Steven E. James, ’80
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[ABIGAIL R.]

MIHALY: So, my name is Abigail Mihaly [pronounced mih-HALL-ee], and I’m sitting in Rauner [Special Collections] Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. It is Monday, February 11th, 2019. It’s 2:41 p.m.

JAMES: And this is [Steven E.] “Steve” James. I’m at home in Sandwich, Massachusetts.

MIHALY: Perfect. And you’re Class of [19]80. That’s right, right?

JAMES: Nineteen eighty, yes.

MIHALY: Yes. Perfect. Okay, awesome. So I guess if we could just start out, can you tell me where you grew up and—and who your family was comprised of, growing up?

JAMES: Well, I grew up in essentially two families. My mother and father divorced when I was ten, and so there was that pre-divorce life and post-divorce life. Pre-divorce, my biological father is—was in the military and was in the [U.S.] Marine Corps, and we moved at least once a year from different naval air stations to another. He was a flight instructor for the Marine Corps, assigned to naval air stations, where he conducted trainings for up-and-coming pilots, in both jets and helicopters.

It was during a time preceding—following the Cuban Missile Crisis, and so there was a lot of demand for his skills, and so it was not uncommon for him to come home, typically on a Friday afternoon, when it was—you know, we’d been at some place for several months, and say, “Okay, start packing. Monday we have to be in, you know, some other location.” And on a couple of occasions, they were cross-country moves that we had to make very quickly.

That I think helped me to learn how to say “hello” and “goodbye” to folks. It—in my family, I was the oldest child. My younger sister did not do so well with the moving. I think it had an impact on her that was more deleterious than the impact on me.

My father was in his third tour of Vietnam, flying helicopters primarily, and he had been wounded twice, and we didn’t find out about it until after the fact, which was his practice. Whenever something big happened over there, he would go silent. That second time that he was shot down, he was silent for several weeks, which was unusual and very concerning.

And when we knew that he was okay and that he was, you know, being well cared for in hospital in Honolulu [Hawaii], we, you know, we went there and visited with him during his R&R [rest and recuperation], and—but for my mother, it was the beginning of the end. She couldn’t take the stress of that. And so—

MIHALY: How old were you when he was injured that second time?

JAMES: I was nine.

MIHALY: Okay.

JAMES: They divorced when I was ten, and my mother went through a big transformation for her. It was 1968. She was—I think she was at that time twenty-nine and eager to break free of the constrictors of her very traditional family. My parents were both raised in El Reno, Oklahoma, which is in the western part of the state.

MIHALY: What were their names?

JAMES: Sonny [James] and Paula [Spink James] are their names. They had nicknames back then that they were known by, but I won’t—[laughter] in deference to their dignity, I won’t share those. [Laughs.] But they were very stereotypical in some ways and very unusual in others. He was a—is Native American, and she is white, and so it was very unusual for them to get together in a mixed-race couple. Bu, his father was the warden of the federal penitentiary in El Reno, and

my mother's father was a doctor in town, and El Reno is still a very small town on the road from Oklahoma City to Amarillo [Texas] [chuckles], and so class overcame racial prejudice, and they were able to unite.

He was captain of the football team. She was homecoming queen. And so it—it worked for them. But by the time it came for their divorce, my mother was tired of being a military wife, moving, and being stuck in places that she considered boring, as often those isolated bases are.

And very quickly remarried. My stepfather was—is a very different kind of fellow. He was in the [U.S.] Navy but during World War II and so, considerably older, wiser, more stable. He worked for a aircraft—in the aircraft industry. He was a logistical engineer, and so by temperament and profession, he was very, very different from my birth father and was in many ways for us a godsend in terms of the stability, the maturity that he brought to our new family.

MIHALY: What was your relationship with your father following the divorce?

JAMES: Lost touch with him for a number of years. He went off to do his own thing. He moved up in the officer ranks and enjoyed moving from post to post fairly frequently. I was very close to his parents and so would hear from them where he was and how he was doing, but there were years—you know, periods of years when I wouldn't hear directly from him, and then typically I would, you know, hear from him sort of—you know, classic sort of stereotype, distant, absent military father. He would call to say he was sorry and find out how I was doing, and, "Gosh, I can't believe you're that old." You know? [Laughs.] That sort of thing, which helped me understand the value of psychotherapy, which is one of the things that I studied at Dartmouth.

