

Drew Ryce '74
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
February 4, 2013

DONIN: Today is February 4, 2013. My name is Mary Donin. We're here in Rauner Library with Drew Ryce, Dartmouth Class of 1974.

Okay, Drew, the first question is really sort of a background question. Where were you born? Where did you go to high school? And why did you end up at Dartmouth, or how did you end up at Dartmouth?

RYCE: Well, there goes your hour and a half. [Both chuckle.] I was mostly likely born on the Kahnawake Reserve in Quebec, Canada.

DONIN: After this is over, you're going to have to spell names.

RYCE: Fine. Yes, I'll do the spellings, if I can remember the spellings. But I have a U.S. birth certificate for Brooklyn, New York. There was a Mohawk colony in Brooklyn, New York, for the steelworkers. My pop, my uncles, grandpa—they were all steelworkers. They were back and forth. And being very farsighted folks—if you happen to have been born in Canada, what they would do is they would zip you down to New York and make sure that you were presented as a “Guess what we just had, okay, yesterday, down in New York,” so you had U.S. papers. In Canada, a Native wasn't a citizen. In fact, they might not be citizens now, come to think of it. I think 1976 there was a big change with the British North America Act, but then we were in a status very much like pre-Dawe's Act, United States. So we were non-citizens, but we were wards of the Canadian Government. So you were set in Canada, but this way you had U.S. paper, which you needed to get jobs, and these guys knew about jobs because they were three generations of steelworkers, which is what I was expected to do.

So that's basically it. That gets you down to Brooklyn, New York. And actually I was raised there the first six, seven years of my life. My parents broke up. My mother moved us

to Chicago, and I went through a series of schools. You were asking where I went to school. I went to a series of schools in Chicago, probably a different school every year or two, finally graduating out of South Shore High School, on the South Side of Chicago. We lived on the South Side almost exclusively.

Which takes you right up to 1970, in terms of your question, okay? Was there more to that? It was a multiple question. Being an attorney, I always say, "Objection."

DONIN: Oh.

RYCE: [Laughs.]

DONIN: Okay, yes, you shouldn't ask more than one question at a time. Well, how did you learn about Dartmouth?

RYCE: Okay. It was a very difficult life. You have to realize what the world was like back then, okay, which is not the way it is now at all. So actually I don't think I ever did hear about Dartmouth. I was certainly completely unaware of Dartmouth. Didn't know it existed or anything similar to that.

I lived in an all-black neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. My pop had been a very committed alcoholic and extremely violent when he was drunk, which was frequently, and my mother had a number of psychiatric and medical issues. She was diagnosed as a multiple personality. Now, I'm not sure that that diagnosis actually exists, whether it's been confirmed over the last 40 or 50 years or not. But what she did was she had deep mental difficulties that caused her to be committed frequently, and would frequently go into other personalities, different people that she was, and had a very difficult grasp of who she was and where the center was.

So, as a consequence, I had a very neglected, often abused childhood. Spent a lot of time outside of the house. Basically, I was running the streets until I was, I don't know, 12 or 13 or something like that.

DONIN: Did you have siblings?

RYCE: No, I had one—I would have had a brother, but there was—eh, what the hell? I got nothing to lose—my father beat my pregnant mother into a miscarriage, a very bloody, ugly thing in front of me, I think which is what prompted the final split. So I heard rumors about having a sister in Brooklyn, but she would have been much younger than me and very much separated from the time period that we're talking about. So, no, I didn't have family basically at all.

DONIN: Was your dad in Chicago at this point?

RYCE: No. He traveled quite a bit, but his health was breaking down. So now we're up into the mid '60s here, and his health had broken down quite a bit, and he was mostly staying in Brooklyn. He was one of the—actually, he was the youngest son—he had quite a number of brothers and sisters, and the rest of his family—in fact, my family, you know, but his generation; that would be the way to put it—had already been leaving Brooklyn as well. My Uncle Bill and Aunt Mary had moved out to Long Island.

The actual center, in a lot of ways, for the Mohawk community was a bar on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. And that bar was owned by my Aunt Gladys and her husband, my Uncle Bernard. And so I spent a lot of early years there. There was a lot of circulation, so whenever relatives were in town, they were there, and the steelworker community was very close. Everybody knows everybody.

In fact, when you get around to "Mike" Bush, who I think is probably class of '76 [Class of 1975]—his folks are in there, too. And Bruce Oakes' dad, Gabe, was a steelworker. I'm sure he worked with my uncles—you know, that kind of—I mean, all the Mohawks all know each other in that tight little community, whether they were in Syracuse or up by Montreal or in New York.

So he wasn't around Chicago very often, if at all. He certainly wasn't a factor after a certain point. I went and looked him up at different times in my life, but not during the mid to late '60s—you know, not during that era.

So let's see, where was I?

DONIN: So you were running the streets by the time you were 12 or 13.

RYCE: Yes.

DONIN: Were you going to school?

RYCE: Yeah, sometimes. Well, I mean, actually this goes directly to how I wind up here and all that other stuff. It seems like it's a bit of digression, but it actually does loop around, as all good Indian stories do, back to the beginning again.

When I was about 14—I had gotten hit in the head so many times that I couldn't actually hide it anymore. I was having seizures.

DONIN: Hit in the head by whom?

RYCE: Oh, everybody. You know, it was just, like, everybody. It was—how's the best way to describe this simply?

DONIN: Were you, like, running with gangs?

RYCE: Yeah. If you ever saw *The Wire*—

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

RYCE: Okay. There. Okay. You know, it was that. All right, that's the place. Okay. Easy access to it. I love that show. It's a real easy way of just referencing all the—*The Wire*, fourth season, there you go! Okay. Got it!

So anyway, I had gotten hit in the head way too often. Not that kids should be hit in the head at all. And I was having seizures, so I wind up in Chicago Children's Hospital for six weeks. You know, after six weeks they come up with the brilliant diagnosis that "you're having seizures because you've been hit in the head." [Laughs.]

But during that time—I'd always read. Read, read, read. Read everything I could get my hands on. Just read like mad. Just couldn't eat a meal without reading something, couldn't see something without reading it, and this gave me six great weeks of reading like the Dickens. I mean, you

know, I was just having a ball! I mean, this was great. You know, I was just reading away.

And there was an intern there, a young fellow from India, and he was a chess player, and I had been dinkering around with a chess set since I was a little kid, but I didn't know anything about how you actually play this game. And so he says, "Well, let's have a game." And so I played a game with him, and he just cleaned my clock. And he had no interest in teaching me how to play or anything. He actually exits immediately. I don't even know his name.

But I'd seen something here. You know, there was an internal logic and some vast mystery, okay, that was out there, that could be learned, and I was ferocious trying to find this stuff out. So after I got out of the hospital, I'm trying to learn about chess, and there were very few books written then, at the time, and you couldn't really find out anything. But there was a chess club downtown in Chicago, called the Metro Chess Club, and so I used to hop the old Jackson train—literally hop the train and head up to downtown and go in there. And there was nobody there interested in teaching a kid, either. And I think I probably lacked social skills. Let's put it that way. I don't think there was anything particularly fetching about this, either. I guess sort of Dickens, except I'm the Artful Dodger, not Oliver, okay? You know, kind of putting it that way.

But they had big stacks of Russian chess journals, so I was interested. This was diagrams and—but I don't speak Russian, and so I had to teach myself enough Russian to read the journals, which I did. So now I'm learning how to play chess from these Russian chess journals. And so the effect on me was kind of instantaneous. It was a major transformation because I was learning how to think in a disciplined fashion.

Now, there's a lot of ways to get to that. You can even do it through sports, but there's a lot ways to get to that, but you have to get to that if you're ever going to do anything, and that's what I got to. And this is how I got to it. If this, then this, then this, then this. Whoops, no. What about that? Then this, then this. Keep—you know, it was a good—it's decision

trees and basically how these things happen. So I'm actually learning how to play chess.

So that was my breakout, okay? There was the U.S. amateur championships were held in Chicago in '70, and I entered. I was literally living on the street at that point. Previously, I'd been going home, coming back, kind of like a cat that's outside, comes in, eats, sleeps, goes back out again, comes back in, that kind of a thing. But I had literally been out of the house since November.

DONIN: It's cold in Chicago!

RYCE: Yeah. Well, I mean, when you say you live on the street, you don't actually live in the street. You just—

DONIN: Hang out.

