are in the leadership of those frats, I definitely have a different view about how the frats are doing, so I don't know how much has actually changed, or if it's just my view, my position.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

ORTH: But, yeah, I feel like—the part that I don't like is that it seems like the administration is pushing more towards the research university and the Dartmouth University kind of thing, and since I've been big on tradition of Dartmouth for—before I even got here—that kind of bothers me at a pretty fundamental level, 'cause I had talked about that with my mom before I even got there. Like, that's one of the reasons I came, was to go to an undergraduate focus place. And even though I want to stay now for a master's degree after this, I still want it to be undergraduate focused. If it weren't, I would probably not want to stay. Yeah. I think that's the only—that's the bad sign that I saw. But part of that's a temporary president and now an interim president.

WOMICK: Yeah.

ORTH: So I'm definitely excited for the new president, especially considering that he was there when my mom was there, which was when Kemeny was there, which is my favorite figure in Dartmouth history. And he's a math major—he was a math major, just like Kemeny. So I think there are a lot of good signs there.

WOMICK: There are, definitely.

So seven out of eleven terms on in a row.

ORTH: Mm-hm.

WOMICK: Why?

ORTH: To make up for all the time gone. I mean, I missed five and a half terms in a row, which means six 'cause that spring term didn't count that first year, and because I had, like, three or four two-course terms now—well, one I got that E, so it was a de facto two-course term. But, yeah, pretty much it's just a course count thing now. And I still have distribbs to do over the next four terms, but I'm also trying to do something for a second major 'cause I finished my math major a while back. So now I'm working—I did—my second freshman summer, I was in film, which was originally just supposed to get the art distrib out of the way because I was kind of interested in the idea, but I kind of fell in love with that class and that professor, and now I work for him, and I've taken three classes with him, audited two more. Yeah, I'm like TAing one of his classes. Definitely trying to do something with film and media studies, and I'm trying to merge it with something in computer science as well.

WOMICK: And you want to finish as soon as possible, I suppose?

ORTH: I mean, if I could afford it, I'd probably stay even more than the four terms, but, at the same time, I probably want to switch to—if I can get into the master's program here, I would like to so that I can—I mean, the CS department here is pretty oriented towards pushing anybody who wants to continue in CS right into the master's program at the end, and so, like, the major adviser is not very worried about the fact that I won't have time to finish, like, a whole major. I should be able to do pretty much anything I want in CS and then finish everything when I get to the master's level.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

ORTH: Yes, it's all lining up pretty well, except for the fact that I'm running out of time.

WOMICK: That'll put you in Hanover for a long time.

ORTH: That's fine with me. This is very similar to where I grew up, and it's pretty much been the only place I've wanted to go for the whole time I was in Virginia.

WOMICK: Mhmm. So looking even further, ahead after the master's program, what would be the plan after that?

ORTH: Well, part of the idea of the master's program is to—because I essentially ruined my GPA those first two terms, which means in the current climate of math and CS programs, it pretty much rules out a *lot* of programs for Ph.D. level, so the idea is to get a better track record in the master's program and then go right into either a math or computer science—I'm right on the border of my research interests—I like algorithms and number theory kind of stuff, so pretty much either, depending on what adviser I end up finding. So, yeah, I'll be in school for, like, seven years, eight years at least. [Chuckles.]

But I'm going for a professorship in the end. I'd love to end up back here, especially. If I don't end up back here, I'd like to be at some very similar location, possibly back where I'm from, like Williams. But, yeah, that's been my target for five, ten years now, so I'm probably not gonna deviate.

WOMICK: Have you talked to any professors here about that goal?

ORTH: I have, and it's been a tough conversation because of my GPA. Just—they've helped me be realistic about it, which is why I've decided on the master's program, 'cause it's pretty non-traditional. But hopefully it'll help me merge the two paths of computer science and math and it'll give me more time, 'cause if I do the master's program here, I'll be able to do the MALS program as well, and be able to continue some of the fun stuff that I'm working on, which is kind of interdisciplinary connections between computer science and like the liberal arts. Hopefully that's, like, an interesting enough side topic that it might be a good second research interest to get me into a good program, 'cause pretty much I'd like to continue—

I mean, Kemeny is pretty much my idol, and his big thing here was—while he was president, even, he would always teach the Intro Finite Math class, which was, like, an intro class that anybody could take without prereq, except that it wasn't calculus, so it didn't, like, turn people away from math so quickly, and it ends up being very useful, especially if you read, like, his actual—his books that he wrote on, like, pedagogy. It's really helpful for the social sciences, and the stuff he's writing about in 1970 and 1972 are still completely

applicable because nobody actually picked up his thread all the way.