So there was, you know, there was good to come out of it. In both sides of my families of origin, education was very, very important—a lot of physicians of different kinds on my mother's side, a lot of government, military service on my father's side. My father's—my birth father's parents were both children of reservation families, growing up.

My grandmother's parents died in the influenza outbreak of 1918—1919. She and her siblings were farmed out to foster homes during their adolescence, and she was put into a family—fairly wealthy family in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she was basically a servant in that household. But she learned the value of education from them and developed a keen interest in all things artistic, cultural, particularly around service to community, and that—so by the time she went off to the Indian college—at that time, it was called the Haskell Indian School [now Haskell Indian Nations University] in Lawrence, Kansas, where she met my grandfather, she was in a good attitudinal situation to meet him and to fall in love.

He was very interested in working for the federal government, and he studied accounting in school. She studied secretarial and administrative work, which was one of the only two things that back then that—that women could study at Haskell. The other was home economics.

And so together they graduated from Haskell, and both—they married, and then my grandfather got a job working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs out in Window Rock, Arizona, on the Navaho reservation, and that's where my birth father and my uncle, my grandparents' two children, were born.

MIHALY: What were the name of your—of your grandparents on that side?

JAMES: Orville Eugene James and Mary Marshall James.

MIHALY: Wonderful. So then when you sort of lost touch with your father and moved—or where did you guys end up moving with your mother and your stepfather at that point, when you were ten?

JAMES: Well, he was a Yankee [laughs], and so we moved to New York,—

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

JAMES: —which was a big change for us because, as you may or may not be aware, most of the naval air stations that were active in flight training during the sixties and seventies were in the South: southern California to Florida. And so I had

never been to New York City, but he lived on Long Island, and so it was a real big change for us to go to New York.

And it was very pleasing for my mother. As a teenager, her grandmother had taken her to—for a long vacation in New York City, another one in Los Angeles [California] and a third in San Francisco [California], and so this was exactly what my mother was—was looking for in this new chapter of her life, to have exposure and access to greater cultural opportunities, particularly for my sister and I.

And almost every other weekend, we went into Manhattan and did cultural things, whether it was a Broadway show or a day at a museum or some sort of cultural event, or just exploring neighborhoods that were—that my—I refer to my stepfather now as my dad. That my dad knew about—you know, whether it was, you know, looking at bookshops in Greenwich Village (a neighborhood in Manhattan]—and my mother at first being shocked by all that we were being exposed to and often keeping a tight rein on my younger sister.

But I was allowed to explore wherever we were going, and it was—it was wonderfully enriching to me. It really helped flesh out things that I had been reading all of my life. I was an—a voracious reader from early on, and so going to New York and having exposure to Manhattan, to concerts and to the opera and to the shows and museums—it was just—it was just the right thing at the right time in my development, as a ten-year-old and older. It was—it was really, really helpful to me.

And while my stepfather's family was not as big on higher education, he certainly recognized in me the potential and made every effort to be supportive. He paid, say, ninety-nine percent of all of my costs to going to Dartmouth and kept, you know, reassuring me that he was happy to do that, that it was important to him to support me in getting a higher education. And he made it happen. He really did in that regard.

MIHALY: So it sounds like your relationship with both your parents at that point were quite positive in terms of growing up.

JAMES: Yeah, it—they really were. We had a very close family, very supportive, by and large. Now, you know, it was still the seventies, and my mother and her parents and my dad's parents and my birth father's parents were all of a certain generation that were not as cognizant of gay and lesbian folks and what it meant to find yourself, you know, during adolescence and young adulthood.

So it took me a while to come out to all of them, but it—it—you know, as those things go, I had a pretty easy time of that as well. At that time in my life, it was much harder being biracial than it was being gay and coming out.

MIHALY: So did you stay on Long Island, then, throughout high school until you went to Dartmouth?