RYCE: —sleep where you can. So at that point, actually, I was sleeping on the back porch of a social worker, Mrs. Wheeler. Great woman. She let me have the back porch, so I'm sleeping on the back porch. Her daughter was, like, one of the last white kids left at South Shore. She was a year behind me, and I kind of put a protective veneer around her, which was kind of nice. And she got along fine on her own, anyway. But then when I'm graduating, I told Mrs. Wheeler—I said, "You gotta get your daughter outta here. She's not gonna make it next year." [Laughs.] And they did. They pulled her out. Actually, they moved up to the North Side.

But so I'm sleeping on the social worker's back porch, and I had a job, and there was usual rip and runs that we're all doing, so I'm getting by just fine. So at this point, really, I mean, I'm grown. I'm like an adult. In its own way, childish in many ways, but an adult in many other ways.

But I played the tournament, and this is a big deal. This is a big national tournament. And I went undefeated. Had two draws. Came in fourth place. It was a huge damn thing. Everybody was looking for the next Bobby Fischer then. He hadn't made world champion yet for several years. And, by the way, I was never near that kind of a class. But that got this attention and kind of gave me the idea maybe I can do something besides everything that I'm seeing around me.

DONIN: At this point, did your parents know this had happened to you?

RYCE: Well, no. [Laughs.] I don't think so. I don't know how they would. Maybe it was in some papers. Maybe they read one or something like that. But there was an Indian Center up on the North Side, up on Foster, I think. And there was another social worker associated with the Indian Center, and he used to—I'd been in touch with them over the years at one time or another, but it was far to go up. And he actually would come down to the South Side and pick up the couple of Indian kids that were down on the South Side. Claude Bearskins was one. He'd pick all us up and take us up there for whatever event they were having for kids—you know, a really outreaching kind of a guy. I think he was Choctaw. He was a nice guy.

You know, "Sure, I'll take a ride up to the Indian Center." So we'd go up to the Indian Center, and we'd be up at the Indian Center. And they were pushing big on going to college. "You can go to college." And, by the way, you couldn't have gone to college earlier. I mean, really—it's not like there was a rule that said "No, Indians can't go to college," but Indians didn't go to college. I didn't know any Indian going to college. I don't know there were any that I might ever met or known or people—nobody that I knew knew an Indian that had gone to college. I mean, that's how far off the thing gets. So I said, "Okay. I'll, like, apply to colleges."

Two other things occurred during this time period that have nothing to do with me. One is that there was the SAT scores (which is a big deal about going to school). The scores had improved every year—you know, just nationally, until 1967, at which point they took a plunge and started going down until they hit some kind of a nadir later, and kind of stayed there since then. So I caught the plunge, okay?

So because of all the reading and because of all the chess—because even though it's called a verbal test, you're actually writing it, so I had no idea how to pronounce most of these words, but I certainly knew these words, and I could string things together, and I had a good day at the SATs, so I just blew the socks off the SATs.

So I applied—I hadn't heard of Dartmouth at all. Even at the Indian Center they weren't talking about Dartmouth because at that point no Indians had gone to Dartmouth. There was. There was Henry Perley and that kind of a thing, but no one ever heard of them. But I had heard of the Ivy Leagues, and one of the—oh, yeah, that's right.

One of my best friends from high school was a terrific football player, and he was being recruited by Yale. And they were going about it in a really sneaky way. He didn't have the grades or the background to get into Yale, but the Yale Alumni Association was setting him up with a year at a prep school in New Jersey, which I'm sure must have been really embarrassing for the prep school kids because I think he did, like, 400-and-something yards rushing in two games or something ridiculous. I mean, they simply couldn't pull him down because they couldn't. If you went to college out of my high school, you went to Grambling or A&M or something.

And that got into the Ivys, so I heard about the Ivys, so I found out what the Ivys were, and I applied to all of them. Somebody must have been waiving fees or something because I wasn't paying any fees. That's for damn sure. But whatever. I don't quite know what happened. But I got accepted to Dartmouth. The only other college I got accepted to was North Central Illinois State on an athletic scholarship, which is really weird because I hadn't played in sports since I was a sophomore. Pretty good as a sophomore, but I hadn't played football in a long time.

So, okay, I guess I'm going to go to Dartmouth. It really appealed to me because it was very far away from Chicago, and I really liked the idea of getting out of Chicago at that point because, you know, I mean, I'd been stabbed twice, I caught a lot of—I mean, I gave it back, I got it. It wasn't, like, one sided. It wasn't this poor kid getting beat up for his lunch money. Quite the opposite. But it was starting to wear on you, and I can see as far into the future as anybody else, and I'd see I didn't have much of one the way things were going.

So going to Dartmouth was great. But I didn't have the cash to do it. I couldn't even see how I could get there. There was

a program at University of Illinois, and it was one of these space experiments they were doing with NASA. There was this sensory deprivation chamber that you would go in for three weeks. And they'd had a cancellation because somebody had gone in there and then gotten carried out. I mean, it was apparently some big problem for doing this. And I looked at it, and I couldn't really see it as much of a problem.

But it was six hundred bucks cash if you made it through the three weeks. We had to live on Vivonex. I don't know what Vivonex was. It's a drink. Basically, this was, like—so they were going to check and see if your nutrition could—you know, if you could live for three weeks, be in a space capsule for three weeks. You're cut off from all this stuff. So I said, "Yeah, I'll do it."

And so I pop into the capsule. I had a ball. I mean, it was just simple; it was just the easiest three weeks I could imagine. I mean, shit, I'd like to sign up for this full time, six months on. I'll have six months off. I wouldn't have gone to college.

DONIN: Were you alone in there?

RYCE: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, it was basically how do you handle the isolation. [Laughs.] (You love it!) How do you handle the food. That sucked, but I'd gone hungry before. It wasn't a big deal. You know, how do you keep yourself amused? I wrote—I wrote. You had pads. You were allowed pads of paper and things like that, so I just wrote all the time. I mean, basically it was doing three weeks in "juvie," as far as I was concerned. I mean, it was nothing, you know? So anyway, I did that and came out, got my cash and went to Dartmouth.

DONIN: Amazing.

RYCE: That's it. I sort of arrived. So that's how I got to Dartmouth.

DONIN: So you didn't know anybody coming here.

RYCE: No, no, not at all. In fact, I didn't know [chuckles] it was an all-men's school. I was on the campus a couple of hours. I'm walking around. There's something eerily wrong, and I

haven't quite picked it out yet, but you know how the hairs on the back of your neck—

DONIN: [Laughs.]

RYCE: *What the hell is it?* All of a sudden, realized, *God dammit! There's no girls! I never heard of such a thing!* [Laughs.] I wasn't aware of it.

DONIN: Yes, so you arrived here in the fall of '70.

RYCE: Yes. So John Kemeny had just become president, but it hadn't even gone co-ed yet.

RYCE: Nope. Yeah, there was a couple which I met, and subsequently there were some transfers or exchanges of some kind, that kind of a thing. Forty? The number 40 comes to my head. But that was about it. There was—no, nothin'. That was all. And was, *Okay, this is gonna be difficult.* [Laughs.]

DONIN: So you were in the Wigwams first, you said?

RYCE: Yes. They set up kind of an Indian place to live, which was the third floor of Chase Hall, but I'd elected not to go in on the third floor of Chase Hall because I didn't want to self-ghettoize. (I didn't know the phrase self-ghettoize, but I knew I didn't want to do that.) So I just went in with the normal freshman bunch down to Hinman. They were a nice bunch of kids, but we didn't have anything in common, and it was difficult to bridge the gap. And I wound up—actually, I was hanging out with—actually, most in common I had with the black kids on campus. I was hanging out with a bunch of black freshmen. We were doing fine. But more and more, I'm going over to Chase Hall, and finally I just said, *Ah, screw it,* and I moved over to Chase Hall. That would have been a couple of months after I got there.

DONIN: Were there other Mohawks here?

RYCE: Bruce. I think he was the only one. [Also present was Hollis White '74]

DONIN: How many—I mean, were there, like, a dozen or were there—

RYCE: A dozen what?

DONIN: Natives here.

RYCE: Oh, God no! There was—you know, I think technically they let in 13 or 14, but a couple of them elected to stay away, so we never, like, met them. Well, there's a story about that, where I finally did meet them, where actually all got together finally, towards the end of the year, maybe. But, no. So I would say on campus—I mean, you're certainly under a dozen that were active, that you could actually know. There was very little of a—here's a thing that has to be understood: The ones like me, that had been in cities, something new was happening, which was a sort of a—what I'll describe as a pan-Indian sentiment. We were self-identifying as Indian. Yeah, you're Mohawk, but you're Indian. Now, that was unheard of with our parents.

