Mary K. Klages ’80
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[ABIGAIL R.]

MIHALY: All right. Okay, so my name is [Abby] Mihaly. I’m here with SpeakOut in Rauner [Special Collections] Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. It is Saturday, February 2nd. Here, it is 10:26. It is—

Do you want to go an introduce yourself, Mary?

KLAGES: Yeah. This is Mary [K.] Klages [pronounced CLAY-jiss]. I’m speaking from Lafayette, Colorado, where it is currently 8:30—8:28 a.m.

MIHALY: Great. And you're a Class of ’80 at Dartmouth, right?

KLAGES: That’s correct.

MIHALY: Okay. Awesome.

So I guess to start out, I would love to hear a little bit about your family growing up, just like where you grew up, yeah.

KLAGES: Okay. Okay. I was born in 1958 in Columbus, Ohio, to well-educated and wealthy, upper-middle-class white parents. My father went to Harvard [University]. My mom went to Wellesley [College]. So that was part of my inspiration for wanting to go to an Ivy League school.

MIHALY: Got it! What was your—

KLAGES: I had—I had two sisters, an older sister and a younger sister, and my younger sister had Down syndrome.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: And that’s just relevant to me; it’s not really relevant to Dartmouth.

MIHALY: No, that's okay. How did that contribute to, like, your family environment, growing up?

KLAGES: Well, it was—it was difficult because it was the 1960s, and my parents were very brave. When my sister, my little sister was born, the doctors told them to institutionalize her, and they said no. So she was of the first generation of Down syndrome people to be raised at home, which on the one hand was marvelous and, on the other hand, we were doing it without any counseling services or support services, so in my family of origin, we weren't really allowed to talk about how different my little sister was.

MIHALY: Mm-hm.

KLAGES: And—and I think that was a problem. You know, that was a family secret that I wish we hadn't had.

MIHALY: Sure. Did she go to the same school as you, growing up?

KLAGES: No. No. Our school in our—the suburb where I grew up, which was Bexley, Ohio, didn't recognize that they had any kids with special needs, and so they sent any kids that needed special ed to a different school district.

MIHALY: Okay. Got it. And—and what did your parents do for work?

KLAGES: My father was the president of a company that his father founded, Columbus Auto Parts Company, in Columbus, Oho, and my father was first the executive vice president and then the president. And it was company that did original manufacturing. They made auto parts for auto manufacturers in Detroit. And that's a business that was sold to a multinational corporation in the mid-eighties and is no longer in existence.

MIHALY: Got it. And—and was your mother—did your mother stay at home?

KLAGES: Yes. My mom was an honors Wellesley graduate. She majored in chemistry. But this was right after World War II. She was Class of '48 at Wellesley. And when my dad came home from World War II—he was Harvard Class of '44—he

proposed to her and persuaded her not to go into a professional career but to go home and raise his kids.

MIHALY: Got it. You say—

KLAGES: She was very active in clubs and in charities and social organizations, but I think—I think she also had ambitions for me to go do what she wasn't able to do.

MIHALY: Yeah. Do you—do you think—and you say "persuaded her to stay at home." Do you think she had ambitions for a career that never got realized?

KLAGES: I know she did, because I've read some of the letters they exchanged—

MIHALY: Ah!

KLAGES: —when they were courting, when they were engaged. And—and she's saying, "Look, I have a good job at this chemistry firm in Boston [Massachusetts]," and he's saying, "Yes,, but I'm here in Columbus, and I love you, and I want you." and she says—(It's 1948)—"Okay." [Laughs.]

MIHALY: Wow. That's interesting.

KLAGES: Yeah.

MIHALY: Can I get—what were your parents' names?

KLAGES: John William Klages, Class of '44, Harvard. And Virginia Booze Klages. That's B-o-o-z-e. Wellesley Class of '46.,

MIHALY: Okay. Wow.

So what was your, like, school experience, growing up? I mean, you said—like, did you enjoy high school?

KLAGES: Oh, I loved it. I loved school. Because I was extremely good at it.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: I got—got straight A's without much effort. I went to Bexley High School. It's a public high school, but it's in a small and fairly wealthy, quite upper-middle-class community, so it's a very good public school. And we have—we have—the high school has a reputation of getting lots of people into Ivy League schools.

MIHALY: Got it.

KLAGES: I think there were three people from my graduating class that went to Dartmouth.

MIHALY: Were you happy, like, socially as well, growing up?

KLAGES: Yeah, yeah, I think I was.

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

KLAGES: I was—[Chuckles.] I was an arrogant high school student because I thought I was smarter than everybody else.

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

KLAGES: And I see this—I have two grown-up children. They're both in college. And I saw myself in my son, in his arrogance of "I'm so smart, nobody can be as smart as I am."

The one—one of the issues I had, though, as a teenager in Columbus, Ohio, in the seventies was my sexuality, because I was starting—as a senior in high school, starting to think that I might be a lesbian. And that was not something I was going to say out loud in my high school in 1975.

MIHALY: Was there any kind of visibility or role models in your town at all?

KLAGES: No. It was a time—1969 was when the Stonewall riots happened, and that was the first publicity that gay rights got for me in the middle of the Midwest, so I didn't get news except on national news, when it caught the national news' attention. So the Stonewall riots in '69 made magazines like *Time* magazine and *Life* put the issue of gay rights on their front covers, and that's really the first that I had heard of it.

At that time, the image of gay people, first of all, was mostly men, and images of gay women were of butch dykes, men who were—women who wanted to be men and couldn't pass. So it as pretty distorted. So there wasn't really anything I could identify with. What I did—

MIHALY: What year in high school were you when the Stonewall riots happened?

KLAGES: It was—'69, I was in—let me think. I was in junior high.

MIHALY: Oh, okay, okay.

KLAGES: So—but my—my senior year in high school, when I was starting to explore this, I was taking a sociology class, and we had to write a research paper for the class. And so I wrote a research paper on the problem of lesbians being oppressed and unnoticed, which was pretty radical for 1975.

MIHALY: Yeah! [Both chuckle.]

KLAGES: And my teacher basically made fun of the paper and wrote sarcastic comments all over it, one teacher did.

MIHALY: Goodness!

KLAGES: And then another teacher took me aside and said, "Oh, please, don't be this way. You don't want to do this."

MIHALY: Mmm. Interesting.

KLAGES: Yeah.

MIHALY: So—yeah! I mean,—so tell me about how you ended up at—at Dartmouth. It sounds like you were motivated in terms of school. Was that the largest factor, or what went into that decision?

KLAGES: I think the largest factor was that Dartmouth was the most recent of the Ivies to go co-ed. It was the most reluctant to go co-ed. And I was arrogant enough to say, *Look, if—if the last place on earth that was going to accept women has finally accepted women, I'm gonna be one of 'em*.

MIHALY: That's awesome.

KLAGES: My—my sense was, *I am better than any man. Let me in. Women have been waiting forever to have access to these all-male environments. Let me the fuck in.*

MIHALY: That's awesome. Do you—you make this sound like a—very much an attitude that you're realizing in hindsight. Do you think—what do you think you thought at the time?

KLAGES: At the time, I—again, I was—I was quite arrogant.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: I said, *Bring it on. I'm smarter than anybody on the planet.*

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

KLAGES: *I am—and I'm entitled to these things that have been barred to women for so long.*

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: And I also wanted—I—I have a—I love living in Colorado because I fly fish, and I hike, and I did that when I was a teenager also, and so when I looked at the Ivy Leagues, I thought, *Is there any Ivy League where I could also like, hike and fish?* [Chuckles.] And Dartmouth, of course, is the only one, or *the* one.

The other reason was I knew a couple of my dad's friends were Dartmouth alums, and they were the funniest adults I knew. And I thought, *If I'm gonna go to an Ivy League school, I want to go to one where people get a sense of humor.*

MIHALY: Really?

KLAGES: And, you know, that's not necessarily something you associate with Dartmouth, but that was part of my decision.

MIHALY: No, I like that. [Chuckles.] So when you arrived here on campus, what did it feel like?