JAMES: No, his job with McDonnell Douglas, the aircraft manufacturer that worked primarily with the military, moved him some, too. I was actually—we were in Santa Monica, California when I started high school, at Santa Monica High [School]. And I loved Santa Monica. It was—it was wonderfully diverse, and it was much more open around gay issues. You know, it was just much more encouraging of that.

I mean, for example, I was able to get a copy of—of Mart Crowley's play, *The Boys in the Band*, from the university library at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] while I was still in high school. And that would not have been possible any of the places I had lived before. I mean, except Manhattan obviously.

You know, the fact that you just go in and get a copy of [laughs] the play. I couldn't go *see* the play at that age [laughs], but I could at least read it. And it was—it was just that kind of environment in those days. It was very, very supportive to me. At least I found it so.

MIHALY: Good.

So, I mean, you mentioned that, like, it was difficult in terms of your parents not necessarily being cognizant of, like, gay and lesbian issues, growing up. At what point—do you think you realized that there was a—do you have an inkling during

high school and kind of adolescence that there was something going on there, or was that something that happened later, in college?

JAMES: You mean for myself?

MIHALY: Yeah.

JAMES: Oh, I knew very early on.

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

JAMES: Now, part of that I think was just me, and part of it was—you got to remember that in the sixties and especially on military bases, things were greatly sexualized, and so, you know, officers' parties on the weekends were pretty wild, and even though they would, you know, send all of us kids off to bed or leave us at home with babysitters, you know, we weren't ignorant of what was going on and the rambunctiousness of our, you know, typically fairly young parents.

And so it was not—you know, and I went to a lot of different bases. I lived in, you know, in a number of different places, growing up, and it was pretty common that there was a lot of experimentation of all sorts amongst the older kids on the bases. And so it was very easy for me to understand where I was headed early on.

You know, by the time I was in high school, I felt that I was probably bisexual. I don't know that I had a word for it at that point. I didn't have *that* word for it at that point. But that's, you know, how I felt, approaching college. I was bisexual, and I had preference, but I had, you know, a variety of experiences and was feeling that I would find my way and that that was one of the things that I really looked forward to at college.

And also recognized a concern within myself that I didn't want to behave the way that people had on the bases when I got to be an adult. And so that influenced my choice of schools, because, you know, during the college tour year, I, you know, of course was already familiar with Manhattan. I had—was able to spend a weekend in Cambridge [Massachusetts] and had been to Palo Alto [California]

before, on a couple of occasions and realized that those places were probably not safe for me.

And I couldn't have put it in words at that time. It was a feeling that if I were in an environment with that many people with, you know, subcultures that large and active, that I'd probably get lost somehow. And it was a feeling of uncertainty and fragility. And, again, I would not have put it in those terms then, that really made Hanover feel safe to me.

MIHALY: Was it just sort of like a discomfort, and do you think it's because of—a lot of it was because of size, sort of, of Hanover being kind of like a smaller community?

JAMES: I think that played a part in it. And I think that the sense of culture that I got in Hanover, you know, when I—I went and stayed—they had a program for students to come and visit and spend a weekend. I don't know if they still do that, but it was a wonderful thing for me. And I got the sense that things were well contained, that there was a subculture but it was well hidden, it was well protected, people knew where the lines were, and it was safe.

You know, you could have what you wanted, but you could be safe doing it, as long as you followed the rules, and that was perfect for me because that's exactly how I had lived, you know, on the military bases. You could have anything you wanted, but you had to play by the rules.

MIHALY: Interesting. It's very interesting to me the way you're describing—because you would think that it might be more comfortable for you to go somewhere *with* a big subculture so that you're able to find that and explore that, and yet what you are pushed toward seems to me more to be a smaller, sort of hidden group, because that's what you were used to.

JAMES: Well, and it's because it—it felt safer to me.

MIHALY: Yeah.

JAMES: And it felt—because honestly, I—I think I recognized in myself a certain—oh, how shall I say?—a certain hedonistic potential—[both chuckle]—that would have been celebrated in larger communities, I think to my detriment. And looking

back on it, I'm glad I trusted my gut because had I been in Cambridge or Palo Alto or Manhattan, I don't know that I'd be alive today.