I remember watching a drive-in movie with my uncles and my dad. And here comes the cavalry and the whole thing, and they're whooping it up, and I'm going, "Wait a minute." I'm a little kid. I'm going, "Wait a minute. Aren't we Indians?" And they were, like—I'm not going to say outraged, but they thought it was pretty funny. "No, we're not Indians, we're [Kanien' gehaga]." Actually, they talked to me in Indian, but they're saying that we're not Indians, we're Mohawks.

But in the cities, you get mixed up. So Indian relocation—I don't know how much you know about this stuff, but Indian relocation came out in the '60s. They were actually pulling Indians off reservations and dumping them into target cities. Now, I wasn't part of relocation, but I was in Chicago, which was a relocation city; hence, the Chicago Indian Center, which is full of Lakota, for example. I think the social worker I mentioned was Choctaw. There was a whole bunch of Indians there. And so we self-identify as Indians. So your friends wind up being your friends, and there wasn't any particular closeness. I didn't see the Sioux guys hanging out with each other particularly, for example.

DONIN: So what you're saying is the identity with your tribe was being sort of squashed and then—

RYCE: No, it had been expanded. You know, it had been expanded. You were never not a Mohawk. It's not exclusive. You're a New Hampshire and you're an American, you see? You're Irish and you're American. (I'm just making stuff up here.) It doesn't require you to have given up something to have been something larger.

So when I say this sort of pan-Indian thing, it's actually a very good thing. It's actually the reason for the American Indian Movement, because that comes out of the cities, not the reservations. On the reservation, you were just yourself; in the city, you're all these other people, and now you can start moving these things around. So whether it's AIM or UNA, you wind up being very much involved with things that are happening with all of us. So Isleta is the same thing as Red Lake or White Mountain or [Akwesasne]. We're all this. That was very much the sentiment of the Indian kids that were here, I'll tell you that. That was very much the way we looked at it; hence, Indian programs—you know, Native American programs, Native American studies, Native American stuff, not Mohawk studies, Lakota studies, Apache studies.

DONIN: But that hadn't started yet, had it?

RYCE: It started with us.

DONIN: It did.

RYCE: Yes. It started with us, yes.

DONIN: Early '70s, yes.

RYCE: It started with us probably the third week we were there, in our thinking.

The law of unintended consequences comes in. The administration, in a good faith, good effort to try to have some kind of a center for us when we arrived, had hired an adult Native man to be our mentor. His name was Jean Philippe Olguin. He was from Isleta. That poor bastard was

lost. He was in terrible shape. He was a bad drunk, and one of those guys who gets really obnoxious when he gets drunk.

We'd all been around drunks, but he had just had it. He was completely intimidated by the college. He wasn't young and flexible like us or, for that matter, a street rat like me, where you just accept—wherever you are, you are. He had big problems.

His incredible failure of leadership was actually what caused us to band up together, first to get rid of him. And, believe me, that was a moral decision that we were making. We didn't want to do this to the guy, but we had to get rid of him. He was just killing us. Get rid of him and also, "Well, what do we want?" That becomes Native American programs, that becomes Native American studies. You see, it forced us to be active. If he had been a pleasant but ineffectual guy, I don't think any of this stuff happens. I think Dartmouth winds up a place where it takes eight or ten Indians a year, and there's not much going on here, not the thing you see today.

DONIN: Oh, that's interesting.

RYCE: Isn't it.

DONIN: Did you feel, though, that the administration supported you and responded to your requests?

RYCE: Well, we didn't expect any support. You got to understand: I mean, before I ever got here, I had marched with Martin Luther King, for example. I'd been in two riots, including the Democratic National Convention. The Black Panthers were a way of life for me. I ate at the breakfast program all the time. I knew these guys. I mean, I knew all these guys. I'd listened to Malcolm X give live sermons. That was right over on Stony Island. I mean, you know, it was a couple of blocks from me. I used to walk up and listen. He was a very rousing speaker. I used to rip his speeches off later, when I was doing public speaking. I just swapped this for that, and it was cool. He was really good at this.

Later, long after I'd left here, I was an armed bodyguard for Cesar Chavez for a while.

DONIN: Wow.

RYCE: So I'm not unique in this crowd at all. I mean, Butch had been to Vietnam.

DONIN: Who's Butch?

RYCE: Oh, Butch Geurue, Trudell Geurue. He's also '74. Butch. No one will know Trudell. He'd be mad if he knew I said his name. [Laughs.]

DONIN: What's his last name?

RYCE: Geurue.

DONIN: Okay, okay. We'll find him.

RYCE: Oh, yes, no, he's not hard to find. He'll be in the books. So been in 'Nam, were on their way to 'Nam, were waiting to go to 'Nam. Had been doing stuff. Everybody had been doing stuff. We were hardly—any of us were just kids out of high school, and those that were had unusual backgrounds to boot. We didn't come from alumni families or anything like that.

So where was I?

DONIN: Um—

RYCE: Okay, sorry. Go ahead.

DONIN: How the Native American program got off the ground. It was you guys—it was guys at that point.

RYCE: Well, there was Denise there, too. We had one Native woman, Denise Dean, later Denise White because she married Hollis. Oh! That's the other Mohawk guy that's in the Class of '74. How can I forget Hollis? Hell, he's even a cousin of mine a couple of times removed, I think. So Hollis and Denise were together right from the start, and they married, and they're still together.

DONIN: So she was here—

RYCE: Seventy-four. Yes, she was there right with us, first one, yeah. She was a transfer from Oberlin, and she's Arikara, out of North Dakota? North Dakota. Yeah, North Dakota. So she was there, too, so it's not just all men. And she was actually very much of a center for us. She was solid and steady and wise and funny and all that other good stuff. So it was a good thing. [Laughs.]

DONIN: So when you finally sort of migrated back over to the Choats after trying to not be ghettoized, as you said—is that where you remained for the rest of your four years here?

RYCE: Oh, no. No, no. No, I was out of there pretty fast. Okay, here comes one of these weird twists of fate, okay, kind of a thing. Patty John, who was a Seneca girl, was—I think she was in ABC. She must have been in ABC because she was in a prep school. And her roommate, who was named Peggy—and Peggy was a local girl. You know, her dad had a farm out by Windsor, out in Cornish Flat. And so Peggy and I hooked up, and that was the first big emotional experience of my life, and we were together for several years. In fact, we've been brother and sister now for over 40 years, so that was a big deal for the both of us.

So I was off campus, like, immediately. So either we had a place off campus or I was living with her above—you know, an apartment above the garage over at one of the houses over at his farm.

DONIN: So was your community here that you sort of stuck with—was it just Natives or not?

RYCE: Well, you know, I had a couple of friends like this, a couple of friends like that, but I got to tell you, I pretty much departed the community at that point. I mean, it's not that I didn't know folks. I'd come back, but I really stopped going to classes.

DONIN: You stopped going?

RYCE: Oh, yeah, I stopped going to classes. I was getting a big-time education off campus. Peggy's dad was J.D. Salinger.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

RYCE: And there was a big—the things about him being a recluse are actually not true. There was a lot of activity going on over there and through them. It was also a very verbal crowd, I might add. So I was just sucking up all kinds of education. But I didn't have the—if it was my kid now, I'd give him—I'd say, "Get your butt over to one of the academic departments and say, 'I want to do off-campus study,' and get somebody to sign off on it." But I didn't know about that. So I was—it was way too interesting being somewhere besides here, so I wasn't here. And it showed. Grades—I was always pretty damn good at passing an exam without actually taking the class, but you can't really just keep up with that, and it didn't work, so I got kicked out. So I got kicked out, and—I got kicked out.

DONIN: What year was this? I mean, did you make it through—

RYCE: Well, I came back, but that was, I don't know, '72 or '73, something like that. Sorry bout that, but it all kind of just blurs in terms of years.

DONIN: The dates don't really matter. But you managed to get through classes for the first two years.

RYCE: For the first year, at least. I think things got pretty bad after, the second year.

DONIN: Did you feel prepared to be in these classes in the first place?

RYCE: No, no.

DONIN: Academically, I mean?