KLAGES: Well, gorgeous. I mean, it—it's still the same gorgeous campus. So walking onto campus, I felt both privileged—like, *Yes, this elite environment has finally welcomed me*, and terrified. *Oh, my God, everybody here is going to be as smart as I am. In fact, smarter.*

MIHALY: Hmm.

KLAGES: The other thing was, you know, there was this sort of attitude of: "Oh, look how progressive we are, Class of '80. Look how many women there are in this class. Look how many black people there are in this class." But with no, like, idea that maybe people who weren't straight white men needed some different facilities, needed some different attention. There was the sense that "Yeah, women can be here, but just keep quiet and blend in."

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: You know, "Don't make a fuss." And I think—I think the first classes—I think '72 was the first year that they had women in. Now I can't remember. Anyway, whatever the first class was, the first couple of classes, the women's attitude was mostly "We're grateful to be here. We won't make waves." So by the time I got there and my cohort got there, we were coming in with a slightly different attitude, which was maybe a little less grateful and a little more demanding, that "we're here, and it's not special, so we better get positive treatment."

MIHALY: And was part of that because Dartmouth was later in terms of women entering? Like, you kind of felt like all these other institutions had done it already, or—

KLAGES: Yeah. And—and, you know,—this is very much in hindsight, but Dartmouth was an extremely masculine place. I mean, the college song is called "Men of Dartmouth" [now "Alma Mater"]. And there were lots and lots and lots of people there, men and women, who didn't think that women should be admitted, that this was the last bastion of male privilege, and it was going to be destroyed, and the women were going to ruin everything.

So there were still—there was still a huge sentiment of—I can remember seeing signs, that said, “Cohogs go home.” That’s what the co-eds were called, is cohogs. And there was—I don’t know if you still have the tradition of Hums in the fraternities?

MIHALY: I don’t this we do, actually.

KLAGES: Okay, good, because Hums was where each fraternity got together to make up songs, and there was kind of a, you know, drinking beer and making ribald songs. And one of the songs I heard the minute I got to campus was called “Our Cohogs”: “Our cohogs, they play one, / They have taken all our fun. / Our cohogs, they play two, / They have refused to screw. / Our cohogs, they play three,”—I can’t remember all the verses. But they were out,—like, every frat on Frat Row [Webster Avenue in Hanover New Hampshire]—all the members were out in their front yards, drinking beer and singing songs like this.

And when women started to found a group—we founded one called Women at Dartmouth (an unfortunate set of initials, W-A-D, but that’s what it was called), starting to protest and say, “We don’t feel comfortable here. This is a hostile environment.” I—there was a rape culture that was enormous in all the fraternities and completely unmentioned. I had several friends and classmates, women who were raped at fraternity parties and couldn’t report it, didn’t report it.

MIHALY: Was there any kind of—

KLAGES: We didn’t feel like there was any place to report it to.

MIHALY: Yeah.

So tell me about—you arrived here—was it fall of—it would have been ’76, right?

KLAGES: Yeah.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: It was my senior year, yeah. My senior year in high school was Class of ’76.

MIHALY: Yes, okay. So arrival.

KLAGES: So, yes, fall of ’76 was when I was starting, yeah.

MIHALY: And you moved into a freshman dorm that was mostly men, I assume?

KLAGES: Right, Middle Fayerweather [Hall], which had three floors of men and one floor of women.

MIHALY: And what was that like?

KLAGES: Hooo!

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

KLAGES: You know, everything was fine until I came out to my roommates, and that’s when everything got horrible.

MIHALY: So tell me what—

KLAGES: You know, it was—the dorm was just the dorm. It was—you hung out. You made friends. You partied in people’s rooms. Not much different than I imagine it is today.

MIHALY: Yeah. [Chuckles.] So, yeah, tell me about your roommates.

KLAGES: Okay. My roommates—I’m going to use just first names here.

MIHALY: Sure.

KLAGES: I had two roommates. One was Erica, and the other was Sarah. And one was—Erica was from Main Line Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], and Sara was from Cape Cod [Massachusetts]. And I mention that because I came in from Columbus, Ohio, and I still had an Ohio accent, and I felt very much like the outsider from the East Coast roommates. But we managed to get along all right. We were,—you know, like all freshman roommates do, you—you don’t reveal your

entire self right away. You kind of figure out who you are in relation to these people.

And I think we got along perfectly well until—until I was involved with a woman, which was my winter term of my freshman year, and when that relationship broke up and I told my roommates because I thought they were sympathetic, that's when—Sarah was the homophobic one. Sarah, who called her mother while I was sitting in the room with her and said, "I just found out my roommate is a lesbian. Please call the dean and have her expelled."

And I didn't know that she couldn't do that. So that was—I was pretty terrorized. My—by the end of my winter term and my spring freshman term,—

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: —one of my roommates—Sarah had turned quite hostile and had basically said, "I don't ever want to see you in—in this room again." And Erica was more neutral, but I think she sided with Sarah, so—

MIHALY: Did you move the rooms around, or what ended up coming of that phone call?

KLAGES: Oh, yeah. My—we had had a suite with a main room, like, a living room, and then a little bedroom. And Sarah and I had—Sarah and Erica and I had our beds in the little bedroom. So after I came out to my roommates, in the middle of the night one night, Sarah got a bunch of guys from—I think they were from the ground floor—they were definitely from the dorm—and they came in very loudly at, like, three a.m., and Sarah said, "I found out my roommate is a lesbian, and I can't sleep in this room with her anymore." So the guys moved the other two beds out into the living room. While I was there. I was there pretending to be asleep.

MIHALY: Goodness.

KLAGES: And that was—you know,—again, I had no idea if I could even tell anybody that this was going on. I was—I was sure that this was—this is how normal society reacted to a lesbian in 1976, '77, so I didn't—I wasn't—didn't have a support

group, didn't know myself well enough, didn't know Dartmouth well enough to fight back. I didn't feel like I had any recourse.

MIHALY: Who did you end up telling about the incident? Or did you end up telling anyone about the incident and what was going on?

KLAGES: Well, I had made a really good male friend at Fayerweather that freshman fall, and it was a guy named [Stephen T.] "Steve" Elder [Class of 1980]. And he and I got to be friends pretty quickly, and I told him that I thought I was a lesbian. And he said, "Okay, let me see what I can do." And he went to talk to some people, some professors in Sociology and found out that, yes, there were some other lesbian students at Dartmouth, and he was able to get the contact information so that the professor—I think how this went—the professor—Professor Joan [M.] Smith in Sociology contacted the three lesbians. All of them were seniors living in a house together. Those were the only ones anybody knew about. Contacted them and said, "There's a freshman lesbian. Could you go and talk to her?"

And so I had—that—that household, those three women—for a while, I could talk to them, until I got involved with one of them, and she was a senior. I won't mention her name. She was a senior. The affair lasted about six weeks. And that's when—when it broke up. That's when I told my roommates about it.

I told my friend Steve about what had happened with the roommates, and I told my then ex-girlfriend what had happened. The ex-girlfriend didn't really care. [Chuckles.] And there wasn't—you know, there wasn't, like, a resource. I was terrified that if I went to a dean, if I went to any kind of administrator to talk about this, they *would* kick me out.

Now, I had no—no experience of what—what happened to lesbians at college except for a series of 1950s pulp fiction books by an author named Ann Bannon [the pen name of Ann Weldy], where they had 1950s girls going to college and falling in love with their roommates and then being expelled. So I had no idea what to do except that I was going to—as

soon as spring semester was over, I was going to move into a single room and not confront this again.

MIHALY: Got it. And was that in the same dormitory?

KLAGES: No, I moved out of Fayerweather and into—oh, God, what's the—the complex of the square dorms that's behind Frat Row.

MIHALY: Oh, the Choates [the Choate Cluster].

KLAGES: Yeah. No, it wasn't the Choates, it was closer. It's—because the Choates are down by the river, right?

MIHALY: No.

KLAGES: No?

MIHALY: That's the River Cluster. It does-—[Chuckles.]

KLAGES: Okay. I'm not remembering.

MIHALY: It's okay.

