

Daniel Tom, Class of 1968
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
June 14, 2013

DONIN: I'm just gonna say a couple of opening lines here.

TOM: Okay.

DONIN: Today is Friday, June 14, 2013. My name is Mary Donin. I'm here in Rauner Library with Daniel Tom, Dartmouth Class of 1968. Okay, Daniel—do you prefer Daniel or Dan?

TOM: Dan.

DONIN: Dan. Okay. Good. I'm glad I asked. Just to get us started here and get a little background from you, you're from Hawaii, I see, in your *Aegis* and your Facebook page; you started out in Hawaii, it would appear. How did you end up all the way across the United States in northern New England, at Dartmouth College back in, let's see, 1964?

TOM: Well, I almost didn't get here actually. When I was considering the colleges to go to, I was picking colleges in Texas. There was one in Tennessee. And these were mainly Christian colleges.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: And now of course the University of Hawaii was also under consideration.

DONIN: Yeah.

TOM: But my high school counselor said, "Well, you know, you should always pick one that you know you will definitely get in, such as the University of Hawaii. There would be no question that you would get in there. And of course you'd probably get into the colleges that you applied to. But shouldn't you consider more academic or higher universities in a higher tier category? And so why don't you try applying for some of those?" And so I said, "Okay."

And I went, and I looked at the catalogs that were at the counseling office. And there was one on Dartmouth, of course. And I looked at

the description. I read everything. And I said, well, you know, I really like the sound of this. And I was intending to major in American history anyway. And so this would be a good uni— college to go to for that. Plus the fact that my mother, during the war years, had a colleague, a coworker, in civil service, who was William Goodman. And he was the Class of '39.

DONIN: Wow.

TOM: And through the years my mother was very good at keeping, you know, in touch with her friends from the past. And so she would get a Christmas letter and card every year from him and his wife. And she would send, of course, her Christmas greeting and letter to him. In addition, since I went to a public high school, you would have to buy book covers for your textbooks and the book covers usually had the insignias and colors of different colleges. One year I happened to buy a Dartmouth book cover. So she mentioned the fact that, you know, she had a coworker that went to Dartmouth. So that's how the name Dartmouth got introduced into the home and why I considered Dartmouth as a choice. And I also picked Harvard and applied to both Dartmouth and Harvard. And sight unseen, of course, just from what was described in the catalog.

DONIN: A few pictures in a catalog—

TOM: Right.

DONIN: —was all you knew.

TOM: Yes. Right. And it's not like today where students get a chance to take a trip, sometimes with their parents, sometimes without, and they go and visit the different colleges, and then they make their choice. Well, I made my choice sight unseen.

DONIN: Golly! You're very brave. How did you feel about going so far away?

TOM: Well, I knew it was a challenge. But I just felt there was an opportunity, and so I would take it. But then I later found out that my mother was also rather adventurous. [Laughs.] But that was after the fact.

My mother, when she was young, while in high school, worked for a military family. We were located near a military base, an army base

called Schofield Barracks. And so while she was in high school, she would work as like a housekeeper at the base for the officers' families. And so she worked for this one family, and she also watched their child; they had a newborn child. And when they got orders to go to Fort Ethan Allen in Burlington, Vermont—

DONIN: Oh, my goodness! Yep.

TOM: They asked her if she would come along with them and continue to watch their son and work for them.

DONIN: Leave Hawaii and go with them?

TOM: With them, yes.

DONIN: Oh, my goodness! How old were you when this happened?

TOM: Well, I wasn't even born, but she was in....

DONIN: Oh, this was when she was young.

TOM: Yes.

DONIN: Okay. Sorry.

TOM: She was about maybe 18, 19; out of high school.

DONIN: Oh! Right. Okay.

TOM: And so she said yes. And so they paid her way, and she accompanied them to Vermont and Fort Ethan Allen. And she stayed with them for two years, until the child was three, I think.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: But she made friends in the community. And after the fact she said, "Well, you know, I went to Vermont, I spent two years there, I have all these friends there. So if you go to Dartmouth, you can go [laughs] and meet my friends in Vermont."

DONIN: Oh, fantastic.

TOM: And of course, you know, if you go to Dartmouth, you would see William Goodman also.

- DONIN: Yeah. That's amazing. So she was adventurous.
- TOM: Yes. You know when you consider age 18...she was born in 1914. So that would have been in the thirties. Incidentally, several years ago, maybe 5 or 6, out of the blue, I received a phone call from a man asking if I knew an Ayako, that's my mother's name, who had been his babysitter as a child. It was the son of the military family whom my mother worked for in Vermont and he was trying to reconnect with her or a relative. Both his parents and my parents were deceased by this time. He had gone to the Naval Academy and was now retired from the Navy and living in San Diego. We had a very nice chat.
- DONIN: Yeah. And so that sort of made this...probably this location not so intimidating to her because she'd been close by.
- TOM: Right, right.
- DONIN: Uh-huh! So were you the first in your family—were you the oldest child in your family?
- TOM: I'm the only child.
- DONIN: Oh, you're the only child. And so had your parents gone to college? Or was this a new experience for them, to have their child going to college?
- TOM: To have their child go to a four-year college, yes. My father actually got his GED in the same year that I graduated from high school.
- DONIN: Oh, that's great!
- TOM: His stepfather died when he was like about 15 years old. And so he had to help support the family. His father had died earlier and his mother had remarried and it was her second husband who had died when my dad was 15.
- DONIN: Oh, yeah.
- TOM: There were three other children in the family. He was the oldest. And so he dropped out of high school to go to work.