RYCE: Oh, no. Hell, no. I had no clue how you do these things. Again, the college, in a very good faith effort, had done something interesting, which was they created special classes, kind of a remedial program. The ones I remember are English 3, 4 or 5. And we took a test. The test was hilarious. There was something about the sun setting like a giant clock in the something or other, and then you had to answer questions. Well, I actually understood the questions. I don't think anybody else actually understood the questions because they hadn't heard: "What's the thematic overall for

this?” And I don’t think anybody had a clue what “thematic overall” was. Things like “meta-dialogue” had not come in. We didn’t know that stuff. I had a pretty clear view of these things, so I think I actually aced the thing, but they stuck me in English 4.

Some very bright guys wound up in English 3, so we’re basically taking the all-Indian black classes there for that first time. It was really hilarious at one point. I’m actually translating—half humor but half not—I’m actually translating between the professor and one of the black students. He was from Baltimore. He was so deeply into Ebonics that—

DONIN: Into what?

RYCE: Uh, black talk.

DONIN: Oh, oh. Okay.

RYCE: Ebonics.

DONIN: Ebonics, okay.

RYCE: Ebonics. See? It works both ways, doesn’t it?

DONIN: [Laughs.]

RYCE: You know, these strange phrases. Okay. And, you know, that was his first language [chuckles], was Baltimore—you know, East Side, Deep South black talk. I understood this. I was in Chicago, where everybody’s from Louisiana and Mississippi. It wasn’t a big deal at all. So I’m translating for him and going back. It was funny as hell. Everybody was cracking up about that.

And then after you got through that, then you’d go into the regular sort of classes. But I don’t think some of us even got out of those. I think Larry Long never actually got through the remedial stage. Larry was a Navaho from around Four Corners somewhere. Actually—yes, he was over by Hopi somewhere. I think it was around Second Mesa someplace. But he was really just not prepared. I mean, really, would have required a lot more preparation than the little stuff that

we had, which is part of this whole Native American program's idea. We could see what we needed.

And the other thing that happened was we're trying to learn about ourselves, like any kid does. And so we're taking the only classes we can find that have anything to do with Indians, and that was a total disaster because that was like anthropology classes, and anthropology has nothing to do with Indi—that was pretty good, too. Professor Whiting, I think it was. He's doing this thing that he had been doing for years. And he dresses up like a—I forget what tribe. I think a Hopi.

DONIN: Oh, no!

RYCE: And he sits there, and then you would ask him questions, trying to discern things. And in that way, you would learn how difficult it was to communicate with other cultures while you're being an anthropologist! [Laughs heartily.] So that was pretty—we were just, you know, not the best day of college I've ever had.

So later we're talking to some of the professors in the anthropology—we had gone to them saying, "Let's try and work something out," but, hell, they weren't doing contemporary anything. They weren't interested in it. It wasn't their field. They were completely unqualified to even talk about it. But as they're sort of defending themselves, something really funny happened, because—okay, well, in the Omaha kinship system (one of them says, he says), what would be your father's sister's husband's wife? Something like that. And one of our guys—I think it was Duane —I think they used the Omaha kinship system up there at Hidatsa. He goes, "Louise." [Laughs.] Yes, that thing went downhill pretty fast.

So we weren't kind of getting where—oh, that's right! We had—yeah, it's so funny! Memory really is an act of imagination, isn't it? You know, it really is. Where we had the big revolt at the finals for this anthropology class. A bunch of us were in the class, and we all decided that when the questions came up about the Bering Strait land bridge, that we were going to, like, refuse to answer them. I was the only one, it turns out, who refused to answer them. When the time

came, the rest of those bastards left me hanging [laughter], which is the oddest damn thing because the Bering Strait land bridge made perfect sense to me. I wasn't from any traditional place where we didn't think that we hadn't migrated from somewhere the hell else, because that's what you do: You go someplace better. There we go. Anyway, so that was—

If you're really looking for sort of the origins of Native American programs and Native American studies, that's it. It's us getting here. The school, on the one hand, trying to help us bridge the gap, but their approach was remedial, and I think we needed less remedial than we actually needed a cultural connection because we were very capable of learning; you just had to have something you really wanted to learn and some way of getting your teeth in it. So hence programs and studies. So there. So I managed that question.

DONIN: Did you have the sense that it was coming from the top, from John Kemeny? I mean, that's what the folklore is about him, that he—

RYCE: Yeah.

DONIN: —he vowed to renew Dartmouth's commitment to the Natives, for whom the school—

RYCE: That is what I heard from the day I got here. So that's not something that's come up recently.

DONIN: No, no.

RYCE: You know, that was at the time. I believe that. I think they only had black kids in the year before. Remember, this is the time of student unrest. There was the ROTC problem we had, which got there just before I got here, and so on. And John Kemeny comes in, and suddenly there's a commitment to the—I think it's kind of brilliant, actually.

I mean, if you actually look at the school—I haven't looked at the school charter in, like, forever, but within its certain racist terminology, it actually says that “the education and Christianization of sauvages and sons of sauvages,” s-a-u-v, I think. That was us. We're the savages and sons of

savages. They hadn't done that for quite some time, so he touches base with the conservative alumni by "uber-conservating" them. You know, "Way back when, this is what we were doing. It's right in the charter. What do you mean, you don't think? It's right in the charter."

At the same time, it's embracing the new, which is opening up the doors to minorities—soon thereafter, women. I think the damn thing works. I think it really worked for Dartmouth in the long run because, as I understand it, this is a very respected and honored set of programs here. It's certainly been a success.

By the way, if any of these guys tells you that "we had this in mind," they're lying. We didn't have a clue this kind of thing was going to happen, [that] it was going to get to be this large and this continuing. If anything, I think we probably figured it would have petered out after a few years.

DONIN: So just to finish your timeline here, so you left—they asked you to leave because your grades were not up to—

RYCE: Yup. Mm-hm.

DONIN: How long until you came back again to finish?

RYCE: Seventy-five? Well, I didn't finish here. I never graduated Dartmouth.

DONIN: Oh, that's why you're not in *The Aegis*.

RYCE: Well, that would explain it, yeah. You do that one in '74.

DONIN: Mm-hm.

RYCE: Yeah, no, I wasn't here in '74. I went out into the world, did a bunch of things. Denise—remember Denise Dean, now Denise White. She'd gone back to Oberlin. They'd started up a little Indian program at Oberlin, and Hollis had gone with her, so he'd transferred. I said, *Hell, I'll go to Oberlin*. I wanted to finish college. I didn't have any particular reason to come back to Dartmouth, so I went to Oberlin.

We had a little mini-Dartmouth crowd. Even Rich Aitsen who wasn't a Dartmouth student, could have been a Dartmouth student. He was an ABC student at Kimball Union Academy (KUA). He had gone to Stanford, and he decided to transfer to Oberlin as well, so we had a little clique, a little post-Dartmouth clique over at Oberlin.

And my experience at Oberlin was 180 degrees different than the experience at Dartmouth, but I think because I changed, as opposed to—well, there are fundamental differences in the schools. Oberlin had had minority students for a hundred years, so they had a lot of minority—it's actually similar to the way Dartmouth would be now. You know, you have minority faculty, you have minority alumni, there was no feeling you were about to be kicked out any minute. You know, something was established.

But also I'm now twenty-two. I now knew how to do papers. I knew how to do all kinds of different things. And I was dedicated to being a successful student. So I went to Oberlin and became a very successful student. I had terrific grades. I was president of the student government. I got elected to everything. I played on everything. I mean, I just did everything you can do to be a successful student.

It bothered me, though, that I had this “got kicked out of Dartmouth” crap on my record, so I came back here. I transferred back in for one term, aced out. Said, “Now I'm leaving on my own terms” and walked. See, so that's why I can come back here with no bitterness or no regrets or no things left undone.

DONIN: Ooh!

RYCE: Oh, I'm sorry. I touched that. You had your earphones on. Sorry about that.

DONIN: That's ok. So you came back here after you graduated from Oberlin.

RYCE: No. I came back here *during* Oberlin. At this point, Dartmouth had gone to the four-quarter system. Oberlin was not, so I had a summer free, so I came back for the summer.