For example, like, social sciences are really statistics-based when they don't have to be. It's a whole 'nother avenue that people kind of dropped, which, again, is, like, seventy years old, like Claude Lévi-Strauss in anthropology was doing, like really cool math stuff. But the results weren't interesting enough 'cause they were so pure. But there are ways to kind of merge the two paths, which—that's what I'm hoping to work on.

I mean, I have a path in mind, and I also plan to be primarily a professor rather than a researcher in computer science. That's why I'd love to be here in the end.

WOMICK: Mm-hm. So you mentioned the Greek system earlier. Are you affiliated?

ORTH: I'm not. But honestly it's mostly because I was gone for the whole what would be my sophomore year, so it becomes a little bit harder—it wasn't significantly harder, except that if I wanted to join, I would probably have done it that first fall 'cause doing it as a technical junior and as a winter rush would be even stranger, I guess, yeah, even more out of the ordinary, so I would have had to do it that fall, and I had already signed up for four classes, and it was my first term back, so I kind of ruled it out. But, yeah, so many of my friends are affiliated that it really doesn't matter to me in any way. I mean, I don't go out that much anyway, so I really would only use a frat for the friends anyway and the connections. But, I mean, I pretty much already have—like, if you know multiple people in, like, the leadership of a frat, then you can feel comfortable just walking right in during the day. Like, not during a party event. So that's kind of how I have it set up.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

ORTH: Which I like.

WOMICK: That is a nice setup. You don't have to pay.

ORTH: Yeah. [Laughter.] Yeah, no. I mean, my best friend is—he just joined last term, and he’s already kind of reflecting on the fact that he already knew a lot of—like, the people he hangs out with in the frat are people he already hung out with, so it is kind of unfortunate that he has to pay for the things that he doesn’t actually partake in anyway. But, I mean, he still really likes it there. He’s gonna live there over the summer. And so I’ll be hanging out on frat row quite a bit over the summer, my *second* summer. [Laughter.]

I mean, I don’t think there’s as much of a divide as people would like there to be, to simplify things, because even—like, you can name any frat and there are still at least a couple members that are really active in things you wouldn’t expect, I guess, with whatever stereotype you apply. And so, I mean, many of the issues related to the Greek system are really just what they’re *not* doing rather than negative things that they’re doing as a frat. And that’s why it’s really easy to be friends with individuals from it. I’ve never had a problem with that.

I mean, and the day culture/night culture thing is a really nice dichotomy, so that you can hang out with pretty much anybody during the day. It might be sometimes hard to connect with everybody at night, but I’m not sure that you really need to. I mean, I spend every Monday through Thursday night practicing with College Bowl, so it really doesn’t affect me anyway.

And then Friday nights I’m often going to sleep early so I can drive people to tournaments. But, yeah—I don’t know. Again, I don’t know if the frats have really changed in any way, but now that I know people that are actually doing stuff *in* them, I feel like we’re on the right track in that case. I’d be rather disappointed if we actually tried to completely get rid of the whole system, especially considering—like, I know the history better than most, and so it would be pretty disappointing to me to see the traditions lost entirely.

I mean, I was *just* talking—before you came in—about, like, Roland Mansilla [‘13] in AD, and, like, you can apply whatever historical stereotype you want on AD, but, like, he’s not gonna really fit that, regardless. In my experience, almost all the ADs are very similar to him, in different ways, but

these are all, like, really big leaders in the community, so—in really positive ways.

I've gone to pretty much every lecture I can this term about—like the Seeds of Change lectures this past week, which Roland help set up and were funded by a classmate of my mom's memorial fund, which is actually the mother of a friend of mine here, the top math student, actually. So I don't know really where I'm going with that, but it's just—there's definitely a good dialogue on campus, and it's not only being generated by people who are against the Greek system, but I think the people who happen to be against the Greek system are kind of conflating issues when they attack other issues. I'm not sure that's the best course. 'Cause there are a lot of allies that you can find in really important positions.