- DONIN: Mmm. A common occurrence at that time.
- TOM: Right. And to help support his mother and the children.
- DONIN: Right.
- TOM: And eventually the two younger children did eventually go to college also. But he never had the opportunity to go to college.
- DONIN: Right.
- TOM: Now, my mother, after she left the employ of the military family, she went to Gregg Business School in Chicago and became a secretary or a....
- DONIN: What they call “administrative assistant” these days, I think, right?
- TOM: Right, right. So she did go to that school, but it was not a four-year college. After she retired, my mother did return to school and received an associate of arts degree from a community college.
- DONIN: So having their son go to an Ivy League college was a pretty exciting event, I would think.
- TOM: Yes, very much so.
- DONIN: So you must have been an excellent student in high school.
- TOM: Well, [chuckles] I guess so. I was the Salutatorian of my class.
- DONIN: Yeah.
- TOM: And I went to a public school. And most of my—all of my Dartmouth classmates from Hawaii went to private schools. So I was the only public school student from Hawaii in my Dartmouth class.
- DONIN: To go to an Ivy League college.
- TOM: Yes. If you meant that I was the only public high school graduate from Hawaii to go to an Ivy League college in 1964, it’s quite possible. Interestingly enough one of my cousin’s twin sons who also went to a public high school in Hawaii went to Harvard, but

we're talking about the next generation and about four decades later.

DONIN: Wow! That's quite an honor. So they were proud.

TOM: Yes. And I grew up in a very small town. Well, I guess around then it was 10,000 maybe. Maybe even less than 10,000 population. It was considered a pineapple town because there were pineapple fields all around us.

DONIN: Oh, wow!

TOM: And while I was growing up, there were even pineapple fields in the town itself.

DONIN: Oh. Uh-huh.

TOM: And eventually those all became residential. [Chuckles.] But they still grew pineapple and harvested pineapple right there inside the town. And most of my relatives, including my father, worked for one of the companies, either Dole or Del Monte or Libby which was big in pineapple production.

DONIN: Big employers, too.

TOM: Right.

DONIN: In the state. Yeah.

TOM: And we considered ourselves the pineapple capital of the world.

DONIN: Oh, fantastic! That's great. But not anymore, I guess.

TOM: Right. Not anymore. However, we still hold a Pineapple Festival in my hometown of Wahiawa every year to celebrate and remember our past.

DONIN: So what was it like.... Were you used to traveling to the mainland and moving around the country?

TOM: No. [Chuckles.] The only other time that I'd been to the mainland I was five years old, when my parents took a trip. And we went—I can hardly remember most of it. We went to Carlsbad Caverns. I do remember that. The Grand Canyon. We went through Mississippi,

and we went to Miami and we went to New Orleans. They tell me these things, [chuckles] but I don't recall much of it at all. So that was the big trip at age five. And from that time to the time I went to Dartmouth, I had never been outside Hawaii.

DONIN: So how scary was it?

TOM: Well, the thing that made it easier is that we had a lot of friends throughout the country. Well, since we were located near an army base and we went to church.... We had a lot of church friends that were stationed at Schofield Barracks.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: But then when they left, they would be stationed all over the United States.

DONIN: Oh, yes. Right.

TOM: But again, my parents would keep up with these friends that they made at church. And so they knew where all of these people were. And we also had friends from Wahiawa who lived, you know, made their careers and left Hawaii and were also living in other states. So they said, "Well, you can always go and see these friends." And I also had an aunt and uncle that lived in Arlington Heights, Illinois.

DONIN: Ah!

TOM: It was my father's younger sister.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: Right next to him actually. She was the second child in that family. So that made it a little bit easier. I spent spring breaks at this aunt and uncle's home in Illinois.

DONIN: Yeah.

TOM: And coming to Dartmouth, the New York World's Fair was going on at that time.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: So I had an uncle in Long Beach. And we had friends in New York on Long Island because he worked as an agricultural inspector at JFK.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: So as I made my way across, I stopped in Long Beach to see my uncle.

DONIN: Oh, great.

TOM: Spent some time with him. And then, you know, got to see that part of California. I don't know if we went to Disneyland or not. But anyway, Hollywood and did all of that. And then we went to New York and I stayed with the friends on Long Island, we went to the World's Fair.

DONIN: Oh, what an adventure you had just getting across the country.

TOM: Right.

DONIN: This is wonderful.

TOM: Right, right. And then from there, New York, came here.

DONIN: Found your way up here.

TOM: To White River Junction and then...

DONIN: So you traveled mostly by train or bus?

TOM: It was all by plane.

DONIN: Oh, by plane.

TOM: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: So what did you find when you pulled into White River Junction and got on a bus to Hanover, New Hampshire?

TOM: [Laughs.] Well, there were other arriving students. And then you just went with the flow, I guess. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Yes, yes.

- TOM: And of course it was Freshman Week. We got our beanies and all of that kind of thing. Found our post office box at the Hop.
- DONIN: Oh, yes, at the Hop. It was, at the time, yes. I guess the Hop had just been built, hadn't it?
- TOM: Yes, it was fairly new. Yeah.
- DONIN: Yeah, fairly new. And did you go on a freshman trip?
- TOM: No, no.
- DONIN: You chose not to?
- TOM: I chose.... Well, it's not that I chose not to. Maybe I was not very aware of the trip. Since I applied to Dartmouth rather later than earlier—you know, I didn't apply for early admission or anything like that because I wasn't even intending to apply to Dartmouth. And then, of course, my parents, you know, it would be an expense for them.
- DONIN: Another expense.
- TOM: Right.
- DONIN: Yes. That's the case with a lot of students, I think, that it's just one more thing you have to pay for.
- TOM: So I didn't go on a freshman trip. So I didn't have that experience.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- TOM: Which I understand is one that you get to know a lot of your classmates on that trip and lifelong friends and so forth. But, no, I didn't. [Chuckles.]
- DONIN: So what dorm were you assigned to?
- TOM: I was assigned to the Wigwam dorms, which are [chuckles] no longer in existence.
- DONIN: Yeah—thankfully.