- DONIN: You finished the courses that had caused you to be kicked out.
- RYCE: No, I didn't take the exact same courses, because that would just be ridiculous. But I took three courses that I thought I might enjoy, and enjoyed them and did real well in them and had great relationships with the professors and just demonstrated to myself and anybody else that would care—though I don't think anybody cared except for myself—but demonstrated to myself that, yeah, I could have graduated here and I could have been successful here, and then left. And that was my idea, which is the way it should be. You know, there we go, so now we can be friends, you see? [Laughs.]
- DONIN: So when you came back, were any of your original friends here? No, they'd all graduated.
- RYCE: Well, not everybody graduated. Not by a long shot. Ever, actually. If you look at our record for the Class of '74, it's pretty damn dismal. Dave Bonga will be in here later today. Dave's got the numbers off the top of his head. But there weren't a lot of graduates. And there were guys that washed out of here quicker than me. I think Bob Abrams just came here and just—he's a Seneca guy. He just watched TV until they threw him out. He just never did anything. He fell into this deep funk of a depression.
- Dave Ipina—I mean, yeah, there were a bunch of guys that were out of here before me, even. It was nothing new. I think my test-taking ability was what kept me going a lot longer than I really should have been. I really should have been out of here a lot sooner, really.
- DONIN: Well, somebody had to be the first. I mean, you guys—this group was sort of pioneers, like the women were in 1972.
- RYCE: We were.
- DONIN: It was a brand-new program. You were unprepared, through no fault of your own. All of you.
- RYCE: Well, we were also—I'll tell you, the one thing the school hadn't learned how to do yet was find Indians, so I don't think

a lot of us would have gotten in ten years later. I'm not going to say none of us would have gotten in ten years later, but I wouldn't have. I had like, a 2.1 average on a 5-point scale in high school or something. There's no way I'm getting into Dartmouth. I don't care what my board scores are or the chess phenom crap. I don't think that matters at all.

DONIN: Well, the SATs mattered, though.

RYCE: I don't think I would have gotten in. At that point, they're finding kids with some background. Ten years later, you're—well, first off, they were, like, students. We weren't students. We were construction workers and rodeo riders and this kind of—you know, we were—Jesus! I mean, look, we went over to Vermont just because we got bored and cleaned out a biker bar one night. This is not like a normal Dartmouth student—

DONIN: [Laughs.]

RYCE: —thing. You know what I mean? It was a truly different group, and I don't know that too many of us would have gotten in. But, mind you, we wouldn't have gotten in because we wouldn't have been able to compete. We wouldn't have been able to compete certainly on paper with better-prepared, other Native students. So Dartmouth got better at finding Indian students maybe that would have gone to Haskell and aced everything or something else. Haskell is a school with a lot of Indians in it. That was, like—okay. Sorry. [Laughs.]

DONIN: Where is Haskell?

RYCE: Kansas.

DONIN: In Kansas?

RYCE: Yeah. There's a number of—were community colleges, now they're four years that a lot of Indians went to. R.J. Eben, for example, who's a year or two after me—he came out of one of these places in Oklahoma. He graduated his two years in Oklahoma, and then he comes up here—you know, that kind of a thing. So I think what happened is we were pulling the better-prepared kid—we, Dartmouth, were pulling the better-

prepared kids—in the later years. I want to be clear about that. We were pulling the better-prepared kids that would have otherwise gone to a local college or to one of the Indian schools.

Actually, the same thing happened with the black community. A bright kid that would have gone to Spelman goes to Harvard. That's just what happens.

But that's what I mean, is I think the college got better at recruiting kids. And then there was more things here for them to do.

DONIN: More support.

RYCE: Yeah, there was at least a class. It was definitely more. And then you actually—you had older students. No matter how screwed up they were, they'd been there for a couple of years. That's a help. "Don't take this class. Take that class." The kind of thing they would have gotten at a frat, let's say. You know, "Don't take this class. Take that class. Let me give you a hand with your paper," that kind of a thing.

DONIN: So this whole Greek life thing didn't even compute for you when you first came here.

RYCE: Well, we were over there quite a bit, actually. And, in fact, two of the Indian kids pledged at—was it Alpha? Beta? I forget. That would have been Bruce and Tom DeHaas, was it? No, Harry? Bruce? Well, Tom DeHaas, definitely. One of the others. I forget which one. It was Bruce or Harry. Probably Bruce. But that was just because I liked going to parties. Yeah, that was another ugly, really—Beta. That was another ugly, really, incident.

We had no clue what was going on. You were supposed to wear beanies your first week. No one's wearing a stupid-ass beanie. And you're supposed to help upperclassmen move their gear. So I'm walking by. The guy goes, "Are you a freshman?" I go, "Yeah." He says, "Here. Carry my trunk up to the third floor." "Fuck you!" [Laughs.] "No. No, you're definitely too light in the ass to have *me* working for you. I mean, no. Absolutely not."

So there were just things that never got explained to us at all. You know, part of that was freshmen weren't supposed to go over to the frats, but that's where the party was, so we'd go over to the frats. And there were some football players versus Indians—fight. Brief. Didn't last very long. You know, that kind of thing happened. No, we didn't have a clue. The Greek—we had no idea what that was.

But after a while, yeah, two of our guys went and pledged at a frat. I forget which one, though. I don't know if they stuck with it. In fact, I think they both got kicked out. Not out of the frat. I think out of the school. But certainly there wasn't any feeling like you couldn't go do it.

DONIN: I'm so amused by your description of your behavior here, and yet this freshman picture of you makes you look like such a sort of erudite, serious student.

RYCE: Well, I was. I just didn't go to class. [Laughs.] Look, I was reading Shakespeare in the fourth grade because nobody told me you're not supposed to do that. I was just reading whatever I could get my hands on. So it's eclectic and strange and odd, and I just learned to blow through phrases I didn't understand or words I didn't understand, and then I'd pull them back later. You know, that kind of a thing. I don't know whether it's true or not, but years and years and years and years later, I was diagnosed as one of the milder Alzheimer's diagnoses. That kind of makes some sense, in a way. Kind of that sort of a semi-*Rainman* kind of a thing.

DONIN: Oh, not Alzheimer's. You mean autism.

RYCE: Oh, I'm sorry. Autism, yeah. I'm sorry. That's the chemo talking.

DONIN: Yes, that's okay.

RYCE: Yeah, autism. I think I just kind of refused to have anything to do with anything that sounds like Asperger, you know? [Laughs.]

DONIN: It's not a nice name.

RYCE: It seems demeaning, you know? [Both chuckle.] But that might be part of it, too. There was always kind of—there's a kind of an ultimate outsider. You learn how to do this. But being raised by a parent who switched identities at the drop of a hat—actually wouldn't recognize me on several occasions. It makes you very adaptable. So I don't know whether that's actually a true diagnosis or not, but the point was I was very adaptable.

And that photo—I think I'm 15 or 16 in that photo, and I knew very well that was going to be going on the Canadian—that's my Canadian Indian ID photo, so that's the one I have to show at border crossings and stuff. You know, I'm not showing up with long hair and hung over and no glasses. So, no, it's my—it's a borrowed suit and a nice haircut, and my IHS Buddy Holly's—you know?

DONIN: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

RYCE: Actually, they weren't IHS, though. They were—but it's the same place. You could get—you know, poor people get cheap eye glasses and eye exams, but you only get four—there are only four models to choose from.

DONIN: Right.

RYCE: I elected not to have horn rims. So that's what I actually wore—I think by the time got here, I was wearing aviators and that kind of thing. I mean, I actually didn't look like that photo at all, believe me.

DONIN: That's a good point. So the dozen or so of you here—did you all sort of present as Native, or did you present as passing for not Native?

RYCE: Well, nobody was passing for anything because there wasn't any reason to pass. You got no—Okay, this is another one of those big switches within macro America, as opposed to within us. It's actually quite fashionable to be Native now. Especially since the casinos have come, it's actually lucrative and fashionable to be Native. None of us, at a time prior to coming here, had ever gotten any advantage whatsoever about being Native. We simply were because we were.

You might be discriminated against in a setting where the Natives were the minority group—you know, were *the* minority group. But speaking only personally, I'd never been a place where Natives were *the* minority group. I was in a place where actually whites were the minority group and I was a sub-minority group of it. So in terms of self-identifications personally, only personally, it would have certainly been non-white, Native. I mean, there's also this other uber category of non-white, which included the Latinos and the blacks. And on the South Side, that was that. I mean, it was very important not to be white. *That* could get you killed in the wrong place, and I was definitely living in the wrong place to be white.

But Latino or Native was just fine. A lot of the brothers were part Native. At least their personal family sagas included a Native grandmother and this kind of a thing. It's—wow, this is really getting out there, but this is traditionally the way black families would explain the straight hair and the lighter skin. They wouldn't go, "Yeah, yeah, your grandma was getting raped repeatedly back in Tuscaloosa." It was, "Yeah, Grandma was—Great-grandma was Cherokee," "Great-Grandpa was"—you know, something or other like that. And to some extent it's true. I mean, I'm not going to say it doesn't happen, but there was just no way there were that many Indians in that many black families. But you had that.