I mean, I've had a pretty strange view that I kind of publicly espoused about I'd much rather see a de-emphasis on the drinking age, underage drinking, because I think there's definitely anecdotal evidence, not the least of which is, like, when my mom was here, the drinking age was 18, so pretty much everybody could drink, and it really didn't matter, and they really didn't have a significant problem with overdrinking. Maybe some freshmen did it, like, once to experiment and then pretty much never again.

So even though you have, like, *Animal House*,—kind of that view, very few people actually did, like, over-party or whatever. What the drinking age allows is that, like, S&S can be more active 'cause S&S doesn't have to turn, like, a blind eye to all the underage drinking if it's legal. So I've been talking to a lot of friends that actually know how, like, state-level politics works and stuff, and there *are* ways that, like, if the police department in Hanover actually wanted to work on this issue correctly, they *could* stop enforcing that law, and it would be legal. And if so, then I feel like S&S can be closer to the real issues in terms of actually monitoring, like, at-risk people on both ends—like, possible victims and possible assaulters.

Yeah, so I'm trying to figure out how active I want to actually take that stance over the next year or so. Pretty much I'm gonna spend the summer trying to figure out what I really want to do for my last term, my last year as an undergrad

here. I think I do want to do something more active than I've been doing. Right now, I've pretty much been attending all the lectures and meetings, and I'm on the blitz list for the RealTalk movement, but I don't participate yet. So, yeah, I'm pretty much just trying to gear up for something that needs to happen in the next year or so.

WOMICK: And you think something needs to happen?

ORTH: I think something's going to happen, and if people who don't have other agendas aren't involved, then I think side things could happen. Like, I think it's very possible that in the rush to solve all of our problems, we do stuff like start closing Greek houses, and I really don't want to see that happen because I think that's a complete side issue that has very little bearing on what they actually want to happen. I think there needs to be more people—I think a lot of people with my stances that are not against the Greek system but also have a less active, like, stance against the issues at hand—like, I think more people like myself need to actually be *doing* things because otherwise the more radical people that aren't managing to do things will do more things than they probably should, I guess.

I'd also like to just become—I've been putting off, just for time issues, getting trained for, like, the Sexperts and SAPA, for a long time. I've had a lot of friends do that, and I think those are the places where people can help the most right now. I mean, they have all sorts of their own issues, and that's why there are so many groups that want to I guess rush things more. But I don't know, I'd like to get more directly involved with things, but not blindly, so [chuckles] taking my time.

WOMICK: So during your time here, have there ever been any moments or periods of time where you felt like you didn't fit in or didn't belong here?

ORTH: I mean, almost certainly not in the last two years, just because of how amazing the setup that I managed to get that first fall back. I mean, that first fall back, I was literally—I was able to come into Brace Commons and East Wheelock and just get out my homework, maybe start it, maybe not, and that could be at, like, 6 p.m. on, like, a Tuesday, and by

10 p.m. I'd be surrounded by at least five other people, most of which didn't know each other but only knew me. So it was, like, a really nice—it was kind of—I introduced people to other people, I got introduced to other people, and eventually my work would get done over the whole night, 'cause I would devote that time to working and hanging out with people at the same time. So that usually worked really well.

My freshman year, because I let it get so binary of being with this person or pretty much being alone and, like, sleeping, that got pretty much out of hand. So I'd say there were probably times, especially in that winter leading up to spring that I—I don't know if it—I didn't feel out of place necessarily 'cause, like, as I said, I had a really good roommate, and I could talk to him about anything, any time. But I didn't always take advantage of that.

There were times when I was kind of silent. I stayed in my room a lot. 'Cause I was nocturnal, I was able to kind of just—I could miss entire days without talking to anybody except this one [chuckles] person, so—I don't know. But luckily—like, her roommate was one of the only people that I did sometimes talk to, just tangentially, and now she's one of my closest friends. Coming back, she was one of the first people I met—I, like, reconnected with on campus that fall. And we've hung out, like, every chance I've gotten.