MIHALY: Hmm.

So before we move on to Dartmouth, I'd love to—you just mentioned that you had a sister. What was your relationship like with her, growing up?

JAMES: Oh, she was a pain in the ass. [Laughter] As all little sisters and brothers are.

MIHALY: What was her name?

JAMES: Her name is Jennifer [James].

MIHALY: Jennifer.

JAMES: And we're very close today [chuckles] and have been for many, many years. But she was pretty savvy about who I was, growing up, and recognizing that there was something different about me. And she was not always respectful of that. You know, she would sometimes use that as a way of, you know, getting some power in our relationship. And she was pretty effective at it; hence my resentment. [Laughs.] But we were still, you know, at the end of the day, close.

When my family moved to England—well, I'm getting ahead of myself, but during my time at Dartmouth, my family moved to England, and she began to have her own relationships with fellows who weren't always good for her, and it was—it was very moving to me that she would reach out to me and allow me to support her during those times. And she came to support me similarly.

MIHALY: So was she younger than you?

JAMES: Yes, four years younger.

MIHALY: Okay. And then, remind me of the name of your—your dad, your stepfather.

JAMES: [Donald] "Don."

MIHALY: Don. Okay. Wonderful. Oh, sorry, last name, because I suppose it would be different.

JAMES: Oh, Spink, S-p-i-n-k.

MIHALY: Perfect. That's it. Okay, great.

So, yeah, I mean, we're talking a little bit about transitioning to Dartmouth. So you visited here, and you got a really good sense. Did that match what it was like when you first came to campus in the fall?

JAMES: Well, it was—that was compli- —my arriving in the fall was complicated because my junior—the summer between sophomore and junior year of high school, my family moved back to St. Louis [Missouri], where McDonnell Douglas was headquartered. And I—we moved back there from Santa Monica. And I—you know, we had moved back to the same house that we continued to own during those years that we went to Santa Monica.

And I really was chafing at suburban St. Louis lifestyles and really wanted to get away. I wanted to go to one coast or the other. And so it—it really came down to me, between Stanford [University] and Dartmouth. And I was having a terrible, terrible time deciding which. My dad got an opportunity to move to New Jersey that summer after senior year, with the understanding that he would only be there a year before going to London [England] to work with the British Air Force [sic; Royal Air Force] on the Harrier project. And the Harrier is that plane that can take off from standstill because its jets rotate.

And they decided they were going to do that, and so when it was decided that they were going to New Jersey, as a stopover to London, it really shook me because all of a sudden, it wasn't, you know, just Dartmouth and Stanford but getting ready to say goodbye to them, moving out of the country.

And I got spooked. And so, as we were moving to New Jersey, I said, "I don't want to go to either of these places. I want to go to someplace in New Jersey." But I hadn't applied

to any place in New Jersey. [Laughs.] And so I scrambled to find out where we were going to be living, and the closest college of note was Drew [University]. And so I quickly applied to Drew, got in, got a housing assignment and all of that. We got to New Jersey, went to Drew to see it, and it wasn't really what I was hoping it would be.

And we were still unpacking, and I got a call from the Dartmouth admissions counselor that I had talked to previously on occasion, and she said, you know, "What's goin' on? We haven't heard from you." [Laughs.] And I told her. And she could tell I was upset, and she said, "Well, let's talk a little bit about this." And—and, you know, she spent at least an hour with me, talking about how, you know, how—"We'll pay"—you know, "It's not what you were anticipating, but you, you know, can still have a wonderful life here in Hanover. And New Jersey is actually closer than St. Louis, so it's closer than you thought. And, you know, even if your—your parents are going to—to London, Hanover is closer to London than Stanford is." [Laughs.] "So, you know, why not come to Dartmouth?"

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

JAMES: And it was—it was really touching to me, and I felt really supported by her making that call. And so I said, "I'll have to talk to my parents," because at this point I had already, you know, had classes and a roommate I'd been in touch with at Drew. And so she said she'd call me back the next day.