TOM: They were down by the river. Of course you know that. And I was in Middle Wigwam.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Did you have a roommate?

TOM: Yes. And he was from Upstate New York.

DONIN: So Wigwam was over there down by the river where the River Cluster is, isn't it? Sort of.

TOM: Yeah. Near the Tuck School, yeah.

DONIN: And how was it your first semester adjusting to everything new here? How did it go for you?

TOM: It went pretty well. And fortunately my other classmate from Hawaii was also in the Wigwam dorms. I need to add this story about adjusting to Dartmouth. I got so involved my first semester in my course work that I neglected to write home to my parents. One day I got a phone call from Mrs. Champion who also happened to be with the local American Red Cross. She was calling on behalf of my mother who worked in the American Red Cross office at Schofield Barracks. My mother had used her connections with the Red Cross to have someone in Hanover contact me. Mrs. Champion sort of chided me in a nice way and told me that my parents would appreciate a letter from me. She said she had college age children of her own and understood, but before hanging up she made me promise to write home. My Hawaii classmate in the dorm received a more public message to write home. He was sent a telegram from his mother and the telegram was stuck to his dorm room door by the telegram deliverer for all to see, much to his chagrin.

DONIN: That's lucky! I wonder if that was intentional.

TOM: I'm not—I don't know.

DONIN: Did you know this person before you came?

TOM: No, no.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

TOM: There were five of us from Hawaii. And he knew...he and two others graduated from the same school, Punahou. So he knew

them from high school. And then there was another classmate from Hawaii Prep Academy, which is on the Big Island of Hawaii. So I didn't know any of them.

But it was fortunate that I had this one classmate. And we had some connection because his father worked for a stockbroker company. And my father also had dealings with that same brokerage. So there was that little connection there. We were also both ethnically Chinese. By the way, that stock brokerage was headed by a Dartmouth alum, Paul Loo.

DONIN: Small world. Yeah.

TOM: So—

DONIN: It's nice you found somebody with some commonalities between the two of you. And how did you find the academic challenge here? Did you feel well prepared?

TOM: As well prepared as anybody else I think.

DONIN: Right.

TOM: What was interesting is that after—one of my teachers found out that I was going to Dartmouth; she did ask me before I graduated from high school, "What would happen if you went all the way up there, and you found that academically you were not making it? Or you were homesick? Or, you know, anything like that? Because it's 5,000 miles away. What would you do? Would you come home, or would you stick it out?" [Chuckles.] And I said, "Well, I probably will stick it out." So I had that attitude to begin with.

DONIN: Very mature.

TOM: And so I just plugged along. And if we had to write a paper, [chuckles] I wrote a paper. But I did have trouble in Latin. Because they said you should take the language that you took in high school.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

TOM: Which was Latin. But the problem is that they stopped the Latin program in my high school because they couldn't find a teacher. So I only had two years of Latin in high school. And my senior year I didn't continue Latin. So there was a break of one year. And then

here I was taking freshman Latin with all of these other students who had taken four years of Latin.

DONIN: Oh, yeah.

TOM: And then they had gone to prep schools and so forth. So I got one of those letters at midterm [chuckles] that said—

DONIN: Oh, from the dean.

TOM: Yeah.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

TOM: “You are failing”—“Or you’re”— Yeah, I think it was, you’re failing in Latin, at that point—or getting a D or whatever. But I ended up with a C-, I think, that term, or a C+. One of those.

DONIN: Oh, didn’t they used to call that a Gentleman’s C.? [Laughter.] It was totally acceptable.

TOM: [Laughs.] But then the second semester of Latin, which I ended up getting a B in. [Laughs.]

DONIN: Oh! So you’d mastered it by then...pretty much.

TOM: [Laughs.] I found a way to get through, yes.

DONIN: Right, right.

TOM: And I had another classmate in my class that was in the same boat. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Oh, yes, I’m sure.

TOM: The two of us were having a hard time in Latin. In spite of my challenges with Latin, I did end up making the Dean’s List one of my semesters freshman year and I also received a citation in English from Alexander Laing. That was encouraging. I would make the Dean’s List many more times and I received two more citations, one in History and one in the History of Chinese Art during my 4 years. I graduated *cum laude* with honors in history.

- DONIN: Right, right. And how was the social life? I mean, who became your friends your first year here? Was it your floor mates in Wigwam or were you doing any intramural sports or other activities where you made friends?
- TOM: Well, I did work for the Intramural Office. I got a job working for the Intramural Office, and I met people there. And also I kept close to that other Hawaii classmate who is also here for this reunion.
- DONIN: Oh, that's great!
- TOM: And then I made friends at church, too. I went....
- DONIN: Which church did go to?
- TOM: I went to the Lutheran Church.
- DONIN: Oh, yes. Down on.... Yes, right. I know right where it is.
- TOM: So eventually I started rooming with one of those friends that I made at the Lutheran Church.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- TOM: So moved out of the Wigwams to Massachusetts, which [chuckles] was a step up.
- DONIN: A big improvement.
- TOM: But, you know, those were my friends. And the people you meet in the dining hall.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- TOM: And then we had similar interests...like we liked to go to the Film Society films and so forth. And then they would introduce you to their friends. And then we just formed a group.
- DONIN: Your circle grows that way, doesn't it?
- TOM: Yeah, right. Right.
- DONIN: And so as you looked around you, at your class, did you see a lot of people that looked like you that you felt some connection to you

because they looked like you? Or did you feel you were sort of swimming in a sea of Caucasians, white Caucasians?

TOM: [Laughs.] Well, definitely was swimming in a sea of white Caucasians because there were very few Asians in my class.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: Or even at Dartmouth at that time.

DONIN: Right.

TOM: I felt that many times I was the only black-haired student in the class, and that way I would stand out more because of that fact.

DONIN: Yeah.