So that was actually quite easy for me in Chicago. On the South Side, nobody had anything against Indians because they never met one, but all they heard was good things about it because, like, Grandpa Henry was a Cherokee. You know, this kind of a thing.

So, no, I don't think anybody was running around—well, none of the crew you're talking about—maybe some of the kids who weren't coming around had decided that they—much like their parents, had decided they were putting the Native part aside and were moving forward from it, into this other thing. But I wouldn't want to speak for them. You know, not at all.

But, no, the idea of sort of passing for white was never—never really seemed to come up in discussions at all.

DONIN: So you never encountered any negative response to you here, the fact that you were a Native.

RYCE: No, not at all. You know, qua Native. You know, lots of negative response, okay? And it stems sometimes from being a Native. Like I say, we had no clue. What we were doing I think violated the social mores constantly. I mean, just constantly. Well, like timeliness. Indians just are never on time for anything, and you had to be on time. If you were a couple of minutes late for a class, you were in for it if you come wandering in a couple of minutes late, and we were perpetually late. It's a routine, standard joke about "Indian time." For example, Indian time is fifteen, twenty minutes behind Eastern Standard, Pacific—wherever you happen to be. No excuse for it, but we just didn't know about it. We didn't know that timeliness was important and this was important, those things were important, so we didn't do it.

So that comes out of things we didn't know about the overall culture. Things happened coming the other way. That anthropology professor, for example. But I would say I didn't come across any—you know, "What are you fuckin' Indians doin' here?" kind of a thing, at all. Then again, that could have just been a sense of—it would have been very unlikely for anybody to have confronted me or any of us with that kind of a statement. It would have been violently answered to.

DONIN: Responded to.

RYCE: Yeah, very quick—

Our basketball team went into the playoffs. Just to give you an illustration of this, our—this is not the first year; it would have been the second year or the third or something. And, you know, we're winning, and in the final minute or two, there's some hard fouling from the other side. It's a way of stopping the clock. And sometimes that turns into an argument. One of our guys, Sky Locklear, had been driving to the basket, and Sky gets clotheslined. This guy grabs him by the throat and throws him to the ground. Sky pops up. Sky had just finished a tour in 'Nam as a "Irrp"—long-range recon patrol. He had his throat cut from here to here. He had

bullet holes. Sky is not the guy you want to hard hack in the last minute of a hotly-contested game.

So he pops up, and the benches empty out, and, like, I mean, twenty seconds into it, all of a sudden everybody just stops. And, like, what the hell just happened? Because the other guys—I think they were expecting to run out and push back and forth and go through a behavior—you know, push, push and hold me back and this kind of stuff. And we're going right for throats, edge of hand, nuts. We're just—the poor guys are just crawling around. I mean, these poor guy are just, like—I mean, I felt bad for them. I mean, we all just sort of stopped and go, "What happened?"

We didn't expect that. Everybody was sort of—we never actually had—yeah, there's a cultural differential right there. That was, like, pretty bad. I remember I'm helping this guy up, saying, "You okay?"

DONIN: [Laughs.]

RYCE: No, I felt bad! I mean, because nobody really wanted to hurt anybody. This was the end of a game. And then we said okay, we'll just go out and play some more. You know, kind of ease up on—it's okay. You know, kind of eased up. And they didn't foul anymore, and the game ended, and everybody, blessedly, we went home. You know, that was, here.

DONIN: This was here?

RYCE: Here

DONIN: Varsity basketball?

RYCE: Intramural.

DONIN: Oh, intramural.

RYCE: No, I used to play with the guys on the team. I had a lot of basketball—but that was—oh, I don't think any of us could—R.J. might have had a shot at making the varsity team maybe, but none of us could have played varsity basketball here. Not at all. But we used to play with the guys, and that

was good. That was some good basketball got played here. It's in the winter. What else are you going to do?

DONIN: Right.

RYCE: You know, really. [Laughs.] There's nothing else to—I understand there's a nice, great big field house now that has all kinds of other things, but, nah, that wasn't the case then. [Laughs.]

DONIN: There was an unheated hockey rink, right?

RYCE: Oh, yeah.

DONIN: In the winter.

RYCE: Yeah, uh-huh. It was virtually an outdoor hockey rink, basically.

DONIN: Yes, it was just a shell.

RYCE: Uh-huh. Yep. Lacrosse was in a field, uh-huh.

DONIN: Yep. Skiing was—

RYCE: Skiing was big, but none of us skied. I remember thinking about it and saying, *How the hell am I going to be able to afford this?* I mean, you had greatly reduced prices. It just seemed out of my range, and I just never learned. Peggy had been on the New Hampshire girls' ski team. She was a hell of a skier. She also wound up captain of the Oxford women's basketball team. She was quite the little jock, too. It's one of the reasons we got along so well. But, yeah, no, there wasn't a lot to do here in the winter sports wise, unless you played basketball. Played basketball, lifted weights or were a gymnast. You know, that was warm. Those were all warm.

DONIN: Swimming? Was there swimming?

RYCE: You know, if there's a pool, I never found it. Hell, I would have enjoyed that. I'm not saying there wasn't; I just wasn't aware of it. There was a lot of things I had no idea was going on around here. It's funny. You wouldn't think so, but unless

somebody actually takes you over and says, “That’s Webster Hall,” how the hell do you know it’s Webster? I mean, how do you know about it?

I remember I was discovering things kind of out of nowhere when I came back. It was, like, *Wow, that’s always been there?*—that sort of stuff.

But, no, it’s not the—here: One of my roommates briefly—and a good friend of mine, was a black guy from Liberty, Mississippi. And Lanis had integrated his high school. So he’s a freshman in high school. He’s one of, like, three or four black kids getting bused into this all-white high school in Mississippi. And he had crowds and people throwing things at him and this kind of stuff. And he would come, and he’d sit down at a table in the lunchroom, and everybody else would get up and leave the table and that kind of stuff. Nothing like that was going on around here. You know, nothing remotely similar.

DONIN: And he was one of your roommates here?

RYCE: Yeah. When I was living off cam—well, off campus but around—down the street here, actually. Yeah, he and I split a place. It was a two-bedroom apartment, and he had one, I had one. Then he left. Then I was splitting with Hollis. Actually, that was—yeah, I just drove past that coming in yesterday, in fact. It was kind of funny. It’s still standing there.

But, yeah, that was the kind of thing. No, so there was—within my—in Chicago I’d certainly seen segregated housing. I’d been in the projects for a while. There was certainly a high degree of segregation. You cross Exchange Avenue, you got to be ready to fight. No matter which direction you’re going, it’s the white kids on the one side and then us on the other side of Exchange, so crossing Exchange is like a declaration of war. But even the white kids weren’t just white kids. They were Greeks and Italians and Irish and—you know, this kind of a thing.

In fact, that’s one of the—I was—I don’t know how old. I was a kid. Anyway, I’d been kicked out of the house without a coat, so it was cold in Chicago, and I found this car that was

open, so I'm sleeping in the car, just waiting for the day. Then I'd sneak back to the house, get a coat. And this guy found me in his car. I thought he was in for the night, but he comes out. But I'm not stealing anything; I'm just sleeping. I was a kid trying to sleep in the back of his car.

Instead of just kicking me out of the car and get in the car and driving off, he says, "C'mon inside, kid." And he comes on inside. He'd been visiting his mother. Nice Greek lady, Mrs. Costopoulos. And what utter decency of people. "We can do better than a car. You can sleep"—they had a basement. It was a nice little basement that they fixed up. "You can sleep there." So I slept there for three weeks. I get dinner with them until I got settled. And then I got settled, and there we go. She's in her 90s. I still talk to her son from time to time. You know, still in Chicago, still got her mind.

So, I early on come into the understanding of the essential decency of people that spans all ethnic groups. I never could get into this black and white, and white and Indian and all this stuff. It didn't make any sense to me. You can't hate a newborn child. If you can't hate a newborn child, how can you hate black people or white people? They're born. They're already these things.

But, no, there's any number of people that gave me assistance when they didn't need to at all. My high school homeroom teacher, who marked me present for months when I wasn't. That way, I was still in the system and could come back, for example.

DONIN: Did you find people like that here?