KLAGES: I want to say I was in Lit- —the dorm named Little [Hall].

MIHALY: Little, yes.

KLAGES: But I don't remember—

MIHALY: That's the Choates.

KLAGES: —if that's correct.

MIHALY: That's right. That's where I was freshman year. [Chuckles.]

KLAGES: Okay. So that's where my single room was.

MIHALY: Got it. And so you also mentioned that you eventually moved into Foley House?

KLAGES: Yeah. When I moved to the Choates, I had a car. This was by my sophomore year, so I was allowed to have a car. And I didn't have anyplace to park it, and so the—the Choates

were right kind of within walking distance behind Foley House, which was 9 Webster Avenue. And so I had a couple of friends that I had met that lived in Foley House. I met them in a class. And so I said, “Can I park my car in your parking lot behind the house?” And they said, “Sure.” And so I started hanging out at Foley House more and more. And that’s where I found my tribe. That’s where I found the people that I really clicked with, thank God.

MIHALY: What year—what—at what point was that? I’m sorry if you mentioned it and I missed it.

KLAGES: That was fall of ’77.

MIHALY: Okay. And what was it about Foley House that made you feel like it was your tribe?

KLAGES: Well, it was the only co-ed house on all of Frat Row. It was the only house on Frat Row that had a kitchen in the basement instead of a bar. Foley House was the center for the anti-nuke movement. It was the center for various forms of nonviolent trainings. It was—it—it was where I found the small feminist and politically left community that I didn’t know I had been seeking.

MIHALY: Hmm. And were there other people who were—

KLAGES: It was—

MIHALY: —openly gay in the house?

KLAGES: Not at the beginning. By the end of my senior year, about half the women in the house had come out.

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

KLAGES: But that was—that was a kind of a different phenomenon. That was more women discovering that this was an option that they could do different things with their sexualities. But it was—it was just—it was a welcoming environment. It wasn’t—it wasn’t hostile. It was people who said things like, “I don’t like this heavily male, patriarchal environment.” You know, it was people who were doing—doing alternative lifestyles.

So there were a couple of places on campus where you could find what I guess would be called the hippies. And one of them was the Co-op House, and the other one was Foley House.

MIHALY: Got it. And so when you first started hanging out at Foley, I mean, you were immediately—I mean, after the incident, were you, like, openly gay to the people that you were meeting and getting to know that were new?

KLAGES: Well, not through Foley House but through Women at Dartmouth.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: By the fall of my sophomore year, the Woman at Dartmouth organization decided it had to have a particular session on lesbianism, and that was kind of—bring it to the surface of the feminist discussion group as something they needed to be aware of. So they wanted to have an out lesbian talk. So I did.

And that was—that was traumatic, because it was the first time I was coming out to a group. And everybody there was pretty supportive, but it also was—for a lot of the women there, it was a very foreign idea, and so they asked a bunch of questions about—well, like, one of the first questions was, "Well, why do you hate men?" And "If you hate men so much, why are you at Dartmouth?"

And I had to say, "You know, being a lesbian is not meaning that I hate men. It's that I love women." [Chuckles.] So I mean—and the level of consciousness about gay people in the 1970s—I don't know how to convey this. We were—we were still secret. We were still, "Oh, my God, how brave of you for speaking out!" We were still something that the majority of people in the United States thought was sinful and immoral—

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: —and against nature. And, you know—I mean, you can still hear those arguments in 2019, but they are very, very, very

faint in the cultural conversation. And in the 1970s, they were very, very loud.

MIHALY: Did you feel in some ways—I mean, especially coming out to that group, that you just weren't really equipped to answer the kinds of questions that they were asking?

KLAGES: Well, yeah. I was—I was only one woman, and I had only had one affair. [Laughs.] So, yeah, I—I wasn't an expert. But I was more "expert", quote unquote, than anyone else there.

MIHALY: Sure.

KLAGES: And that felt—you know, I was on the spot. It felt also—I felt very brave. "Look, this is who I am. I'm a complete outcast, an outlier. I'm a freak. You don't know anybody like me. Yes, I'll put that on display for you."

MIHALY: Hmm.

KLAGES: Because the conversation needed to happen. There needed to be an overt conversation in this very small women's, feminist community about the issue. It had just been a topic in the organization NOW, the National Organization for Women's Rights [sic; the National Organization for Women], which was trying to get the ERA passed, the Equal Rights Amendment, which never got passed. And there was a big fuss in NOW when there was a lesbian contingent that said, "Look, you straight, middle-class white women, you're doing great work, but you need to recognize there is this element here that you're not paying attention to." And that was kind of a national scandal of "Oh, my God, there are lesbians in the women's movement." And that was headline news on these national magazines.

So at Dartmouth it was a discussion that very much needed to happen. And I think it did open a lot of doors. I think it opened a lot of conversations, so I was happy—again, in hindsight I was happy to have done it.

MIHALY: Do you mean conservations, like, within the Women of Dartmouth community?

KLAGES: Yes, conversations among women: what—what was this about? You know, what's—for individuals—we had something called consciousness raising sessions, where we would go and we would,—you know, five or six women from this community would sit together, and we would talk about some issue, like how did we feel when we first—got our first periods, or how did we feel about having breasts, or how did we feel about marriage.

You know, these were all things that normally women in groups didn't necessarily talk about, and so the purpose of the consciousness raising groups were specifically for women to get together with other women and talk about experiences that women have in common, that women don't usually talk about with each other.

So those conversations were opening up in all kinds of different directions because of the consciousness raising conversations. And one of those consciousness—consciousness raising conversations was this talk about lesbianism.

So what it did was simply open it up so this wasn't a forbidden topic. Within our women's community, we could now—I could come out. I could answer questions. We could have this out in the open, rather than something that we whispered about behind doors.

MIHALY: What role do you feel like Women of Dartmouth, like, played for you and for the other women in the group and also in the community at large? Like, can you tell me a little bit about—

KLAGES: Yeah. For the people in the group, I think it was a refuge. I think it was—I remember when we used to meet in—no, this was before Collis [Center for Student Involvement] was built. God, I can't remember the building's name. Anyway, we used to have biweekly meetings, and I have some photographs of, you know, twelve women sitting around, talking to each other, listening, looking intently, you know, engaged at what was going on.

We—we felt at home with each other. We found—again, we found our tribe with each other. Here was a group of women who were not content with the way things were at Dartmouth

or elsewhere in the world and who wanted to talk about things like gender inequality and sexism and violence against women. And one of the things we talked about a lot was the hostile climate at Dartmouth for women, and particularly for feminist women.

Which takes me to how the group was perceived by the outside. *The Daily Dartmouth* frequently ran cartoons showing W-A-D members, with that—that—those combination of letters on their shirts—you know, cartoons of women who were wearing exaggerated hiking boots and had exaggerated hairy legs and exaggerated muscles, and these were WAD [pronouncing it WAHD], and that WAD was somehow trying to end everybody's fun. WAD didn't want there to be Hums. WAD didn't want there to be frat parties where people stood—men stood out on their porches and yelled, "Come suck my dick" or yelled, "Hey, cunt, suck my dick" as you were walking home from the library.

That kind of sexual harassment was pervasive and completely untalked about. And one of the things that Women at Dartmouth did was bring that to the fore, bring that to public view. And we did that in part through a newspaper called *Open Forum*, which was the women's newspaper, that tried to be a counter to *The Daily Dartmouth* by giving news about what the climate was for women.

MIHALY: Just to clarify when—I—I actually was looking at one of the old *Open Forum* issues. Is Dartmouth women's—

KLAGES: Oh, good, because I sent them to—I sent them to the library a couple of years ago.

MIHALY: Yes! We've noticed that your name was on them, while I was looking at them.

KLAGES: Yeah.

MIHALY: As the donor.

Is Dartmouth Women's Alliance the same as Women at Dartmouth?

KLAGES: It's what they changed the name to, thank God, by my senior year.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: Or soon after. Because W-A-D—WAD was just not a good acronym.

MIHALY: [Chuckles.] Yes.

KLAGES: [Chuckles.] Just it isn't.