And that was a tough night because I—I felt like I was—*Now I'm gonna change my mind again?* And my mom was not happy with me, but I got to say, to his credit, my dad said, "You know what? If you want to go to Dartmouth, go to Dartmouth. You know, Drew, Dartmouth—they both begin with D. Just pick one. You know?" [Laughs.]

And I don't know what *they* talked about later that night, but the next morning, my mom was of the same mind. She said, "You know, you're—you're going to get a lot more out of Dartmouth than you will out of Drew, and, you know, you've been looking at this place for over a year now, and you've talked to all these alums, you've done all this stuff, you went there for a weekend. You don't know anything about Drew."

And so by the time the admissions counselor called me back that afternoon, I had decided to—to, you know, change my mind again, and she assured me it would be okay and, you know, gave me the date to come up and all of—you know, had to redo a bunch of paperwork. [Laughs.]

So then, of course, I had to call my roommate at Drew and tell him I wasn't coming, and that was horrible. But anyway,—so I arrived—you know, we arrived on campus in Hanover and go to the housing office or—I don't—yeah, I think that that was first. I don't remember. Anyway, got to the housing office. They didn't have me listed. And I thought, *Oh, my God, I've screwed it up. Now I'm not going to Dartmouth, and I'm not going to Drew. I don't have anyplace to go.* [Laughs.]

And fortunately, the woman in the housing office said, "Don't worry about it. Don't worry. Let me call over to Admissions." And the woman actually came over—the admissions counselor came over [chuckles], and she talked to the registrar. She took me around, and she got it all straightened out in a couple of hours.

And they had given away my space at the room that I thought, you know, originally I had been assigned, but I ended up in a two-room triple in—on the fourth floor of Gile [Hall], with two guys who I'm still friends with.

MIHALY: So did you arrive—it sounds like Drew would have just—the classes would have started earlier, so when you arrived at Dartmouth it was still before most people had moved in?

JAMES: No, it was—it was the—most people had just come back from their Freshman Trips [Dartmouth Outing Club First-Year Trips], which of course I missed.

MIHALY: Okay. Understood. Got it. [Both chuckle.]

JAMES: It was—it was like the day.

MIHALY: The day of classes?

JAMES: It was—it was—I was running late. I—[Laughs.] It was very, very stressful. But—

MIHALY: Yeah. [Chuckles.]

JAMES: It was—it turned out just fine. Eric and Loren, my roommates, I think were a little disappointed they *did* end up with a third person in there, but very quickly, I would say within hours, we were fast friends.

MIHALY: So it sounds like you got lucky with roommates. Do you think the dorm overall was, like, a good fit and a good place to be freshman year?

JAMES: Yeah, it was. I mean, it was a very, I think, classic sort of floor, with rich—diverse mix of folks, nothing to crazy but, you know, certainly challenging social interactions. There were—I had never, you know, lived in that sort of space before. When I had traveled by myself as a younger teen, to Europe, I would stay in hostels and things, so I had some semblance of group environments, but I had never had a roommate, you know, of any sort before, much less two in what felt like very cramped spaces. But that was true for Eric and Loren as well, so we were—you know, recognized the struggle and shared it productively.

The culture in Gile that year was not very academic. There were some serious students. Loren was one of them. There were wild guys who, you know, were making a full event of the social possibilities without parental oversight, and Eric was one of those. And so I was—I was always supported, whether I wanted to go out and raise hell or stay at home and study. [Both chuckle.] One or the other was willing, you know, to do that, or lead me, or support me [laughs] in that.

But, you know, it was a big transition in terms of the level of academic work required, and, you know, I think a lot of Dartmouth folks—I had always had an easy time making good grades in high school, but, you know, I—I relished the challenges as they came but never felt like I had been really pushed. And all of a sudden, I was really pushed. And at times, rose to it really well, and other times, I didn't know what the hell was going on. [Laughs.]

And unlike high school teachers, the professors were very, very different. [Laughs.] They were—some were very supportive and engaging, and others clearly resented having their office hours used by undergraduates and would rather have been doing anything else, it seemed. So it was a real mixed bag in that regard.