RYCE: Well, yeah, I got in with Peggy's family, and they sure didn't have to put up with me, but they sure did. Her dad and I became quite close. Was a real fatherly influence for me, and there's a lot of fatherly influences, but he's certainly one of them. They certainly extended themselves. I can't recall a professor who did or anything like that, but I didn't really need it either, so, you know, it wasn't there.

DONIN: You weren't looking for it, though.

RYCE: I wasn't looking for it, didn't need it. I was completely existing on my own at that point. I'd hit my full growth a while before, and college was something I was trying while I was here.

DONIN: Did you work at a job while you were here?

RYCE: Freshman year, yes, I scraped trays at the college mess. Had the early shift. That was hilarious. There was an Eskimo from—Lars? I think his name was Lars. He was from Greenland or something. This is how unsophisticated we were: We didn't actually understand that Eskimos were Natives. I just knew he was this, like, cool guy. And he and I were next to each other on the shift, and there was all this really great food coming past. I mean, we couldn't believe the stuff people were throwing out. So we made up all kinds of—we were eating food, we were throwing stuff. We were just having a ball. The supervisor would come around. He said, "Stop all that." I said, "We're doin' the job. It's a line. We're not holding anything up." You know, "Fuck you." "I'm gonna write you up." Okay. What am I going to do? Am I going to lose my minimum wage fucking job at five in the morning? [Laughs.] I didn't care.

And then after a while, I didn't need to work 'cause I'd found one hustle or another and that worked out okay, so I always had some cash around.

DONIN: But I assume your tuition was covered by scholarship.

RYCE: There was a scholarship, and there was loans, and everything seemed to resolve itself. It was always there. There was never anything over, but it also—

Oh, God! I'm sorry about that. I'm thinking about this. Yeah, so I'd head over to financial aid because I wasn't getting my parental contribution, which wasn't much, but there was a parental contribution and that's the gap. And I'm saying, "Guys, this isn't working out." Yeah, there's your little cultural differential. "Can't you and your mom sit down and talk?" "Well, no!" [Laughs.] I mean, she doesn't have anything anyway. And there you have it. So, no, I'd been out of the house a long time at this point.

And they found a scholarship for me. It was a named scholarship for something or other, and every year I'd write a letter thanking these folks, a very heartfelt letter. I forget what it was. It was a... had a name, which is escaping me right now. But it was that, and that made up the gap, so that was pretty cool. So when I said people extended themselves, there's another one. These guys went and dug in and found something.

DONIN: So if you had to describe what your two years here at Dartmouth—two and a half years, whatever it was—how it impacted you, how would you describe that?

RYCE: Oh! [Laughs]

DONIN: I mean—

RYCE: Are you kidding? This was my get out of hell ticket. Okay, Dartmouth punched my get out of hell ticket. It's not so much what I did here; it was actually getting here, because that opened the door to all this other stuff that happened. So I'm a transfer student from Dartmouth to Oberlin, which is a whole lot easier than trying to get into Oberlin after four years of not doing anything—I mean, a zero and a blank. I learned basic skills from the people that I met here, not necessarily in class, I don't think, but this whole hanging around with Salinger was one hell of an educational experience.

And obviously it took, because, as I say, the next college I went to, I was an enormous success. I was enough of a success there that I got into Yale Law School. Did my graduate work at Harvard. You know, I mean, I have aces, academic credentials now.

DONIN: But some of that is developmental, don't you think?

RYCE: How so?

DONIN: Well, learning to be a good student. I mean, you were 22 by the time you were excelling.

RYCE: Sure. But you say, "What's the effect of Dartmouth?"

DONIN: Yes.

RYCE: That's your get out of hell ticket. There's no way—if I go to North Central Illinois, I just dick around for a while and then I'm out. I probably wouldn't have gone to college at all. I mean, that's about it. And I don't know. There's a whole other, alternate life that isn't this life, and I can't—I'm not going to say that I wouldn't have done well in it, but I sure wouldn't be me right now. That's for sure. And that all starts here. It starts the day I arrived.

It put a—I was a Dartmouth student. That made all the difference. You see, that made everything different in the way you're viewed by the world. Being viewed by the world different means you have your opportunity. And that's what I did. Now, I took that opportunity, and I ran with it. I didn't necessarily excel—I didn't excel here. That's for sure.

But, no, the developmental thing you're talking about—that's a direct result of coming here. So there you have it.

DONIN: So what did you make of this Dartmouth community that you found here that was so totally opposite from the life that you had known? It's like a foreign country.

RYCE: Yeah, it was. Picture being a foreign exchange student in Norway for a couple of years. What do you make of Norway? Norway's Norway. They don't care what I make of them. I either enjoyed myself and get good things there and made friends and then left with good experiences or I didn't, and I made sure that I left here with a good backward—except for two years ago, I haven't been back here since 1974 or whatever it was. I mean, I would get to Cornish Flat, but I wouldn't get over here, because there was just no particular reason.

Oh! I take that back. One time, when I was in Yale, I got into a car—so this is '78, maybe?—'77, '78. Get into a car. It's a Saturday morning, Sunday morning, whatever it is, with this Chicano kid, Frankie Serrano. We were hanging out. And just gone—you know, started driving around just because. You know, like to drive. And wound up heading north out of town. I said, "Yeah, I went to Dartmouth." And he goes, "Yeah, so let's go. What the hell?"

So we just drove up there, and that was pretty funny. So on the way up, I had to stop off and say hey to the Salingers, so we pull up, and we're chatting, chatting, chatting, chatting. Get in the car and we're driving over and he's going, "That was J.D. Salinger," he says. I go, "Yeah." He goes, "Jesus!" Yeah, that is kind of odd. I wasn't actually aware it was odd, really, at the time, either.

And then we went to this guy—and this is the funniest thing, because we go to the Indian House, and there was always a poker game going on at the Indian House, and I walked in—

DONIN: The one here?

RYCE: No, this was a different Indian House.

DONIN: Oh, a different Indian House.

RYCE: This was—wow! Yeah, no, we started off on this other place, and then it got moved. They actually picked the house up and moved it on rollers, put it in a different place. This Indian Center they have is a whole totally different thing.

DONIN: Right.

RYCE: It's brand new to me.

DONIN: The Indian House you were referring to was the Dartmouth Indian House.

RYCE: Yeah.

DONIN: Yeah, okay.

RYCE: Yeah, yeah. So I went there, and there's a poker game going on, and there were a couple of guys that I knew: R.J. Eben, for example. They were still here. They had come in after me, but they were still here, and they might have been in their eighth year, for all I know, but they were still here. I just walk in, and I sit down. I pull a couple of bucks out of my pocket, put it down. They're all, "Hey, Drew." And they start throwing me in. This is a very Indian thing you do. You don't show surprise or anything like that. And Frank was just

cracking up. He says, “They act like they just saw you, like you’d been playing last night and had just come back or something.” I said, “Yeah, that’s just the way we do this stuff.” It was just funny as hell.

Who was at that thing? R.J. Eben and—Littlefield. Yeah, Ed Littlefield. He was another one of the players. So I definitely knew both of those guys.

DONIN: Did your years at Dartmouth, the two and a half years—did it change in any way your feeling of belonging to this community of Natives that were up here with you?

RYCE: Well, if you think about it, we actually moved our community of Natives over to Oberlin. I’m having now, for the first time, having to come to grips with the idea that there’s a community of Dartmouth Indians and that I’m a member of it. I’m Grandpa, actually. Or maybe not. That weird uncle who you keep in the garage. But I’m actually a part of this. But I never—no, it never, ever seemed to come up or anything like that. I mean, I would meet some kids that had gone to Dartmouth, and that was nice. I had met them. But it’s not like we, “And did you remember Professor So-and-so?” or “What about this- ha!” or Winter Carnival or any of that kind of a thing, you know? [Laughs.] There’s no connection to that. We were just connecting as an older Indian guy and young Indian kid just coming out into the world, basically. It was pretty much what I expect to happen today with the—

DONIN: Class.

RYCE: With the classes, yeah.

DONIN: And the roundtable tomorrow.

RYCE: Yeah. I would expect it to be like that. But, I mean, you know, it’s not at all surprising. I’m general counsel out at Colville, which is up in Washington State.

DONIN: How do you spell that?

RYCE: C-o-l-v-i-l-l-e. It should be coh-l-VEE, okay?

DONIN: Uh-huh. Yeah.

RYCE: It drives you nuts, listening to the way people pronounce French. I'm from Quebec enough to know what it's supposed to sound like, and it's not—you know, Versailles [pronouncing it vur-SAILS] Plank Road.

DONIN: Oh, dear.