MIHALY: So within I guess the *Open Forum* and—and Women at Dartmouth, why do you think people were so really intimidated by the group? Like, what was the fear there from men?

KLAGES: You know, I don't think it was fear; I think it was anger. I think it was anger at these women coming into this all-male paradise and making trouble and pointing to things that they don't like. "Why don't you just go home?" I mean, the—the—the attitude of male entitlement in the 1970s—again, this is in hindsight, but they thought this was a joke, you know? When you try and say, "I think there is a culture celebrating rape, and here's a picture of four guys wearing T-shirts that spell out RAPE, and they're dancing." And to point that out and say, "That's not good" or "That's not healthy" or "We don't feel safe" was to ruin their fun! "How *dare* you?"

I mean, did you see the [now Supreme Court Justice] Brett [M.] Kavanaugh hearings?

MIHALY: Yes.

KLAGES: It kind of remind- —that—that totally gave me Dartmouth PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] flashbacks, because that was exactly the sense of entitlement, of "How dare you ask me questions? How dare you imply that what I'm doing is not okay?" So I—I really feel like the response—the campus-wide response to the vocal feminists was—was anger, and sometimes even violence.

MIHALY: Were there instances of violence, like, while you were there?

KLAGES: Yes. I knew of at least five women who were raped at fraternity parties. It was—it was a common experience. When I was living in Foley House, okay?—it's, like I said, the only co-ed house on Frat Row. When I was a senior fellow, I had to study in the library, and I would come home when the library closed at eleven, and I would walk from the library down Frat Row to Foley House. And every single night, there would be guys on the porch saying, "Hey, cunt, take off your clothes." "Hey, cunt, I want your pussy." "Hey, come suck my dick." "Hey, you have to fuck me now." Just, like, every night. And there was nobody to complain to. There was no—there was no sense that this was not okay. This was boys having fun.

MIHALY: You men-—go ahead.

KLAGES: I was going to say that—that—you probably saw the *Open Forum* article that I did on emotional violence,—

MIHALY: Yes.

KLAGES: —which was the first time anybody at Dartmouth, I think, had talked about verbal abuse as a form of abuse. And, you know, the frat boys were having none of it. This was the women coming to take all their fun. Women were coming, like women do, to say to all male communities, "You need to shape up." And so they weren't—they were just saying, "Fuck you. We're not—we're not changing. You don't like it, you go home."

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: "We didn't want you here in the first place."

MIHALY: You mentioned a picture on the cover—and I saw it, that picture of the four men wearing shirts that said "RAPE."

KLAGES: Yeah, that say "RAPE"? Yeah.

MIHALY: Is that a Dartmouth picture?

KLAGES: Those were—all the pictures in that issue of *Open Forum* were pictures that *The Daily Dartmouth* was giving away. They were from their files, and every year they purged their

photo files, or they did before digital, and they had a day where they just said, “Here are boxes of photos. You can take anything you want.” So I went through them.

MIHALY: Yeah.

So, I mean, you’ve mentioned before that you kind of feel like Dartmouth wasn’t ready to have a lot of the conversations that were being forced to happen once—once Dartmouth went co-ed.

KLAGES: Yeah.

MIHALY: Can you say a little more about that in terms of, like, the administration and sort of the school at large, and them being ready and what that means?

KLAGES: Well, I can’t really have expected Dartmouth to be ready, because they didn’t know what it was going to be like to have women there until they had women there. But the atmosphere I’m talking about is there were a handful of women faculty members, and they were clearly the minority in every department. I had the experience several times of being the only woman in my class and being asked by the professor, “What do women think about this?”

MIHALY: [Chuckles softly]

KLAGES: Yeah. So I would say, “Well, speaking for all women, as I do, this is what women think.” And kind of laugh it off. But—but it also felt like—it felt intimidating. We didn’t have any facilities for sexual violence: no rape crisis center, no counseling center. As I said before, you had to go to Dick’s House [Dick Hall’s House] for your birth control or for your gynecological appointments. But that hasn’t changed.

I think there was one assistant dean for women. There was a nascent women’s studies program. It was when I was a senior that it finally became a certificate program, not yet a major. There were—I think what I would say—again, in many years of hindsight—there wasn’t an awareness on the part of the administration that the administration needed to do something to help create a welcoming environment. There was the feeling that “No, we’re gonna let women in. That’s

great, wonderful. We have some bathrooms for you. We'll give you separate floors in the dorms. And that's it. And then we don't have to do anything.

And I think there were many, many cultural conversations that needed to happen in the Dartmouth community because it's such a small college, because it's such an enclosed space. You know, you can't get out of Hanover [chuckles] in the wintertime. It's such a—a—a—you know, a little community. We needed to be having discussions about things like behavior, like—like emotional violence, like physical violence, like how—can we talk about the anger that these frat boys seem to have at women being here at all? Which is creating a hostile environment.

There was an *Esquire* magazine article about Dartmouth in I believe 1979 that you might want to look for. And *Esquire* magazine came to Dartmouth because we were starting to get publicity about the conflict between the feminist community and the fraternity community. And *Esquire* came and did a photo essay on the protests, so there are some pictures of the Women at Dartmouth and the alternative, the leftist community holding up big signs that say, "Sexist humor isn't funny" and "You need to stop this. These are not jokes when they're jokes about rape and sexual assault," et cetera.

And so it started—it started to get a little more, like, public attention with this *Esquire* magazine article. And I think that helped change things—that for the Dartmouth community as a whole to see an outside magazine presenting a picture of Dartmouth as a place of conflict, as a place where there was this kind of war between the old lifestyle and the new, possible lifestyle, that when Dartmouth saw that as depicted by this magazine, there was a kind of shift in "Oh, maybe we need to talk about this." Not necessarily because it was something important to the community but because, "Oh, this is the public face of Dartmouth. We don't want to have a negative picture presented to the world."

MIHALY: Yeah. That makes sense. The protests that you're talking about—were those anything specific, or—

KLAGES: We had regular Take Back the Night Marches pretty much every semester.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: And this was a specific one, where the discussion was about Hums. And Hums had been an all-male tradition, where when it was only men, they would—they would bring women from the Seven Sisters up in buses, and then as they got off the buses, men from frats would rate them. They would hold up cards giving them a number from one to ten, and the idea of Hums was to sing—to make up bawdy songs. So we staged a protest at Hums specifically with that—that's what the *Esquire* magazine was covering.

MIHALY Got it.

So I'd love to circle back to the—talking about the women's studies major.

KLAGES: Okay.

MIHALY: It started out as, like, two girls, right? I noticed you'd written an article about it your freshman year.

KLAGES: [Chuckles.] In *The Dartmouth*, yeah.

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: It was—God!—[Elizabeth A.] "Beth" Morrison [Class of 1978] and Judy Roitman [Archivist note: spelling uncertain].

MIHALY: Yeah!

KLAGES: And they had—they were the first to propose that they could do a special major with an emphasis in women's studies.

MIHALY: Got it.

KLAGES: And so they pursued that. I think their faculty director was Marysa Navarro.

MIHALY: And was talking to—

KLAGES: There were—

MIHALY: Go ahead.

KLAGES: Hmm?

MIHALY: No, go ahead.

KLAGES: You—oh, I was just naming the—the feminist faculty that I could remember.

MIHALY: Oh! Yeah, go ahead then.

KLAGES: So Mary [C.] Kelly in history, Marysa Navarro—I don't remember what department she was in [Transcriber's note: history department]. Ellen [Cronan] Rose in English, Brenda [R.] Silver in English. Mmm! And there was one other—Joan Smith in sociology—

MIHALY: And those—so those were all professors who were willing to collaborate with these girls to help them do a special major.

KLAGES: Exactly, yeah. These were all faculty—women faculty who had expressed an interest in the emerging field of feminist studies, or women's studies, whatever you want to call it.

MIHALY: So, yeah, like, what did that look like, a major for them?

KLAGES: [Chuckles.] I don't remember what I—

MIHALY: That's okay.

KLAGES: —said in the article.

MIHALY: No, it's okay.