TOM: And I remember thinking in economics class, I'm taking notes in my notebook, and then I see that my handwriting is getting worse and worse and worse. And I'm getting sleepy. And I was thinking—I'm sitting in the front row—and I'm thinking, Oh, what is the professor thinking because I'm the only Asian student in this class, and maybe dozing off in the front row? [Laughs.] But anyway... And when I came, you know, my name is Daniel Tom.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: So it's two first names actually. And when I matriculated here, they have you meet the president, and you sign the certificate—and he signs the certificate, and they reversed my name on the certificate.

DONIN: Oh!

TOM: And so it was Tom Daniel. [Chuckles.] And they apologized for that. They said, Well, we're going to have him (the president) sign this, but we're gonna send you a corrected copy later. So in that way they didn't know that my last name was Tom.

DONIN: Tom. So you were in the wrong place in the alphabet, too, then.

TOM: Mmm, I don't know. I think they did it by—I don't know how they organized it, whether it was alphabetical or not.

DONIN: Yeah. Uh-huh.

- TOM: But what also helped, of course, is that you have classmates in one—in the dorm you have a class advisor, a professor that’s your class advisor, and he looks after you for the freshman year and invites you to his home. That kind of helped, you know, to get you to be more integrated into Dartmouth. But also, coming from Hawaii, you felt that you had some aura of interest from other people. “Oh, you’re from Hawaii!” You know.
- DONIN: Yes, yes. You’re slightly exotic, right?
- TOM: Right.
- DONIN: Yeah, yeah. And how about other people who looked different? I mean were there black students in your class?
- TOM: Yes, there were black students in my class.
- DONIN: And any Native Americans?
- TOM: There may have been, but they were not obviously Native American.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- TOM: ‘Cause a lot of, I think...a lot of Native Americans may be mixed. Even the Hawaiian people in Hawaii, a lot of them are mixed. So they can be Hawaiian, Portuguese, Chinese.
- DONIN: A combination.
- TOM: A combination.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. So people aren’t really sure whether you’re from Hawaii, for instance, or from Japan or from....
- TOM: Right, right.
- DONIN: I mean it’s hard for them to identify you. So how did that sort of—did that impact how you felt like you belonged here or not, being among so few Asians in your class?
- TOM: No. In a way, growing up in Hawaii, when you see so many ethnic races, you don’t grow up thinking, “I’m Chinese” or “I’m Japanese.”

You grew up thinking, “I’m an American, but I have a different cultural heritage.” And we may be celebrating Japanese New Year or Chinese New Year, and you have those customs. But you still consider yourself an American.

DONIN: Of course.

TOM: So in some sense, you know, I didn’t have any idea that facially or...you know I was any different from anybody else.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: You think of yourself as an American. And so I didn’t feel like I was a misfit or didn’t fit in. But I was not into a lot of sports. And so I was not with that crowd or this crowd. But I think I managed to feel that I was at home, regardless.

In the same way that when I was in.... I worked in Taiwan for five years. And even though I was Chinese and would blend in with the local population, [chuckles] I still thought of myself as an American teaching in Taiwan rather than as a Chinese person.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: And I remember getting into a taxi, and the taxi driver asked me, “Where are you from?” Or “Are you Chinese?” And I said, “No, I’m an American.” [Chuckles.] And then he actually scolded me because he said, “It doesn’t matter whether you are from America or born in America, you are still Chinese.” [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Oh, that’s interesting.

TOM: You know, a Chinese is always a Chinese.

DONIN: Right, right. And also I think your background... You know, I’ve never thought about this before. But since Hawaii is such a melting pot for all sorts of, as you say, all sorts of Asian cultures—

TOM: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: —it’s easy to feel comfortable wherever you are because you grew up in an atmosphere where there were so many different cultures that made up your life.

- TOM: Yes, yes.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- TOM: Now the other Asians in our class, one was from Hong Kong. Now he may have a different perspective on things.
- DONIN: Right.
- TOM: Coming from Hong Kong rather than from Hawaii. However, I must tell this funny story about another cousin's daughter. Her father is Caucasian so she's half Caucasian and half Japanese and she did an exchange at the University of Maryland. She and another Hawaii friend were walking on the Maryland campus and remarked to each other that they were surrounded by so many "*haoles*" (Hawaiian for Caucasian) at the school or as you put it "swimming in a sea of Caucasians." When she told her mother that, her mother laughed and said, "What do you think you are?" since she was half Caucasian herself. We all had a good laugh when my cousin related the story. I guess I really did have a different perspective on things being part of an Asian minority at Dartmouth.
- DONIN: I'm sure. So were you interested in the Greek life? Did you join the Greek life?
- TOM: No, I didn't.
- DONIN: No....
- TOM: I did—during the rush week, I did go to different fraternities. But again, affording the—to belong is another...
- DONIN: It's another issue.
- TOM: Yeah, another issue.
- DONIN: Right, right. Did you feel that you were missing out on something by not having those social opportunities in the basements or wherever they socialized in the fraternities?
- TOM: [Chuckles.] I think I did miss out on some of that.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.

TOM: Because you do find out that, you know, other classmates who belong to fraternities also have lifetime friends from the fraternity, and there's a lot of networking and so forth that goes on.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: And bonding in those relationships, which I did not have. But then I knew other people who were not in fraternities also, so....

DONIN: Right. And I assume you feel that even more acutely during the big sort of holidays that are celebrated here, the traditional holidays: Green Key—I shouldn't call them holidays. The weekends: Homecoming and Green Key and Winter Carnival.

TOM: Winter Carnival. Those kinds of things, yeah.

DONIN: And all that. So that must have been particularly difficult times.

TOM: Right, right.

DONIN: And everybody's got a way to meet women because they come up for these weekends. And you probably felt a little bit left out of all that.

TOM: Yes.