I think that—I've only had one friend that's really had a serious problem with trying to fit in, but mostly his real issue there was just lack of—like, no willingness to actually go look for those places. I mean, he ended up finding it with, like, our College Bowl team, so he's not really feeling the problems as much anymore. But he still has that issue of—like, if we're not meeting as a team, he's really only gonna talk to, like, a couple people from the team. He's not gonna try to find, like, another group at the same time.

I mean, pretty much anybody who's actually searching for a group, that I know, has seemed to find something. And I've liked that about this place. But, yeah. I think there are—like, I was kind of surprised because I went to the—I guess it was Take Back the Night. But it was the last part of Take Back the Night, on the Green, with a big circle, people saying what they want their Dartmouth—what Dartmouth should be or

whatever. And multiple people said something about they wanted more, like, intellectual conversations at night. I had trouble with that because, I mean, if you're going into a frat basement and you're saying you're upset that there's no intellectual conversation, I feel like you're missing some kind of point here.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

ORTH: Like, I don't think that's a flaw of the frat because they're hosting a party, and a party's not usually for— I mean, unless your party is, like, a wine and cheese event, you're not really supposed to be having, like, intellectual conversation. I see nothing wrong with that. If you want the intellectual conversation, I feel like there are plenty of places. If not, you can form a club.

I mean, I'm a president of one organization that has intellectual conversations every weeknight, but I'm also the treasurer of Dartmouth Math Society, and we hosted talks, like, every other Wednesday night some terms. We're a little less active the last two terms, but I think I'm going to stay with that. These are all—like, there are so many talks, to the point where I've actually skipped classes to go to some of these really interesting lectures. And after those, if you go with a friend—that's enough material for a dinner conversation that can go forever. And I've had those, regularly. Like, I can't go a week without a really interesting conversation that's something I didn't think about, like, the week before.

I don't really understand the people that are critiquing Dartmouth life based on that, based on lack of, like, opportunities for intellectual conversation. I find it kind of funny sometimes. I also find it kind of depressing. But—I think that's pretty much my stance on alternative social spaces or whatever. I think there are plenty of ways to create your own, so I don't really consider that an issue. But I suppose there's probably people that would disagree, based on their own experience.

Again, I mean, if I can take a more active stance over the next year, I might be able to maybe help people find—one way is that I'm trying to expand what College Bowl is actually

about, and so next year we might be doing more—like, two kinds of practices, which is, like, one for actual A and B teams that are really competitive and then another one that’s more, like, learning oriented, so, like, people who know topics will actually kind of go through them, and so people can—kind of like Miniversity courses but they’re more academic-oriented and they’re even shorter but more concentrated. You can just come—like, if you’re on the blitz list, then you’ll come to each lecture that probably interests you, and you’ll learn, like, maybe all the major psychology experiments in one night, in, like, two hours. And so, I mean, you can get a taste of something like Psych 1 in under a week if you wanted to, especially the way that we have it down.

I mean, that’s one of the most useful things about College Bowl, has been, like, an organizational framework of learning, so that’s why we have so many good conversations because we’re exposed to so much information that, like, the people who know more than just the bare facts about these things are allowed to, like, express their actual interpretations, so even though it’s really information based, we still get more cohesive, like, concepts instead of just memorizations, I guess.

I think that’s true of pretty much every college that has a team, but pretty much there’s no college that has a team that’s very open to all of campus. So that’s what I’d like to try to start here. ‘Cause I feel like it’s the right place, ‘cause honestly we—last fall was the first time that we really organized some kind of advertising, and it worked out *really* well. I guess we had some retention rate problems, but if I can solve those in some way, then we can do a lot.

WOMICK: Yeah. Would you say that there is such a thing as a, quote, “Dartmouth community”? If so, who is part of it? And if not, what actually exists?

ORTH: I would definitely say so. I mean, I still haven’t pitched this to my professor, but I’m taking a class on Harlem Renaissance, and my final paper is going to be—it’s using Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, which is a *really* cool book that’s been really influential to me. It’s pretty much about nationalism and how nationalism kind of starts as a

seed in groups of people, and I think there's a great case to be made, which our professor, Martin Favor, actually kind of started to talk about in class, that Dartmouth applies to that, so there is this imagined community. And the whole idea of, like, nationalism is that you don't know everybody in the community, but that doesn't prevent it from being a community. And similarly, you don't have to share every opinion with everybody and it's still a functioning community.