KLAGES: It was—they just—they could design their own.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: And there were starting to be classes in—oh, God, what did we call them? I can't—I can't remember the title of the classes. I had one in the sociology department. There were—there were little pockets of women's studies classes

starting to be offered in various departments. So, for instance, Brenda Silver started a course which was British Women Writers, and that counted as a women's studies course.

MIHALY: Okay, cool.

And so did you end up—

KLAGES: It was—

MIHALY: —getting that certificate your senior year?

KLAGES: I did. They—they finalized it as a certificate program my senior year, and I—because I did a senior fellowship, I didn't have to complete any major, so I wasn't officially a women's studies major or an English major. But they did send me the certificate the next year, after I had graduated, because they came up with the certificates, so they sent me one.

MIHALY: Great. And remind me what your senior fellowship was on.

KLAGES: It was called *Pyrofeminism*[*: Thoughts on the Cultural Control of Fire and Women*], and it was about—most of it was an anthropological study of three hunter-gatherer cultures, looking at whether there was a notion of gender equality and looking at fire as the—the place of debate of the question of which sex identified with the substance, fire. Is it male or is it female? And looking at that as part of the indicators of where gender equality was.

I was working with—oh, what was the woman's name in the anthropology department? Tamara Northern was one of my thesis directors. And I had taken several classes on the Anthropology of Women, or Women's Anthropology, with her.

The title, though, of *Pyrofeminism* came from this sub-group of the feminist community that some friends and I made up, and we—Martha [L.] Spiers and I—she was Class of '79, I think—anyway, Martha Spiers and I came up with this phrase, one day when we were taking acid [chuckles], and we were talking about burning down the patriarchy, and we

came up with this term “pyrofeminism,” and the motto, “Burn the mother fuckers down.”

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

KLAGES: And we—we—we brought this back to the community at Foley House, and everybody loved it, and so I had some—some—a graphic—a friend of ours who was a graphic designer made a design of these bare-breasted Amazonian women dancing around a bonfire. And we got T-shirts printed up, black T-shirts with this logo in flaming red and, in—on the back, flaming red letters that said “BTMFD.” With no explanation.

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

KLAGES: And we ordered about sixty of these T-shirts, and so suddenly there was this little tiny population of people who were wearing these T-shirts that looked really threatening, and nobody knew what they were.

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

KLAGES: So we started—then somebody else had business cards printed up that said something about pyrofeminism with a Dartmouth logo on it. And there were—it just kind of took off. It was the seventies equivalent of a meme—

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

KLAGES: —that people just kind of picked it up, and it became a thing. And then it became a thing that people in the—outside of that particular community started to notice, and they said, “What is this?” And to play up the joke, we would just say, “Oh, we can’t tell you” Or it’s—“BTMFD. What does that mean?” “Oh, it means, “Bring the men fried doughnuts.”

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

KLAGES: So—and we were—I mean, I don’t want to make this sound like we were a terrorist group, but this was a way of identifying people who felt the same way we did. We could start to use the T-shirts as a way to say, “Yeah, you’re in my

club. You're in my tribe. You wear this T-shirt, I can trust you."

And it also became a form of empowerment because here were all these people who were not part of the mainstream Dartmouth community, who were all wearing these matching T-shirts. Was it a movement? You know, was there something going on? We just laughed because, of course, no, it's just a joke. But it was my first understanding of the power of symbols in a community, to create a notion of reality.

And I'm grinning as I say this because wearing those T-shirts, I think that the community that had felt ostracized before, felt empowered.

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: And—and that was cool. That was very, very cool.

MIHALY: You said there were, like, sixty of you, more or less? Forty?

KLAGES: Yeah.

MIHALY: That's awesome!

KLAGES: Yeah, there was a critical mass enough that people noticed—

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: —you know. It's—it's a small college, and you *do* notice when there's something different that you see on campus.

MIHALY: Did it get written about at all? I wonder if it's, like, in one of the student papers or something.

KLAGES: I don't think so, but it's in my senior fellowship, which is in Norlin Library—Norlin! Sorry, that's the [University of Colorado, Boulder] library here. In Baker[-Berry] Library.

MIHALY: Oh! Look at that!

KLAGES: And it's—it's—it's right there. It's out there.

MIHALY: Hmm. So—

KLAGES: And it—actually, it might be interesting for you to read what I wrote. The introduction I wrote to my senior fellowship is—it's a very, very bitter and angry essay about what I was fighting at Dartmouth.

MIHALY: I—yeah. I'll definitely—what was the title of your—it was just *Pyro- —*

KLAGES: It was called *Pyrofeminism*.

MIHALY: Okay.

I'm trying to think of where to go next here. I mean, I guess I'd love to talk a little bit about your parents again, because this incident winter term your freshman year sort of made it so that you had to come out to the people around you here, —

KLAGES: Mm-hm.

MIHALY: —but was that something that you brought home as well, or was that something that happened much later?

KLAGES: That happened much, much later. My older sister had come out to my parents. She's also a lesbian. And she had come out to my parents, and they had totally flipped out. This was 1977 that she came out.

MIHALY: So you were in high school. Oh, no, you were in second—

KLAGES: No, I was a freshman at Dartmouth.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: I was just coming out, myself. And my mo-—I remember sitting in the living room when I was home on some vacation, and my mother crying and sobbing about my older sister being a lesbian and saying, "Promise me you'll never be that way."

MIHALY: Mmm!

KLAGES: So it was many years before [chuckles] I came out to them.

MIHALY: Yeah, that's—jeez! Was your sister someone that you talked to during that process?

KLAGES: Not—not really. Not really.

MIHALY: Remind me of her name.

KLAGES: My sister is named Ellen, Ellen [J.] Klages.

MIHALY: And, I mean, were you guys close, growing up? That's interesting to me that it wasn't someone—it seems like a natural person possibly to—to talk to.

KLAGES: Well, we weren't close, growing up, because, remember, we've got a family situation where there is one child with a big difference that nobody's talking about and nobody is getting help with. So Ellen was—she—as the oldest child, she was the rebel. She would do—anything my mother wanted her to do, she would do the exact opposite.

So me being in the middle, I was the good child. I was the one who got straight A's. I was going to the Ivy League school. I was—you know, I was a golden girl. And I wasn't about to do anything to ruin that, in my parents' idea of me. And because we had this somewhat dysfunctional family of origin, Ellen and I were more rivals than we were friends.

And she was a—she was kind of a bully. You know, we had a kind of pecking order, where Mom would—would peck on Ellen, and then Ellen would peck on me, and I couldn't do it to Sally because she was mentally retarded. So I just sucked it up. And I resented my sister, and so we weren't particularly close. It took us a long time before we were able to sit down and actually talk about what happened in our childhoods.

MIHALY: Yeah.

Could I ask when that was that you came out to your parents?

KLAGES: It was 1984?

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: Eighty-five? It was when I was in—at Stanford [University], in graduate school.

MIHALY: Okay. So did you go to Stanford immediately after Dartmouth?

KLAGES: Yeah. I—I had—because I had gotten this senior fellowship, a lot of my faculty advisors were saying, "Okay, you need to go to graduate school." And I said,—I talked to—I remember going to talk to Brenda Silver because I loved her classes, and I loved her. And I said, "Should I go to Harvard? Should I apply to Harvard for graduate school?" And she looked at me, and she said, "Harvard graduate school would kill you. Here's where you should go: at Stanford there's this program called Modern Thought in Literature, which is half literary studies, half in the English department, and half anything else you want." And she said, "That's what—the program you should go to. You're perfect for that."

So I applied. And It was the only place I applied to, because I thought—*I don't know about graduate school. I don't know what I want to do. Brenda says I should apply here, okay, I'll apply here. If I get in, I'll go. If I don't get in, then I'll think again.* And luckily, I got in, which was—I'll brag a little bit. They only take three people a year, and I was one of them. So I was pretty proud.

MIHALY: Got it.

KLAGES: And at Stanford, I was also able to continue—because it was an interdisciplinary graduate program, I was able to continue in my doctoral work doing women's studies.

MIHALY: Okay. Yeah. Was the environment, like, different, did you feel like, at Stanford than it was at Dartmouth?