But I very quickly, you know, felt supported by the other guys in the dorm. I started going to what at that time was new Students for Social Alternatives, SSA. And it was not what I was hoping for. It was—it wasn't—the vibe I had gotten in visiting was there, but the kinds of—of fellows that I was hoping to—to meet were not. It was—it was much more around gender role fluidity. And they had a political overtone that I wasn't really looking for. I wasn't opposed to it; I just didn't want to spend my time that way.

MIHALY: What type of people were in SSA? Like, what was that organization about?

JAMES: Well, it was about supporting one another as we dealt with issues of social differences, and so it attracted a lot of folks who identified all across the spectrum, such as it was back then. And there were guys and women who wanted to use it as a political platform for a variety of different social change goals, and some of them I felt were just doing it for the political piece out of, you know, pure philosophical interest and a commitment to, you know, their philosophies, which was fine.

Some seemed to want to have something to put on their résumé, and that was not fine for me. And I resented some of the judgments that, you know, I got when I would say things that—well, "Why are we doing that?", "Why would we do that?" You know, "Why would we put our resources into doing X or Y or Z, you know, when I'd rather us, you know, find something to do, you know, for ourselves and our—our own community there on campus?"

MIHALY: What type of thing were you perhaps suggesting or might have wanted to see that the group didn't align with?

JAMES: Oh, more cultural things, like outings to museums or—or—as much as I appreciated the efforts that were made in

Thayer Hall [now Class of 1953 Commons] back then, I wanted to be able to have folks find decent restaurants in the area and go out for good meals and have conversation over dinner. And that was just where I was coming from in terms of my family and how we socialized. I—I—you know, it took me a while to sort of wake up to the fact that other people could have just as much fun, you know, riding to a protest rally, you know? [Laughs.] And eating, you know, cheese sandwiches along the way.

You know, but it took me a year or two, you know, before I got involved in—I eventually got involved in the student group for, you know,—for the ecology and really enjoyed going to Yankee [Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant], Pilgrim [Nuclear Power Station] and, you know, standing outside in the cold, protesting, you know, nuclear power because it was a social event. But the time that I first walked into SSA, I didn't have that context.

MIHALY: Got it.

Sorry, can you repeat what you were just mentioning, the second organization?

JAMES: I don't remember the name of it, but we were protesting for ecological issues—

MIHALY: Got it.

JAMES: —and particularly anti-nuke. And we went to Yankee, Pilgrim and to—what was the other one? Oh gosh, I forget. But anyway, I ended up enjoying that more than I did SSA. I actually dropped out of SSA and hung out with the ecology kids more, until I joined a frat.

MIHALY: Yeah, great. So actually, can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with Greek life and your fraternity?

JAMES: Well, I can certainly tell you about my fraternity. I don't know how representative we were of Greek life back then. I was in Tri-Kap [Kappa Kappa Kappa], and at that time, Tri-Kap was sort of stodgy and academic and the boring ones on the Row [Fraternity Row]. [Laughs.] Now, I don't know if it's still the same. I honestly haven't kept up with the frat politics and

milieu of the current day, so I don't know if that's still the case, but it was back then.

You know, we were I think a little more staid, and I liked that. [Laughs.] I mean, I—I'd go to some of the other parties, but not for very long, and I—I liked a more quiet and genteel environment, by and large, and so Tri-Kap was a good fit for me. That, and—

MIHALY: I assume that was, like, your sophomore year that you joined, or—

JAMES: Oh, I started going there sophomore year because so many of my friends, particularly from—from Giles were in it, but I didn't actually join until junior year.

MIHALY: Okay.

JAMES: But I was always over there. I—and a couple of friends who were already in the frat, who were older. They kept—you know, "Hey come"—you know, "Rush." I said, "I don't wanna do that. That's stupid, sit around and have these forced conversations. I know half the guys already. You know, why should I have to do that?" And, "Well, but that's the tradition." "Fuck that, I'm not doing that." [Laughs.]