RYCE: Senecas. Yeah, it's a big drag over there: vur-SAILS Plank Road. [French pronunciation]: Versailles Plank... [/] oh god... and this kind of thing.

DONIN: [Chuckles.]

RYCE: But Colville's like that. You know, the place is full of guys with names like [French pronunciation]: diseautee. I can't even—it hurts my mouth to say it, to even say it the way they say it. But that's it: Colville—you know, not cohl-VEE.

Anyway, yeah. So, no, I can't say there was ever any connection. But the point I was getting at was our director of gaming was Randy Williams. I knew Randy here at Dartmouth. He's class of something-or-other. The tribal chairman is John Cyrus. John went to Dartmouth. You run across them all the time now. It's not at all surprising.

DONIN: But that's new.

RYCE: Yes.

DONIN: I mean, you didn't have that community feeling back then. There weren't enough of you, first of all.

RYCE: No. No. No. There's a community feeling between those of us that were here, but that's one based on long-time, long-term memories. You remember the Patty John that was the roommate of the girl I was with?

DONIN: Mm-hm.

RYCE: She married Tom DeHaas, who was one door down, two doors down from me at Chase Hall, who was rooming with Hollis White, who—Hollis and Denise were in the Indian Program at Oberlin when I transferred to Oberlin. I mean,

everybody is connected up in that group very closely, and we keep track of each other, except the ones that have been—you know, they're dead or disappeared. So you always kind of have an idea of what everybody's doing.

You'll be talking to Dave Bonga. Dave is terrific at that kind of thing. He stayed around here as—he came back, I should say, as the program director, and he's maintained contact over the years, so it's real easy to find out what's been going on at Dartmouth, where everybody is. You know, give Dave a call. You just do a quick catch-up. We just did that driving up from Boston. We met at Logan. He flew in from somewhere, I flew in from somewhere else, and we drove up together, and so I'm getting the skivvy on them.

DONIN: So you've been able to maintain this sort of connection to Dartmouth, even though you've not been back here, because of this network you've got.

RYCE: Right. That's also an old Indian joke. The fastest forms of communication: telephone, telegram, tell-an-Indian.

DONIN: [Laughs.] I never heard that.

RYCE: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's what we do. Yeah, we all have a very clear idea of who's where and what's doing what, that kind of thing, except for the ones that just disappeared off the face of the earth. I'd love to know what happened to Travis Kinsley, for example, but he was just last seen at a motel in Tucson. You know, gone. We have no idea where Travis is. You know, that kind of stuff. But I imagine that sort of thing will pop up.

Other times, you wind up at stuff. I was talking to a girl at an Indian conference, and we were talking about this, we mentioned that, and—"Wait a minute. Dave Ipina? You know David Ipina?" she says. "Of course, I know Dave Ipina. He roomed down the hall from me" and so on. "Oh, he's my baby's father." "Oh, cool! How's Dave?" "You know, he died." "Oh." Okay, so that's how I found out Dave Ipina died.

DONIN: Mmm.

RYCE: You know, this kind of a thing. Sometimes its... but generally it's pretty easy to keep track, keep in touch. And so we have.

DONIN: Is it a sort of sub-group that's made up of mostly people that are products of higher education?

RYCE: I don't know how to answer that. I mean, that—okay, I'm going to bet you there weren't half a dozen Native lawyers in the country when I was in college. I don't think there were hardly any. There's got to be a thousand now.

DONIN: Wow.

RYCE: I mean, there's just a bunch. I think Charles Eastman was the only Indian doctor I'd ever heard of, a guy in Arizona—you know, the Yavapai, so it's probably two. Now, even in our group there's several doctors—you know, Eva and—[snaps fingers]—oh, man! Her name is escaping me. She was Class of '75 or '6. Yeah, I just saw her recently.

Sorry, this is the chemo giving me problems. You know, I fumble around with names and people that I can just picture. In fact, her sister was my secretary for a while at Colville. Certainly, Alison—Alison Boyd, Alison Boyd. That's how I got there. I got there through her sister, not through Dartmouth. That's how I was able to fetch the name up. They're both doctors, for example. So that would have been, like, the total sum of Native doctors in the country that I'd ever heard of at that point, and I never heard of an Indian woman being a doctor, and now here, Dartmouth's got several. I doubt they're the only two.

You know, Louise Erdrich I think would probably have to be regarded as sort of the spokesman, or one of them, for the entire Native generation, and she was here. Her name was Karen then. But she was certainly here. That's how it works. You know, that's how it works. I certainly don't deal with educated people every day, but to have that Dartmouth connection, unless you're secretary happens to be Alison's sister, then that's the way it works. It goes through the educated Indians, of which there's now many. They're all over the place.

DONIN: Right. Right.

Okay. I think we're done, Drew.

RYCE: Outstanding!

DONIN: Let's see here.

RYCE: Good for you. You got your list of questions, in case you forgot something? I always do that on depositions, too.

DONIN: To keep me focused

RYCE: You'd be amazed how often that there's something— whoops! And that turns out to be the important one.

DONIN: But the amazing thing about these interviews is even though I haven't actually come out and asked you these direct questions, the answers have revealed themselves anyway, just in your narrative.

RYCE: Mm-hm.

DONIN: We didn't talk about Dartmouth's location.

RYCE: Hanover?

DONIN: Yeah. I mean, that impacts a lot of people's experiences here.

RYCE: Oh, yeah, no, not me. [Laughs.]

DONIN: The city versus rural.

RYCE: Yeah, I'd done both. I'd done both. I was comfortable with it. In fact, I went more rural once I was here because I was off on the farm. I got nine kids. I raised them on a ranch in California even while I was a big-city lawyer in L.A. I just did the commute up to Ventura County, and I live in the northern Cascades now. It never was—

DONIN: It wasn't an issue.

RYCE: Nah! No, no, living in the woods was not a big deal to me one way or the other. You do or you don't do it.

DONIN: Right, right. Okay, I'm going to turn off the recording.

RYCE: Okay.

[End Part 1. Begin Part 2.]

DONIN: Okay, this is Part Two. Drew has an addendum to his interview.

RYCE: [Laughs.]

DONIN: So what about belonging?

RYCE: One obvious consequence of coming here was that I came to the understanding that I belonged here if I wanted to be here. It turned out I didn't. I wanted to be at Oberlin, followed by Harvard, followed by Yale. But it's the idea that you could, as opposed to prior to coming here, this great mysterious thing that I'm probably not worthy of or able to do or I wouldn't be welcome at. So for whatever the difficulties or whatever occurred, clearly by the time I left here, my second stint here, I was totally, completely convinced that I and anybody like me could succeed and did belong if they wanted to go.

And how that works, then, is I've raised nine kids, and I told each of them, "You just bust hump. You know, do well, and I will send you to any school that you can get into." My daughter, Misha, was accepted here at Dartmouth, and she was a high school valedictorian in a school that doesn't have any other Indians, I don't think. And came here, looked the place over—you know, I was actually kind of lobbying for her to come here, and decided to go to Reed instead, where she graduated.

So it turns out none of my kids went to Dartmouth, although I think five or six of them, even under the more difficult admissions standards of the present day, I think could have gotten in. But they're—I've got a daughter graduating the Actors Studio in May. I've got— Antal went to the American University of Paris. He's an editor on the *L.A. Review of Books*. Marcos is a captain in Viet—not Vietnam. Sorry, wrong era. In Afghanistan. He's coming home in two weeks.

They all did—Pops is a commercial artist in Ventura. He went to Cal Arts Institute.

You know, everybody went where they went. One went to USC. You know, everybody goes where they goes, and they do what they do, and that's it. They belong there. They always, from the beginning, always had a feeling that they belonged anywhere because Daddy never for one instant ever gave them the idea they didn't. There was never anybody telling them they couldn't do it, so there you have it.

So that is kind of an addendum to the punching the get out of hell ticket. Once you're out of hell, you're out of hell and you're never going back, so you don't need to worry about it.

So that's it. So here's maybe a whole generation now of Native kids. Maybe that's what Dartmouth ultimately accomplished, is because they're graduating so many of these guys, and they're going all these different places. Maybe they ultimately create another generation of kids who don't have to go to Dartmouth; they'll just go wherever the hell they want.

DONIN: But it all started with that group of you that got here in the early '70s.

RYCE: Yeah. I guess you could say that, yeah.

DONIN: Great.

RYCE: Okay.

DONIN: Thank you for that. I'm glad we turned it back on again.

[End of interview.]