KLAGES: Absolutely. [Chuckles.] You know, I laugh because I went from one campus with a giant phallic tower in the middle of campus to another campus with a giant phallic tower in the middle of campus. I went from one campus that had had an

Indian symbol as its mascot to another campus that had [chuckles] and Indian symbol as its mascot.

But Stanford was enormously different, number one because it had always been co-ed. When [A.] Leland Stanford set up the university, his wife, Jane [Elizabeth Lathrop Stanford], said, "You will admit women." And so they did. So, you know, there wasn't that sense of—the sense I used to have at Dartmouth of there are—there's 200 years of patriarchal energy seeping up through the ground, and it's in all the buildings.

Stanford was the Bay Area also. It was then the 1980s. I was coming out as gay. I was twenty minutes away from San Francisco. It was paradise compared to Dartmouth.

MIHALY: Mmm. So you mentioned that you graduated—

BARKIS: Also—

MIHALY: Oh, go ahead, yeah.

KLAGES: I was just going to say also, just at Stanford in—in the West Coast, such a more relaxed atmosphere, a more relaxed attitude, a more accepting attitude. I didn't have the—the hard, granite feel of Dartmouth.

MIHALY: And do you think that's just sort of Bay Area and West Coast culture?

KLAGES: I think that was a lot of it, yeah.

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: I also think, you know, the—the East Coast Ivies are—are very old and very entrenched, and Stanford being entrenched but somewhat younger, it has a different feel.

MIHALY: Sure. So you mentioned that—I mean, in order to get to Stanford, obviously, you would have had to do well here. You mentioned you were Phi Beta Kappa. Do you feel like—

KLAGES: Yes, I was Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude.

MIHALY: Do you feel like in general you were pleased with your academic experience here, and fulfilled?

KLAGES: Oh, absolutely. I got the greatest education that money could buy, even better. I—I—that's the one thing about Dartmouth that I absolutely treasure. Actually, there are a couple of things, but the main one is I got a fabulous education.

MIHALY: It's interest- —yeah.

KLAGES: You know, at Dartmouth in particular, because Dartmouth doesn't have—well, it didn't at the time—have any graduate schools connected to the college, itself. So all the classes—they were small seminars, and they were faculty taught, and I got this individual attention from these amazing scholars. You know, I got to work with Mary Kelly, and she is the founder of women's history. So, yes, that's—that is one of the things I will always bless Dartmouth for.

MIHALY: Yeah. So you said, like, there were obviously a very limited number of women faculty.

KLAGES: Mm-hm.

MIHALY: But it seems like you sort of found a pocket of people who were interested in and studying what you were interested in.

KLAGES: Yes. Yes, I was fortunate enough that there were, again, a kind of critical mass of women faculty who wanted to—who were doing women's studies or feminist studies, who wanted to get a major together and who were being extremely supportive of any of the undergraduates who wanted to do that, who wanted to do women's studies.

MIHALY: Wonderful. So do you feel like you saw any shift or change in—while you were here, in terms of, like, number of women faculty or just general attitude shift?

KLAGES: Absolutely, and I think that the women's community is in some part responsible for that change. Because we were—and it's not just the women's community, but when I say that, I mean the hundred or so undergraduates who identified with a political leftist approach—so anti-nuke, anti-apartheid, wanting to have equal access in admissions.

And we had I don't know if it was daily protests but frequent marches and protests and picket lines and, you know, walking around for a couple of hours, carrying signs that said, "Divest from South Africa" and things like that. And—and by my senior year, the trustees did decide to divest all of Dartmouth's money from South Africa because of apartheid and also to grant equal access in admissions and end the three-to-one ratio so that it was just sex-blind admissions, open admissions.

MIHALY: Was that for your senior year or, like, after you left?

KLAGES: That was—that was spring of my senior year.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: That was, like, *Oh, my God, something happened!* [Laughter.]

And I think that—I think that all told—I mean, we didn't—we didn't necessarily see direct results: we had this march, and the they changed a policy. But I think that bringing all of this into the community conversation and having a visible and vocal element of that community that was saying, "No, we don't like this; this needs to change," I think that really did help. That's my theory now on how social change actually happens, is that people start talking to each other about things that are difficult. And that's what I think happened.

MIHALY: And was that a view that you had while you were there also, or—or just something that you've come to—

KLAGES: Oh no, no. [Laughs] No, when I was there, I thought, *Oh, this is so entrenched. It's been here for 200 years. This is never going to change. They're—you know, why should they? Why should they listen to a bunch of screaming women, who are called hysterical dykes?*

What happened, though, I think, was that because there was a somewhat vocal, far-left component, that the people who were much more liberal and more towards the center started to say, "Okay, they go too far, but, yeah, they have a point." So, you know, when you push, it's a—it's the dialectical

theory of history: when you push to one extreme, you'll get people from the middle moving maybe over a little bit to your position. They don't completely agree with you, but they see you have a point.

So when we talked about rape culture and sexual violence, it—you know, the—the mainstream was mad because we were showing dirty laundry in public, and we shouldn't be saying that, and that doesn't happen, and you shouldn't talk about it. But it also allowed people who were sort of in the middle to say, "Oh, wow! Maybe this *is* a problem. Maybe we should, you know, do something."

And that was also when we formed the—oh, God, I can't even remember what it was. It was a legislative body of students, so it was supposed to be like a student government. And we had elections that were weighted so that there was guaranteed to be a candidate from the African-American community and guaranteed to be a candidate from the women's community, et cetera, so that it wasn't all—

Oh, and Dinesh [J.] D'Souza [Class of 1983] was one of my classmates. I don't know of that name rings a bell with you, but he is—he is a conservative writer, who's on the very far right, and he kind of represented what I thought of as the mainstream Dartmouth view.

MIHALY: Was he writing while he was here?

KLAGES: Yes. He started—he helped start the alternative paper—God, what was it called? It was the alternative to *The Daily Dartmouth*, and it was a far-right—

MIHALY: *The* [*Dartmouth*] *Review?*

KLAGES: —he thought *The Dartmouth* was too liberal. Yes, *The Dartmouth Review*. That was it.

MIHALY: Yeah. It's still here.

KLAGES: So maybe—in retrospect, maybe what happened was the—the vocal community that was starting to speak up about the

things that they saw that were wrong at Dartmouth—maybe they helped spark the reaction on the far right.

MIHALY: Hmm.

KLAGES: I don't know. But there—I certainly saw the beginnings of that deeply conservative movement starting by my senior year there.

MIHALY: And that wasn't something that you felt, like, existed already?

KLAGES: I don't think I had heard it articulated in the way that it got spoken. You know, with the founding of *The Dartmouth Review*—that was more, "Hey, we have a public voice, and we differentiate ourselves from the regular *Daily Dartmouth*."

MIHALY: Do you remember when that was founded? I had somehow thought it was there before your time, but I guess not.

KLAGES: I'm pretty sure it was late seventies.

MIHALY: Okay. Hmm.

KLAGES: I could be wrong.

MIHALY: No, that's okay.

KLAGES: I could be wrong. I'm old, and my memory isn't good.

MIHALY: You're very good at remembering names. I've been impressed. [Chuckles.]

KLAGES: [Laughs.]

MIHALY: So—

KLAGES: Well, I've thought about those—that time a lot—

MIHALY: Yes.

KLAGES: —and what—what Dartmouth meant to me, and particularly after getting the SpeakOut forum and after talking to *you*, I've been resurrecting all those memories, and it's been

wonderful to think about it with the perspective of—what?—forty years, to think back on what that was.

MIHALY: How do you think that you think about it differently, or what conclusions have you come to that you weren't able to at the time?

KLAGES: Well, one of them is that the way I was treated by my freshman roommates was wrong, that that shouldn't have happened. And that took me quite a long time to be able to say, because I had internalized their homophobia, and I had it myself. And for a long time, I was scared of coming out to people, because I didn't know what their reaction was going to be, and I didn't want to risk it.