DONIN: Yeah. So how did you... Where did you find your social life? Just with the—I know you said your friends that you met at your job working in the Intramural Office and that sort of thing.

Were there opportunities to, you know, go to The Nugget or go—was The Nugget—yes, The Nugget had burned down, but it was rebuilt by then, yeah. And of course The Hopkins Center was relatively new. You said that was something that you enjoyed doing, the Dartmouth Film Society.

TOM: Mm-hmm. And the concert series.

DONIN: Oh, yes, right.

TOM: And we did go to movies at The Nugget, yes.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And there was another club here that I.... Oh, you managed the Glee Club first year?

- TOM: I was in the Freshman Glee Club, yes.
- DONIN: Uh-huh! What is the Cosmo Club? Is this you? Yeah. The Cosmo Club? Maybe that's a mistake.
- TOM: Three and four. Third year and fourth year. No, I think the Cosmo Club—it's not a mistake. But now I don't remember. [Laughter.]
- DONIN: Made a big impression on you.
- TOM: I guess maybe the Cosmo Club was made up of people who were interested in other cultures?
- DONIN: Oh, that would make sense. Uh-huh. Yeah.
- And did you stick with your intention to be a history major?
- TOM: Yes. But the focus was not so much on American history. It was refocused toward Asian history. And so I went into Chinese history instead of American history.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- TOM: And also I started learning Chinese here at Dartmouth. And I think they'd just started teaching Chinese when I was a freshman.
- DONIN: I think you alluded to that in this little piece here that was in the alumni directory. Let's see here. What does it say? 'Cause you went on to.... Oh, yes, it says you didn't take Chinese until you were a senior. And then after you left here, you went to Middlebury, to their intensive Chinese classes.
- TOM: Right, right. And the same day that I graduated from here, we drove up to—
- DONIN: You went directly to....
- TOM: —Middlebury. 'Cause they were starting the next Monday, I think. [Chuckles.]
- DONIN: So did you have.... You said there was a student advisor in your dorm to look over you during your freshman year. Not a student advisor. Sorry. A faculty advisor who was your....

- TOM: They had a group of us that lived in the dorm on the same floor; we were assigned to a professor. And he was supposed to be our freshman advisor.
- DONIN: And was he helpful to you?
- TOM: Yes. I mean he was a professor of chemistry, and he had us over to his house at the beginning of the semester. And we knew that we could—you know, he advised us on what subjects to take, initially anyway. And we knew that we could go to him if we had any problems.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. So was there other—I mean, were there other faculty people who became—that you got to know well, maybe became sort of like a mentor to you? Was it common for students to form those sorts of relationships with faculty members? Become close to them, more so than just in the classroom?
- TOM: Yes. I think that was very common. But I did not establish that kind of close relationship with another faculty member.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. You didn't feel the need.
- TOM: Right.
- DONIN: Well, that's good. You were probably doing fine then, right? [Laughter.] How do you feel like your four years at Dartmouth impacted you? Did you come out a different person when you graduated than when you got here? And I don't mean just developmentally. Obviously you grew and learned a lot of things. But how did Dartmouth change you, other than your classroom learning, for instance?
- TOM: Well, I think it refocused my future in that instead of American history, it went toward Chinese history. So I've been focused more on Asia and China, and I wasn't intending to do that. And so my present career, which is—I've taught in Taiwan. I taught at a Chinese university in Taiwan. And I also taught Chinese briefly in Hawaii. And now I'm involved with the Center for Language and Technology at the university. And that was all because of my background switch to emphasize China and Chinese language.

- DONIN: Mm-hmm. And your mother and father, are they—is their background Chinese?
- TOM: My father is Chinese. My mother is Japanese.
- DONIN: Oh, interesting.
- TOM: And so I grew up more with my Japanese side of the family because my Chinese grandparents were deceased before I was born. And then my father's brothers and sisters, except for one brother, they moved away from Hawaii. My mother's side of the family stayed basically in Hawaii except for that one uncle that was in Long Beach.
- DONIN: Right, right.
- TOM: And so, you know, the traditional holidays we would go to Grandma's house, and we would have Christmas at Grandma's and New Year's at Grandma's, Thanksgiving, so forth. Spending these holidays so far away from home and family for the first time was a different experience, but it was not a lonely one. My first Thanksgiving was spent with William Goodman and his family. I would also spend a Thanksgiving and a Christmas with my mother's Vermont friends. I'm grateful to my roommates and their families and to my parents' friends on the east coast who invited me into their homes during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's when being with a family was so important.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- TOM: So I grew up getting to know the Japanese side and the Japanese culture more than the Chinese side. But then after that, after I started learning Chinese and traveled to Taiwan, then I became more familiar with the Chinese culture.
- DONIN: So you've got a rich background of both Japanese and Chinese culture. But again, that's not uncommon in Hawaii, it would seem.
- TOM: Yes, yes. Right, right. And my mother's sister, who is the second sister.... My mother's the oldest child. She was born first. Her sister just below her also went far away to college. So it must run in the family. I don't know.
- DONIN: I see, yeah.

- TOM: She went to Baylor [University].
- DONIN: Oh, yeah, in Texas.
- TOM: In Texas.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- TOM: By herself also. So maybe there's this genetic trait [chuckles].
- DONIN: There's a genetic—uh huh, yeah. [Chuckles.]
- TOM: And my grandmother grew up in Japan, of course. And she came from a Samurai family.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- TOM: She was sent to high school in a time when maybe women or girls in Japan would not be educated. But she was educated. She graduated first in her high school class. It was also the first graduating class for that school and since they numbered the diplomas consecutively from then on, her diploma will always be the only one to have the number 1.
- DONIN: Wow!
- TOM: And she had aspirations of becoming a medical doctor. But then my grandfather made a trip to Japan to get a wife.
- DONIN: Oh.
- TOM: And he was from a Samurai family, too. So he went to her parents and asked for their daughter. And it was not really supposed to be my grandmother. It was supposed to be an older sister. But she was not known to be...she was known as a sickly or weakly child. So they said, "Well, we will skip her. We won't give the older sister to this man. We will give my grandmother to him," and they agreed that he would marry my grandmother and bring her to Hawaii. Since I did this interview, I talked to an aunt more about my grandmother (her mother) and learned that I made some errors in this story. It is true that my grandmother was the second choice, but an older sister was not the first choice. The first choice was the daughter of another family. My grandmother did not have an older sister.