So I really think that Dartmouth fulfills all those things, and therefore the essay that I'm gonna write—I'm gonna ask the professor if I can do a second essay that's Dartmouth oriented currently, whereas my primary essay is gonna be I think about Washington, D.C., interbellum era, so significantly different from now, but I think I can apply pretty much the same arguments.

I think it's really easy to do that because we have traditions that are not—like, if you talk to somebody like Martin Favor, he'll point out that a lot of the traditions are not that old, and even though things that people think are kind of like the oldest aren't. A lot of people, like, misunderstand, like, the homecoming fire. My mom has always been really surprised at how that's turned out because they always had bonfires for every football game, and the idea of just having that one is kind of foreign. And it was definitely *bigger* for the homecoming one, but it was also *significantly* bigger than what we do now. The bonfires that we do now are the same size as the ones they were doing all the time. So it just feels significantly different for her. And, like, her roommate came for the 2011 homecoming, got to get her stance on things as well. A lot of these traditions aren't really traditions per se. And things like Flair didn't pop up until, like, late '80s.

WOMICK: Mm-hm. [Chuckles] Makes sense.

ORTH: [Chuckles] Yeah. We're still using the same Flair. I don't know.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

ORTH: But, yeah, so these things aren't—these are just kind of passing traditions that we just kind of label as traditions, but I think that's a good thing. I feel like my paper is gonna end up

looking a lot like Andrew Lohse's argument except that it's gonna be—I'm drawing a positive conclusion from it. Like, I think he had some kind of point—I don't remember his wording—of DOC trips kind of infantilizing the incoming student.

WOMICK: And hazing them into happiness.

ORTH: Yeah.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

ORTH: And just kind of setting up this dichotomy of, like, the upper-classmen like parent and the freshmen child. And then everything is just kind of making it grow the right way or whatever. But I think you can turn that the exact opposite way. I think that's the best way to sculpt things. Because, like, we come in so different and so diverse, to the point where we really don't have any way of talking to each other when we first get there. Like, as an experiment, you can just walk, like, I stayed over interim this past year, and I got to watch all the incoming people for the trips, and you just watch them out by Robo, and, like, they're just kind of standing there. Like, some of them talk to each other, but they're not talking about things that they're gonna talk about in a year; they're talking about just random first thing that comes to mind.

But, like, once you have a shared experience of Trips, you start—at a minimum, you talk about Trips. At best, you end up talking about the things that came out when you did your Two Truths and a Lie or whatever, when you spent the night with these people that you'd never met before. And I think there's a lot to be said with having those mentors that are your trip leaders. And then you get bonded in Writing 5 classes and freshman seminars as well. And I think those are all positive things because it opens up dialogue between people that would probably never meet based on their interests alone.

And even if you stop directly communicating with your trippies and your Writing 5 classmates, you still see them around campus, and in very few cases is that ever gonna change to a negative relationship. Yeah. I mean, I think

these are all positive things, these traditions of bonding and things. It only classifies as hazing in a way that I don't think hazing ends up being a useful word anymore.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

ORTH: You'd have to create another word for what I think most people want to stop when they say they want to stop hazing. So I get really bothered when people say, like, the homecoming fire is hazing, 'cause it's only hazing under the weird definition that people end up agreeing on when they had to write the law. It's really not hazing under any common interpretation of the word, especially because it is so ea— there are so many people that don't go—I think a lot of people think that it's, like, 100 percent participation, but there are so many people who don't bother even leaving their room that night, I think. And I don't think that they're at all marked. I think people completely forget that they didn't go. Like you can talk to people now, three years later, and they'll go, "Yeah. Oh, yeah, I actually didn't go out that night." But I think that's completely fine. I don't think anybody cares.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

ORTH: And I highly doubt that they felt anything bad for the next, like, week or so, even. Yeah, but at the same time, like, the people that you did go with, you probably still remember those things. There's probably still photos on Facebook from that night. I know for me there are. And, like, you can still see all the people that you hung out with that night, and a lot of them are still your friends. And even if they're not your friends, there are still a lot of positive memories with them. I mean, that's definitely true for me, and I have yet to meet somebody that had a real negative experience with these things. Like, even people—like, I have a friend that definitely complained about these things and *does* consider these things hazing, but he still doesn't actually have, like, a negative—negative view of any one of these traditions. It's really just some kind of collective thing that we somehow disagree on like how to all add it up.