I think, though, that having raised two kids, having been a college professor for thirty years, I can now see myself with a lot more compassion and a lot more perspective. I can see my Dartmouth self like I see my children, like I see my current students, of: Oh, you're really smart, and you're wondering what to do, and you're exploring a world that's *not* where you grew up. And, wow! That—I just—I have a lot of feeling for her, whereas I think before, I was still wrestling with: Oh, my God, who was I then? And now I don't care. [Both chuckle.]

MIHALY: Yeah. and so I'm curious—do you feel like your—I mean, your roommates have been the two people that have come up in this story that sort of weren't—women who weren't a part of the leftist or Women at Dartmouth community.

KLAGES: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

MIHALY: I mean, was there, like, a critical mass? And what—like, what did those people represent for you, and who were they?

KLAGES: There were—the majority of women that were there—and this is my own stereotype, because I didn't feel like I fit in with them—they were perfectly fine with the fraternity atmosphere. They would go to frat parties. They would drink as much as the guys. If they got raped or assaulted, they didn't say anything. There were lots of women who were—were okay with Dartmouth the way it was. And I don't

know—I don't want to have any judgment about them. Their experience is their experience, and I know that lots of them were just trying to make the best of the situation that they could.

You know it—it was also the late seventies. Being an out feminist and certainly being an out lesbian feminist was *way* out there. And I think most of the women that came to Dartmouth said, "I want to come to Dartmouth because I can, because I'm smart and because you let women in and that they weren't—they weren't angry. They weren't rebellious. They weren't feeling like things—that they needed to make things change.

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: And also, all of those women, by being at Dartmouth, changed things, just by being there. So—and that's—it was after my time but close to it when the first sororities started. And I think that was a great innovation. That's one of the ways to counter the frat culture that was—that I think was at the root of some of the sexual violence, and propose an alternative. And I think Dartmouth is much, much better off because of that.

MIHALY: Yeah.

Do you think that—I mean, it's interesting to me—you've talked very much about sort of the discomfort with having women here, as being very tied to a discomfort with lesbians.

KLAGES: Mmm.

MIHALY: Do—do you feel like—is that an accurate depiction?

KLAGES: No, I don't think so, because I think that there weren't enough lesbians on campus [chuckles] to make much of a difference.

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

KLAGES: And it was—I mean, lesbian was the thing that you accused a feminist of if you didn't like feminism. "Oh, feminists are all

lesbians." You know, here's a moment of—of the paradox of frat culture, to me. As living in Foley House—Foley House is the only co-ed house on all of Frat Row, and we had guys who would come from some frat and be drunk, and two in the morning, they would come and stand on the lawn at Foley House and throw rocks at the window and say, "Foley House is full of fucking homosexuals."

And I thought, *Wait a minute. We're the only co-ed house on Frat Row. What do you mean we're full of homosexuals? What about you guys? You live in the all-male house.*

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

KLAGES: But, you know, that was—if you wanted to insult somebody, you called them gay. You said, "Oh, you're just a lesbian." You know, "You feminists, you're all just lesbians. You leftist people, you anti-nuke people, you, you know, you anti-apartheid people, you're all just queer." And that was supposed to shame us.

MIHALY: And did it get to you?

KLAGES: Well, that particular incident made me laugh. [Both chuckle.] Because really! [Chuckles.] I didn't—you know, I felt defensive. I felt like I spent a lot of time walking around campus with my fists clenched, ready to defend myself, because I felt like I would be attacked.

MIHALY: So after your winter term your freshman year—

KLAGES: Yeah.

MIHALY: —I would be interested in—I mean, whatever you're comfortable saying in terms of, like,—obviously there was that one affair that made a lot in your life very difficult.

KLAGES: Mm-hm.

MIHALY: But after that, I mean, were you able to be involved with women, like, throughout your time here?

KLAGES: No. As I said, when I got there, there were three out lesbians on campus, and two of them were involved with each other.

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

KLAGES: So I got involved with the third. There weren't very many out lesbians at Dartmouth in 1977. What happened in the time period that I was at Dartmouth was that handfuls of women came out, so that by the time I was a senior, there were probably a dozen women who were identifying as out lesbians. Certainly no more than that. But that felt like a miracle that there were people that were out.

And I had—now I'm trying to remember. Yeah, I had two brief affairs with another—with two other women while I was there, but I didn't really get into a long-term relationship until I was a Stanford.

MIHALY: Okay. And at—and at Stanford, it seems like there was—there was more of a presence?

KLAGES: Stanford—there was—there was a LB- —well, it wasn't LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer] yet, but there was a gay and lesbian resource center. There was an undergraduate gay and lesbian group. There was a graduate gay and lesbian group. Again, you were twenty minutes from San Francisco in the eighties.

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

KLAGES: So it was a lot better.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: I felt—I felt like I had a real gay community that I could be part of at Stanford.

MIHALY: And was—

KLAGES: And at Dartmouth, that was just beginning to form, and, of course, it was mostly male.

MIHALY: Yeah. So was that—I mean, tell me about that. That must have been a really important experience to for the first time feel like you had a gay community.

KLAGES: Yeah! It was, to feel like *I'm not a freak. I'm not the weirdo. I'm not the one walking around, feeling like I'm different from everybody else.* I could breathe. I could relax.

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: I could find a girlfriend.

MIHALY: Yeah. And so, I mean,—and then in that environment and in that head space, you were able to come out to your parents. That makes sense.

KLAGES: Yeah. Yeah. Well, when I met the woman that I was married to for seventeen years, that's when I came out to my parents, because I knew I had a serious relationship and that they needed to know that, because when I got—when I grad-—when I finished at Stanford and got a job, she was going to come with me. And she did.

MIHALY: And did you guys live in Colorado—

KLAGES: Yeah.

MIHALY: —during that time?

KLAGES: She came—she came out with me when I got hired here at—at the University of Colorado, and we lived together for fifteen years and had two kids together.

MIHALY: Wow. And was that your first—I mean, that was your first, like, long-term relationship.

KLAGES: That was my first marriage, yeah.

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: That was my, "Okay, you're the one I'm gonna settle down and have kids with."

MIHALY: Mm-hm. Yeah. So, I mean,—is there anything that—I know I asked you this question before, but I just—I'm curious—like, in terms of hindsight, like, after going to Stanford, during your time at Stanford, sort of how you were thinking about your time and Dartmouth and if that difference in

communities sort of like made you notice anything about your time at Dartmouth.

KLAGES: It—it first of all told me that Dartmouth's atmosphere was not universal, thank God, that there *were* places I could go which were friendlier to me and my beliefs and my ideas. You know, when I was at Stanford, I would look back at Dartmouth and just kind of shudder. And I would tell horror stories about, you know, being called a cunt on the way home from the library and things like that.

I think what Stanford did was make me see Dartmouth as it didn't—that this—that Dartmouth didn't have to be that way, that I could see something else. So I guess for a while, I was kind of bitter about Dartmouth, of why didn't I get—you know, why did I go there? Why didn't I go to Wellesley like my mother wanted me to? Which would have been entirely different.

MIHALY: Yeah. Do you—does any part of you still—

KLAGES: But then, you know, in the—still think that? I say it now as a joke, because my mother wanted me to go to Wellesley, and I would have been so much happier as a lesbian at Wellesley. [Laughs.] So it just strikes me as, you know, totally ironic that—but—but I also understand that what I was doing at the time was very much identifying with male privilege and male power, and wanting that, and saying, *Okay, Dartmouth—Dartmouth is a place where they generate that kind of cultural power. I want that. I don't want to go to a women's school.*

I didn't even want to go to Harvard because I was going to be going to Radcliffe [College, now Radcliff Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard], and it wasn't Harvard then.

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: I wanted to go to the real thing.

MIHALY: Yeah. Interesting.

KLAGES: I wanted to be at the heart of Dartmouth.

MIHALY: Have you been back to campus at all or stayed in touch with anyone?

KLAGES: I've stayed in touch with a bunch of my Foley House friends. I'm in touch with them on Facebook. I was back on campus once, in 1984, and have not had any desire to go back. In fact, I—I pretty much forbid my kids [laughs] to apply to Dartmouth. They had no interest, anyway.