And she was very upset with that because that broke all of her dreams because people who went to Hawaii were mainly laborers who went to find jobs. And then here she was being married off to a man and going to Hawaii. She didn't know that she was going to be a.... He had a pineapple farm. This was in 1913 and she was married in the traditional silk wedding kimono called a *montsuki* with the family crest or *mon* interwoven in 5 places. They traveled to Hawaii by ship, first class. She wore this kimono when she disembarked on arrival in Honolulu harbor and kept it stored in the bottom of a wooden chest during her lifetime. Our family donated the kimono to the Smithsonian in Washington, DC and it was on display for an exhibit on Asian immigration in 2009 at the Museum of American History along with a photo of my grandmother at the age of 16 when she was married. Several in our family including myself made a special trip to DC to see it. This year it is 100 years old and we are very proud to have it at the Smithsonian.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: So he was technically a businessman and wealthy. But she would have to be a—

DONIN: Traditional—

TOM: —traditional wife, and he would have workers, and she would have to do the cooking and everything for the workers. And she would have to do all the housework. They had servants in Japan, so she didn't grow up cooking. So she had to learn all of these things. And then when she started to have children, then she had to raise them. So she had quite a hard life.

DONIN: And she lost her opportunity to pursue her dream.

TOM: Right. To become a doctor. And in a documentary she was interviewed once, and the interviewer asked her: "Well, there was a friend from Hawaii who knew you, who went back to Japan and met your mother. And your mother said, 'Oh, you know, tell my daughter to write because she isn't writing to us.'"

DONIN: Oh....

TOM: And so this friend came back to Hawaii and approached my grandmother and said, "Well, you know, your mother would like you

to write to her.” And then my grandmother said, “Well, she’s the one that sent me here.” Sort of like a little resentment here, you know. “And I’m not going to write.”

DONIN: She punished her by not writing to her. Oh, gee.

TOM: But later on she became close to a younger brother that was not even born before, you know, when she left Japan. He was born afterwards. And so this younger brother found out about her, and he considered her...you know she was his older sister. And so they got to know each other. And he treated her very well after that, even though he was still in Japan. So my grandmother did have an opportunity to go back to Japan and reconnect with her family. Again after talking with my aunt, I need to make some slight corrections. My grandmother’s younger brother had been born before my grandmother left for Hawaii, but he was very young. Later they reconnected and he did have a high regard for her as his older sister and by that time the only other living member of their family. He visited Hawaii more than once and for a while I and one of his sons were pen pals. When I visited Japan in 1969, he and his son took me sightseeing around Tokyo and the surrounding area.

DONIN: Spend time with her family.

TOM: Yeah, yeah.

DONIN: Oh, that’s nice. So let’s go back to Dartmouth when you were here. It was the end of the sixties, and there was a lot of political unrest beginning on campus.

TOM: Yes, yes.

DONIN: Did you get involved in any of that?

TOM: I wasn’t involved directly in any protests or anything like that.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: But there was, of course, political unrest about the Vietnam War.

DONIN: Yes.

TOM: But also black Americans were also protesting at that time. And I remember one year we had all of these speakers come to speak to us. And George Wallace was one of them. And he spoke in this—

DONIN: Yes, he did. Webster Hall.

TOM: Webster Hall.

DONIN: He was not treated well after he left.

TOM: No. They surrounded his car and so forth. And then when he first came onstage, he felt that there was perhaps some danger of him being attacked. So he actually came onstage and then immediately left. And then he came back a second time, and then he did his speech.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So he could sense the—

TOM: Animosity, yeah. Right.

DONIN: —the animosity in the audience.

TOM: Right, right.

DONIN: Oh, interesting. So how did that... Was that a distraction on campus? Or how did that impact you?

TOM: Mmm...I wasn't really distracted by it. We just knew that it was going on. We were interested, of course, in the politics. But I didn't get directly involved in any of the protesting. And it didn't disturb my work. But it did give you a thought, Well, what is my future gonna be like? Because I'm of draftable age and, you know, I might be drafted and sent off to Vietnam. We did get to hear several high profile speakers at the time such as General Hershey, Malcolm X and as already mentioned, George Wallace.

DONIN: Right.

TOM: Those things were on your mind, yeah.

DONIN: A lot of pressure.

TOM: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: And a lot of pressure to stay in school as a result of that.

TOM: Right, right.

DONIN: And do well. So your friends... You weren't in a crowd of friends that were politically engaged particularly.

TOM: No. No, no.

DONIN: Uh-huh. It sounds like your focus was more towards the arts here than athletics. Let's put it this way: You didn't fill the sort of traditional Dartmouth profile—

TOM: Right. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: —of a fraternity....

TOM: Outdoorsman and fraternity.

DONIN: Outdoorsy guy.

TOM: Right. Although I did join the Dartmouth Outing Club.

DONIN: Right. Who did athletics and a lot of socializing. But your experience here was a positive one nonetheless?

TOM: Yes, yes.

DONIN: Yeah.

TOM: I was always very much interested in music and culture and that sort of thing.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: So the concert series—I was very active in doing that. If I recall I was a volunteer usher for the concert series. And of course, the Film Society—interested in all the old films.

DONIN: Yes.

TOM: And things like that.