Yeah, I think traditions can be really, really positive, and I have yet to see a tradition that's actually wholly negative. But I've seen a lot of people cast them that way, which kind of

bothers me, again. But I'm pretty radical on that stance, in terms of I do believe in letting fraternities kind of have a pretty wide—a pretty long leash, essentially, in terms of what they can do as long as they're not lying to people about it. I mean, part of the problem is that the hazing definition is so scarily vague that they could get in a lot of trouble for things that are *not* really hazing, to the point where they have to keep anything secret. It could be something that's very agreeably bad, or it could be something that's very gray area but they have to keep all of it secret, for risk of—for fear of prosecution.

But, like, I think Alpha Phi Alpha—when that '15 talked about what happened to him. That was really divisive among a lot of my friends, mainly because it's such a small fraternity already built on such, like, very clear values. And I have, like, no overlap with that community, and yet I knew exactly what the process was if you wanted to join. And I guarantee he did.

To me, it's more like the military analogy than most people allow it to be. I think that you can allow an organization to bond over violence, I guess, if they're *all* willing participants. And I think the sign that—the fact that it's getting so small now—that fraternity is almost gone just based on size. They struggle with having the minimum, like, five members, whatever—all the time. I think that's a sign that a lot of people *aren't* willing, but I think it's also a sign that if you're not willing, it's not that hard to just not be a member.

See, I have a little trouble with the college kind of interfering with communities that *want* this kind of thing that does fall under the literal hazing rule. They want these actions to happen as a bonding experience. So, yeah, I definitely came on the side of Alpha Phi Alpha in that specific case. And in general, I feel like there should be opportunities for that kind of thing to be allowed if they all agree to it.

I do think there's a problem with the amount of funding that we end up giving those fraternities, but I think that's a separate issue. I don't think that we need to base all decisions off money, on what their hazing practices are.

And to the point that now that every student organization has to do their hazing forms for new members, I'm not a big fan of that just because I can't imagine many student organizations are actually coming anywhere close to anything that people would call real hazing. I'm sure that there are a lot of organizations that are doing something that are in that gray area, which really needs to get settled in the next year or two.

WOMICK: I'm sure they're not going to put it on the form if they *are* doing it. [Chuckles.]

ORTH: That's the problem. That's the problem. [Chuckles] Yes, that's really—

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

ORTH: It's just causing more people to lie, which has been a lot of my problems with how frats are handled in general. That's, again, my *major* motivation for the drinking age to be a major factor. If you reduce the amount of things that people need to lie about, then they'll be a lot more honest in general. I mean, I think people would be surprised about that. 'Cause, I mean, if you talk off the record with pretty much *anybody* in *any* position of power in *any* frat, you can probably learn everything about what their hazing is and get a very accurate description. And then you can judge for yourself whether it's actually criminal in any way. But they're very candid as long as they know that they're not gonna get prosecuted based on just what they say.

But right now it's set up that pretty much any word that they say could get them in a lot of trouble, which is not—that's not gonna breed any kind of communication. So I'm hoping, again, that, like, Hanlon—I mean, he wasn't—as far as I know, he was not actually that active when he was an AD, but he has some frat experience, and I think that he'd be one of the last people to just kind of give up and try dismantling everything before trying to actually solve things. So, definitely looking forward to that.

Also, because I'm here over the summer, I'm gonna try to get in to talk to him before the fall, because I think that he might be more open to meeting with some of the older

students that are on campus. Again, I might use Dartmouth Math Society to do that, but.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

ORTH: I think that's an okay use of power. But, yeah.

WOMICK: How would you say that your time at Dartmouth so far has changed you?

ORTH: I think that my freshman fall, essentially, and my freshman winter significantly opened up—I've always been really open minded, but I guess I didn't have many things that I needed to be open minded about because, like, where I come from—like, racism, for example, is either very blatant or almost nonexistent, based on what part of the area that I'm from you're actually walking around in. So like racism was never a huge issue even among my friends of race that had certain individual problems, whereas I come here, and I totally understand, like, almost immediately the ideas of, like, white privilege on campus.