MIHALY: [Chuckles.] What do you—like, why do you not have any desire to come back?

KLAGES: Because now, when I look back, I think of Dartmouth as a wonderful place to get an education but also an elite country club.

MIHALY: Mhm.

KLAGES: And there is a kind of East Coast attitude that's common to the Ivies, of a kind of arrogance that I loved when I was at Dartmouth. That's what I wanted. I wanted to be elite and arrogant and look down my nose at everybody else. But to the extent that Dartmouth still has that attitude, I don't want it anymore.

MIHALY: Yeah. I guess I never really asked you in full the reaction of your parents when you did introduce them to your eventual wife. I mean, how did that go? [Chuckles.]

KLAGES: My dad was fine with it. My dad had actually been fine with my older sister coming out. My dad was—and—and I just—I love him for this. He said, "Well, I don't understand, but you're my daughter, and I love you, and whatever you do is fine with me." And my mother—

MIHALY: Why do you think that was?

KLAGES: You know, I think that—I—I have a theory about my dad. I think that—he was in the infantry in World War II, okay? And he was in the front lines. He was liberating concentration camps in Germany in 1945. I think that what he saw there changed him and that it made him more accepting of human difference and human frailty and that when he had a daughter with Down syndrome and the doctor said, "You

should institutionalize her," he said no. And I think that was his acceptance of the idea of difference, that we're all human beings, and I think that had a profound effect on him. And I think that's why prepared him to have different— daughters who were different in other ways, that it really didn't make a difference to him.

MIHALY: Huh. And—and what about your mother?

KLAGES: And I give him a lot of credit for that.

My mom was disappointed. She said, "Oh, you'll never give me grandchildren." And then unfortunately she didn't live to see my children, because she died of cancer in—at age sixty-seven. But that was her disappointment. That—and this was her difficulty all along with—with both of her "normal" daughters, that we didn't fulfill her unfulfilled promises. That she still had the feeling of: "You know, *I* wanted to go to Dartmouth. *I* wanted to have a career. *I* wanted to do that. So you're gonna do that for me."

And she was delighted to have me go off to Dartmouth, but she thought—she—she—you know, a woman who was born in 1925—she thought that gay people would always be unhappy. And she said that to my older sister. She said, "The problem is, you're just---you'll never be happy." And we both look back at that and kind of laugh, but I understand what she knew about lesbians was awful, and so she *wouldn't* want her daughter to be that way, because she thought that you would never be happy and that it would be a horrible life.

So, you know, she came around. She—she still—when she would come out to visit me and my partner, Tasha, when I was—before we had kids and while I was still an assistant professor—you know, she was delighted by my job, and she—she loved Tasha, and Tasha was very smart. But she would wander around the house that we shared, and when she saw, like, a magnet on the refrigerator that said something about lesbian rights, she would get a pained look on her face and turn away and then talk about something else. So she was never comfortable with it, but she was—she ended up being okay. You know, I was her daughter. This was my choice. She still loved me, which was different

from a lot of gay people of my generation, whose families disowned them when they came out. And still—that still happens.

MIHALY: Yeah. Did you have a lot of friends that that happened to? Did you feel like you were lucky at the time?

KLAGES: I did feel like I was lucky. I won't say I knew a lot of people, but I knew a significant number of men and women who had come out to their parents, and their parents said, "You're dead. We're never speaking to you again."

MIHALY: Yeah. So, I mean, in Colorado, like, you—so you moved from Stanford to Colorado, and do you feel—

KLAGES: Mm-hm.

MIHALY: —like you found a community there as well? Like, similar to at Stanford, sort of not on the East Coast? Or tell me a little bit about your community in Colorado.

KLAGES: Well, when I got to Colorado, it was 1989, and the world was a different place for lesbians and gay people. So it was still kind of—when I was hired at University of Colorado, when I flew out for my job interview, it was still kind of a secret. I mean, I didn't—I didn't go on the job market advertising that I was a lesbian. But I also wasn't going to keep it secret because I was coming with my partner.

So one of the senior faculty members kind of took me aside during my job interview and said [whispers], "Would you be willing to teach a class on lesbian literature?"

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

KLAGES: And I said [whispers], "Yes, I would." [Chuckles.] So it was—it was kind of an open secret.

And then when I got there, I just—my partner and I just went to all the, you know, new faculty events and didn't—didn't call attention to ourselves. We didn't say anything, but obviously people noticed. We were the only gay couple in many of the rooms. And they were fine with that. That was

not a problem. I—it didn't get in the way of my getting hired or getting tenure.

And eventually, within the first year, Tasha and I found a lesbian community in Boulder, Colorado, which is—Boulder is a suburb of Denver, so there was a pretty large lesbian community and gay community in general here.

And then eventually I moved to where I live now, which is in a co-housing community, where everybody owns their own house but together we own a common house and a woodshop and thirty-five acres of land and things like that. So it's a—I wouldn't call it a hippie commune, but it's for people that used to be hippies [both chuckle], who want to have—who want to have—well, who want to found a community where people know each other and share things and try and cooperate and get along.

MIHALY: Yes. I'm from Vermont, so—

KLAGES: Okay, so you—

MIHALY: —I understand.

KLAGES: —you know.

MIHALY: [Chuckles.] Yes.

KLAGES: You know.

And that was—you know, I think Foley House—Foley House has been a huge influence on my choices since Dartmouth because of that—that was my first experience of a collective living situation. And I loved it. It was really a wonderful way to be on campus.

And I did that again when I got to Stanford and lived collectively with other people. The only time I've lived privately is when I was married to Tasha, and we had our own—we had our own home when we got—when our children were born. But I loved—

MIHALY: How many people lived in Foley House?

KLAGES: There were probably twenty.

MIHALY: Okay.

KLAGES: If you look in the *Aegis* the [Dartmouth College] yearbook, from the late seventies, there are pictures of Foley House.

MIHALY: Oh, lovely. Cool.

So, I mean, I guess, what do you hope that—I don't know how much you're still plugged into the Dartmouth community, but what do you hope that Dartmouth changes in the future? Like, what do you think still needs to be fixed after your time here and after all these—after the years have passed?

KLAGES: I don't feel like I'm in close enough contact with the present-day Dartmouth community to know what needs to be changed.

MIHALY: That's fair.

KLAGES: But I—I do stay in touch with the GLBT [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender] alumni group—

MIHALY: Mhm.

KLAGES: —and, you know, what—what needs to happen—I don't know if this is change or not, but what needs to happen is exactly what you're doing, is talking to the members of past Dartmouth communities about what the community was like for them and using that information to make present-day Dartmouth communities more accepting and more—more cohesive, to make—to make the Dartmouth community be a solid unit rather than a bunch of separate little communities that fight with each other—

MIHALY: Yeah.

KLAGES: —which is what it felt like when I was there.

You know, so to have a—a Dartmouth-wide discussion about, say, gay and lesbian history at Dartmouth and what things were like. Or what things are like now. Just—again,

what I learned at Dartmouth was conversation is crucial. Talking about things is always better than not talking about things. You're only as sick as your secrets, and your silence won't protect you. So that's what I would wish for, is ongoing in-depth, heartfelt conversation—

MIHALY: Is there anything—

KLAGES: —about our differences.

MIHALY: Yes, absolutely. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you want to have on the recording before I turn this off? Otherwise, that's all I have on the recording.

KLAGES: I would like to say that I got—again, I got a fabulous education. I made friends that have been friends of mine ever since, so lifelong friends. I was influenced by some absolutely amazing professors in all kinds of different departments and different ways, male and female. And I will always, always be grateful to Dartmouth for that.

MIHALY: Yeah. Thank you.

KLAGES: And it was a struggle. It was a struggle, and—and I appreciate that also. It was part of how I became who I am today, and I appreciate that.

MIHALY: Yeah. Thanks so much for taking the time.

KLAGES: Thank you for doing this, Abby. This is really, really important to me, that you guys are doing these oral histories so that experiences like mine don't get lost. And I think that's amazing. So thank you, and thank the program for doing this.

MIHALY: Yeah. Thanks so much.

[End of interview.]