DONIN: And you had a community who enjoyed doing the same things as you did.

TOM: Right.

DONIN: Uh-huh. That's so interesting because, you know, that profile of the students who enjoy the arts, it's certainly celebrated now. But it certainly was not as well known at that time.

TOM: At that time. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: So I assume it was more of a minority. And what did they do.... I guess you were on campus when they started bringing.... Was that the first year, when you were a senior, the first year that they had exchange student—women exchange students come on campus? Or maybe it was the year after you graduated.

TOM: I think it was the year after I graduated 'cause I don't remember any—

DONIN: Uh-huh. There were no women in the plays or anything. I guess they got community women to—

TOM: To play the parts, yeah.

DONIN: —play the roles. Ah-hah. Yeah, I guess maybe it's the year after that they started coming as, you know, a one-year exchange program. So they had to go into the community to find women to play the roles in the plays and such.

Now do you have any memories of President Dickey? Did you ever interact with him face to face other than when he signed the card the wrong way? [Laughter.] Your matriculation card.

TOM: Well, we saw him on the streets walking his dog. And, you know, we'd say hello and things like that. But I didn't know him personally.

DONIN: Right, right.

TOM: I never talked to him at length.

DONIN: Yeah. And how'd you manage through the winters? Did you learn to enjoy being outdoors when it's 30 degrees below zero?

TOM: [Laughs.] Yes, I adjusted. And I, of course, liked skiing.

DONIN: Oh, did you?

TOM: Yeah. So I took up skiing, and would go skiing in the winter.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So your body adjusted to these cold temperatures here.

TOM: Right. I always felt, well, as long as you're inside, you had the radiator, and the room was warm. And before you got out, they had the plows [chuckles] out there plowing the roads and making a pathway through the Green. So I didn't feel that that was any problem.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And you actually enjoyed the skiing and the ice skating?

TOM: Mm-hm.

DONIN: Winter Carnival, the sculptures. Were you part of the sculpture-making?

TOM: No. I knew as freshmen we had to go out there and do the center sculpture. But I didn't find time to do that. [Chuckles.]

DONIN: Right, right.

TOM: And we also had to do the bonfires.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: That's a tradition that's—well, it's still here. But we had to do it every home game instead of just the Homecoming.

DONIN: Did the students in those days build the bonfires?

TOM: Yes.

DONIN: Oh, times have changed, haven't they?

TOM: And then as freshmen, you were responsible for the building bonfires and going and collecting the railroad ties. So I do remember having to go out on a flatbed truck, and they would take us out alongside the railroads. And then we would find the abandoned railroad ties. So that was our responsibility as

freshmen. And as freshmen we also had to answer the telephone in the dorm for the upperclassmen.

DONIN: Ahh, yes, yes.

TOM: And then you also could be drafted, [chuckles] so to speak, by upperclassmen to help them move into their dorm.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

TOM: Or for the fraternities to help them clean up the fraternities for Rush Week and all of that. And then there was the tug-of-war where you had to win or you would have to wear your beanie for an undetermined number of weeks after that.

DONIN: Yes. There was a lot of pressure.

TOM: There was a lot of those traditions that are not carried out today.

DONIN: Which is probably a good thing. Probably a good thing.

TOM: But having to wear the beanie, too, to class and even to get into the dining hall you had to have your beanie on.

DONIN: For how long? Was this just the first week or something?

TOM: No. This was into, I think, the end of October sometime.

DONIN: Oh, goodness.

TOM: Because it was the tug-of-war that determined whether you had to continue wearing them.

DONIN: Oh, yes. Of course. So it was important to win that tug-of-war.

TOM: [Laughs] Yes.

DONIN: [Laughs.] And did you that year?

TOM: Yes, we did.

DONIN: Oh, well done!

- TOM: Although we heard that the class before us had lost, and they had a food riot [chuckles] after that. [Laughter] But our class won. Because they said if the upperclassmen felt that your class had bonded, then only the sophomore class would show up as opponents.
- DONIN: Oh.
- TOM: But if the upperclassmen felt your class was not bonding together, then the upper three classes could—
- DONIN: Come and be in the tug-of-war?
- TOM: Right.
- DONIN: Oh, and then they'd beat you.
- TOM: Yes. Because they would have more people.
- DONIN: Of course.
- TOM: Yes, more men.
- DONIN: And then you'd have to wear the beanies longer.
- TOM: Right. [Laughter.] But we were fortunate. They—
- DONIN: They thought you had bonded already.
- TOM: Right. And so only the sophomore class showed up.
- DONIN: Oh, that's lucky.
- TOM: I don't know how many of them even showed up, but we did win very easily.
- DONIN: Oh! Well, done. So did you spend all your four years living on campus? Or did you ever live off campus?
- TOM: All four years on campus.
- DONIN: On campus.
- TOM: Two years in the Wigwam and two years in Middle Mass.

- DONIN: Oh, I see. So it wasn't as common back then for students to live off campus, or was it?
- TOM: Yeah, it was not as common because there were not that many places to live. Now, some people moved into their fraternity houses.
- DONIN: Right.
- TOM: But that would still be considered on-campus, I suppose. But we did have a few classmates that found rooms in town.
- DONIN: Right. There were people who let out their rooms.
- TOM: Mm-hmm.
- DONIN: I see. But it's not like today when they're all over the place...all over the Upper Valley it seems, even undergraduates.
- TOM: Oh, okay. Now, we were required to live in the dorm freshman year; I remember that.
- DONIN: Right.
- TOM: And you could not have a car.
- DONIN: Right.
- TOM: I don't know if it's still the same today.
- DONIN: I don't know what the rule is today, whether students can have cars as freshman. I honestly don't know. Makes sense, though. They should stay on campus that first year.
- So...what have I forgotten to ask you? Or do you have any other stories that I haven't pulled out of your brain, pulled out of your memory? [Laughter.]
- TOM: Well, I do have one interesting story about my Chinese professor.
- DONIN: Oh!
- TOM: His name was Henry Kuo. And he was originally from Beijing. And in those days they made a point of, your Chinese professor has to

be from Beijing—or at least that’s the feeling I got while I was studying Chinese. Because Beijing was considered to be the standard. You know, like in English you may have a standard that says this is Standard English, and people who teach English should be speaking Standard English.