And, like, that was my motivation, part of my motivation for taking, like, this triple-A S [AAAS; African and African-American Studies] for the Harlem Renaissance, and I'm gonna be taking another class over the summer with the same professor because—I guess part of it's the diversity. So, like, not everybody's coming from a place like I came from, where, like, to be gay was actually not at all a deal. [Chuckles.] Like, nobody cared in either direction.

But, at the same time, there was no issue of, like, being the first person to go to—nobody was the first person to go to high school at my high school, for example. But there are plenty of people that are first in their family to go to college, which was, like, at first *really* hard for me to understand because, like, I probably have, like, the longest lineage of, like, going to college in my family. I mean, I have grandmothers that got advanced degrees when it was just not a thing. I have a great-grandmother that had I think a doctorate, definitely a master's degree.

One of my first friends here was a first-generation college student. I was just, like, *Okay*. [Chuckles.]

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

ORTH: So it took me a long time—so I guess what I’m saying is I’ve been very open minded about these things, but I didn’t get to put it to the test until freshman year. And I think that I’ve spent the last three years just kind of still taking in what I already saw that first year. I don’t think I’ve been that surprised since, but I’m still not done kind of working it all out, which is why I’ve taken so long to be, like, active in a lot of these things. So, like, sexual assault—I was very aware of, like, statistics. Even entering, freshman fall, probably more than most.

But to hear second and third hand, like, specific cases and especially the most gray area ones, where, like, both people were drunk and the initiation was completely willing, and you realize that you can actually see yourself on both sides in some of the cases. And that’s when it gets kind of scary. So I’ve spent at least a couple of years now kind of trying to think through these issues ‘cause I don’t think it’s a good idea to jump to a solution stance without trying to figure out, like, how are you going to talk both parties into stopping?

I mean, one of my stances, especially on the sexual assault side, like, I had no solution for years, and then I realized that one of the simplest solutions was just to kind of have people watching and literally stop everybody that is inebriated and not let pairs of people that are inebriated go into the same room behind closed doors. And, yeah, that would mean offending a lot of, like, couples that totally together knew that they were gonna spend the night together, and both decided to start drinking.

But, at the same time, like, I think it is, like, the perfect example of better safe than sorry. And to, like, annoy a couple dozen couples on a given Friday or Saturday night, but to almost eradicate, like, pretty much any bad experience because so many of them end up in just a room where—and people probably saw them, but there’s no—if everybody just agreed that it was socially acceptable to stop even people that they knew were couples, I think you’d see a huge change.

And, like, it's only in the last few months that I started to think that's actually a viable option. But it's—yeah, pretty much the last three years have been just kind of experience after experience and trying to take it all in, and, like, the whole time I was away I spent reflecting on my first two terms, especially because the person I was with was essentially completely opposite to me in so many ways and had opposite stances to me on pretty much everything in terms of, like, solutions and stuff. I mean, that was tough. But that's definitely been my number one improvement over the last three years 'cause, I mean, I didn't come here for just, like, a math degree or whatever.

I mean, I think I had all the textbooks that I've taken classes out of here. I mean, certainly equivalents to all of them. And the year I was in homeschool, I probably learned more than I did in a year here from a *book*, but, at the same time, like, I only saw people that I was already close friends with during that time. I was never forced into any situation that would be at all uncomfortable in any sense. I don't know. I was never really told any—the kind of stories that I heard from them were about, like, gossip or about, like, a really strange experience for them, not a really difficult experience for them. Like, high school problems were just high school problems, and then you come to college.

So yeah, I mean, that's been the real reason to be here for three or four years, and in my case close to five. Yeah, just a lot of experience. I really look forward to meeting more people—I think my summer will be another kind of time for reflection because I'll have a smaller group of friends. A lot of really close friends will be on campus, but allow me to have more time to just kind of strategize essentially about what I want to do in terms of community. And I think that part of that will be making more friends among the freshman because that was my favorite thing about my first term back, was meeting all those '15s, and that was the first time that I had dozens of friends that were younger than me. [Chuckles.] Like, 'cause I've always been the youngest, especially with the skipped year. There's only, like, five '13s that were younger than me. So, and I missed the '14s. So it was definitely a cool experience then.

And I think I chose to stay in East Wheelock again for my last year, and I'm living with a '16, and I'm hoping that we'll be able to actually kind of get to know the '17s and be able to talk out the issues when *they* see these things for the first time. Maybe they are in the same boat as I was. Like, maybe they're completely accepting of differences, but not necessarily—they don't necessarily know what to do with the differences. And I probably won't, either, but at least I'll have, by that time, four more years of experience than them.

And I think that's pretty much what everybody needs to do, is just, like, put themselves in some kind of position to be open to mentoring, even if you're not, like, a mentor that goes around and is actually, like, assigned to people. But if you're just, like, available and, like, open to talking to anybody of any age and any kind of background. That's why I'm, like, a really big fan of my roommate's, Chris McMillan's, like, red cup program for FoCo. Like, I think that has a huge mentoring capacity that isn't going to be exploited for a while, probably, but it definitely could be. You could definitely imagine, like, a bunch of seniors that are just sitting around with their red cups, and it's okay for freshmen to just walk right up to them and ask them anything. I think that would be an ideal addition to campus.

WOMICK: That's great. Is there anything that I haven't asked you or that we haven't gotten to talk about yet that you'd like to?

ORTH: I don't know. I guess I have a few things to say about the role of alumni in the community 'cause, like, for one thing, I think there's been some kind of weird stigma against, like, legacy students here, which has been almost completely unfounded in terms of I have multiple friends that are not legacy students but, like, they've encountered the fact that, like, you're wearing a Dartmouth shirt or something and you're either off campus or you're just in town or you're, like, significantly off campus. Maybe you're, like, in a different state or whatever. That people see the Dartmouth shirt and assume that you're, like, wealthy to some extent.

Like, in one case there was somebody who demanded, like, a real tip—like, a higher tip or something from a friend of mine that was no better off than I am, which is not well off. [Chuckles.] So I think, for some reason, even the same

people that are seeing that and having a problem with that, where they're middle class or lower class, and they're having troubles with people assuming that they're very high class. For some reason, those same people, when they hear that somebody's a legacy, automatically assume that that person *must* be upper class, then, which, like,—

Yeah, my mom has a degree from here, but she's quit being a software engineer and raised me for, like, eight years until my dad left, and then she started teaching. So, like, once my dad died, it was just a teacher's salary. So, I mean, I'm actually in a really bad position because I was left with the nice, upper-middle-class home but with a teacher's salary. And so, like, I'm a co-owner of my house, and so I have to deal with that. That's always looming. Like, bills or something—I actually—I'm very conscious of, more than most people, and yet if I somehow release the fact that I'm a legacy student, then that can't possibly be an issue of mine to a lot of people.

And on the flip side, it's just there are so many alumni that *are* really affluent, and people have a problem with them feeling entitled to changing campus. And when I went to the Our Community, Our Future dinners at the Hanover Inn a couple of weeks ago, people were talking—administration people, even—were talking about how scary it is that, like, only at this school are alumni allowed to earmark to the extent that they do and to really say that they want—like, Dartmouth will pitch them, like, what they want the money to go to, but they can completely say no or they can just add an impossible list of conditions.

And, at the same time, I think that's completely okay because I think the Dartmouth community is about students and former students and professors. I don't think it's about the administration, and I think Jim Yong Kim's tenure is probably the best example of that. I just think that if you have a president that you don't actually agree with in any way but you have money and you want to help the Dartmouth community, I think you should have total control, and I'm fine with that, meaning that some significantly older alumni are gonna choose weird things to focus on, like changing our Thayer dining system because apparently Jim Yong Kim wanted that to be one of the top projects and a class that

hasn't been here in 50 years decided that was okay.  
[Chuckles.] That seemed like a good idea.

While I don't necessarily agree with that. Like, I think that's much preferable to having people just withhold their money because they know the certain temporary administrations aren't going to do what they really want Dartmouth to do. So I guess I have a different perspective from most people on that, and my mom's not even, like, a major donor to this place. She *would* be. She has nothing against the place. And I probably will be the second I leave.

But, I don't know, I think people need to realize that they're going to be alumni, and if they want to be supportive, they should be able to be supportive the way they want to be and not be forced. I think that's a *good* difference from most other places.

Yeah, I think that's about all I have.

WOMICK: Great. If there's not anything else, I can turn the machines off.

ORTH: All right.

**[End of interview.]**