And so in Chinese, Beijing was the standard because it was the capital. And people who spoke Mandarin and lived and came from Beijing spoke the best Mandarin. And they even taught the Beijing dialect. The Beijing dialect is known for having R’s in their—like, for example, you would say “yidiar” instead of “yidian.” And so they would add an R to certain words.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: And so all of your teachers—in fact most of my Chinese teachers were from Beijing or spoke the Beijing dialect. Now it’s considered a dialect.

And so years later, in the 1980s after we were allow—after we had recognized China and Americans could travel to China, I took a tour group to China; I was the group leader for a tour agency in Hawaii and took a tour to China. And we were in Beijing. And I walked into the Beijing Hotel. And one of my graduate student friends happened to be there. I didn’t know he was in Beijing. And he yelled out my name, and I thought to myself, Who knows that I’m here? [Laughs.]

But he said he was there studying...doing research for his Ph.D. And he was at Beijing University. And he said, “Well, I have a student friend of mine, you know, a Beijing University student. And I want you to meet him.” And so I said, “Okay.” “And his uncle teaches Chinese in the United States.”

So this was about the mid-eighties. And so they came to the hotel, and he introduced me to his friend. And when I heard the last name, which was also Kuo, I said, “Is your uncle Henry Kuo?” And he said yes.

DONIN: Oh, unbelievable!

TOM: And then I said, “Well, your uncle taught me Chinese at Dartmouth College.”

DONIN: Oh, that's amazing! What a small world!

TOM: Yeah.

DONIN: Is Kuo a common Chinese name?

TOM: Yes, it is. Mm-hmm.

DONIN: So that's even more unusual then.

TOM: So that was funny. And I met him. And then my friend, who is from New York, of course, kept up a friendship with him even after he left China and went back to New York. And then eventually this nephew came to the United States to do his Ph.D., and he went to Florida.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: And so he got his Ph.D. in Latin American Studies and afterwards a law degree. And then he met another Chinese woman there, and they got married.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TOM: And she is a professor also. And they've now moved to Hawaii. [Laughter.]

DONIN: Ah! Full circle.

TOM: So his wife is a professor at one of our universities, West Oahu College.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

TOM: And so I again, from the mid-1980s to—

DONIN: Now.

TOM: —two thousand something, then again we've met up.

DONIN: Paths have crossed again. It is a small world, isn't it? And it's shrinking every day. And that all started at Dartmouth.

TOM: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: So is Henry Kuo still teaching?

TOM: No, he's deceased now.

DONIN: Oh.

TOM: He died about two years ago.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

TOM: But he went from Dartmouth to Connecticut College.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

TOM: And that's where he ended his career. He retired from Connecticut College.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Teaching many, many students Chinese.

TOM: Right.

DONIN: Wonderful! Wonderful! Okay, Dan. Well, I think.... Oh, let me ask you one more question. Did you stay in touch with your community of friends that you had here when you were an undergraduate over these years?

TOM: Yes.

DONIN: Oh, how nice.

TOM: Yeah. My roommate—my roommates of course.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

TOM: And unfortunately the roommate that's closest, he lives in Massachusetts—

DONIN: Oh!

TOM: —decided not to come to this reunion.

DONIN: Oh, dear.

TOM: And we're kind of sad about that. And my other roommate is now in Minneapolis.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

TOM: But he has chosen not to come either. By the way I did ride up here from Boston with my Hawaii classmate from Wigwam dorm days who now lives in Boston and I spent the night at his home before coming to the reunion.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

TOM: But I have seen them since we graduated.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Is there a Dartmouth Club in Hawaii?

TOM: Yes, there is a very active Dartmouth Club in Hawaii.

DONIN: Oh, that's nice.

TOM: A lot of the.... I think it's a very strong club because a lot of the Hawaii people, you know, it's not rare that.... I mean I think in every class there's probably someone from Hawaii.

DONIN: Oh, sure.

TOM: But there's a sort of bond there of, you know, Hawaii people going to Dartmouth. So I've known—I've met many, many Dartmouth alums throughout the years.

DONIN: That's nice. Well, I think when you're that far away from the College, whatever it is—

TOM: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: —you probably try a little harder to stay in touch because it's the only way to stay connected really.

TOM: Right, right. And some of the singing groups have come to Hawaii.

DONIN: Come to visit?

TOM: Yes.

- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- TOM: Yeah. Both the women's and the men's. I think the Dartmouth Aires have been to Hawaii, but they haven't been in a while.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. That's great.
- TOM: And occasionally we get a professor that comes through. For example, there was an anthropology convention held in Hawaii in April. So one of the Dartmouth anthropology professors went to that convention, and then she—we had an event—an admit party actually—for those that were admitted to the Class of what? 2018 now? No, 2017. My freshman roommate who is an anthropology professor in Singapore also attended this convention, but I didn't know that until after he returned to Singapore so we didn't get to see each other.
- DONIN: 'Seventeen, yeah.
- TOM: So she spoke at that party.
- DONIN: Oh, great!
- TOM: And then there was a music professor that also did a semester or a year of visiting professorship at the University of Hawaii.
- DONIN: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
- TOM: And he was there, too. We had an event with him. We do occasionally have people from the College make a visit.
- DONIN: The connections continue.
- TOM: Yeah.
- DONIN: Yes. Good. Alright. Well, I'm gonna turn off these recorders now, now that we're done.

[End of Interview]