And so they kept pushing me, and so I went to—to pledge activity or rush activities sophomore year and would go in and sit down on one of the couches, and I'd bring a book with me, and I'd sit and read. The brothers that didn't know me would become concerned, and they'd come over and start trying to talk to me, and I'd—I was always polite but always off-putting, and go back to my book. And my friends just thought this was an absolute hoot. [Laughs.] They used that as a way to sort of rib one another and—and talk about, you know, how do you—how do you deal with, you know, a recalcitrant pledge?

And so, you know, I did that a couple—on a coup- —for a couple of events, and I—we thought it was just great hilarity that, you know, I would go in there and sort of play that role and consternate, you know, some of the other brothers and had great fun with it. But I realized after I had taken this

break to go to England that—when I came back, "You know, I really do want to do this." And so I pledged junior year.

MIHALY: And was that—do you think that was just because—or why was it that you wanted to do that?

JAMES: I wanted to get out of the dorms. I wanted to be with my friends who were about to graduate, these older friends. I wanted to—to—you know, to be in closer, you know, continual proximity with them, some of whom I had had under-the-radar relationships with on and off.

MIHALY: Yeah. Great.

So, then, you said—you just mentioned that you went to England. Was that just over a break?

JAMES: No, I actually took a couple of semesters off.

MIHALY: Okay.

JAMES: I was flirting with the idea of going into psychology as a profession, because I was about to finish my philosophy major and started thinking about what the hell was I going to do with that? I didn't want to be an academic. That was the last thing I wanted to do. And we'll come back to that in a minute. [Laughs.]

And so, you know, I had had the experience, you know, in—from my family, from, the divorce and my own anxieties being treated and whatnot, and so I went to the [William Jewett] Tucker Foundation when, you know, they put—put out the push for the Tucker internships. And I said, "You don't have one in psychology." And they said, "No, we don't, but we've got some others." And they told me what they had, and they had mentioned fellowships.

And I said, "Well, what about the fellowships?" "Oh, well, those you set up, you know, with us. They're not sort of, you know, already created. Those, you've got a lot more flexibility." And so I thought, "Well, what do you have to do for one of those?" Because that felt like a better opportunity for me. And they said, "Well,"—you know, they told me what

to do, and I didn't really know anybody that could help me to do that.

So I turned to my grandparents, my birth father's parents, who were both very involved in all sorts of social movement things and had worked in a variety of different settings within the federal government, each in their own careers. I think I mentioned my grandfather was an accountant for the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the beginning of his career, but he switched to the Federal Prison Bureau [sic; Federal Bureau of Prisons] later on, which is what took him to the federal penitentiary in El Reno.

And my grandmother was a contract negotiator for the Federal Aviation Administration, and the first woman to hold that position in the 1940s. And as a result of their work and their social activism, they had a very wide network. They were both good networkers.

So anyway, I called them, and I said, "You know, they've got this fellowship, but—and I want to do something in psychology, but I don't know anybody. Who do *you* know?" Well, I come to find out that my grandfather, in his first assignment at a federal penitentiary, worked with this young psychologist, whose father was fairly well known. His father was Karl [A.] Menninger. Roy [W.] Menninger ran the Menninger Institute, which at that time was in Topeka, Kansas.

And so he said, "Would you like me to introduce you to Roy and [W. Walter] "Walt"—his brother?"—who were big psychiatrists and ran the Menninger Institute. And I said, "Hell, yes." [Laughs.] So I went out, during a break, to Oklahoma, and we drove up to Kansas, and they introduced me, and they said, "You know, you have this opportunity through Dartmouth for a fellowship if you all could, you know, work with him to create some sort of experience." And they said, "Sure, we'd love to do that."

And I ended up working with Walt to create the Tucker fellowship that took me to the Menninger Foundation for six months. As the dates worked out, it was—you know, it didn't make sense for me to go back to Hanover, and so I went and stayed with my grandparents in El Reno while I wrote up

my final reports for Menninger and for Tucker Foundation and then went to England to be with my parents.

And my dad said, well, you know, "If you're gonna be here for any length of time, why don't you find a job?" And I said, "Well, doncha have to have papers, you know, and stuff?" And he said, "Well, there's jobs, and there's jobs." You know.

In his office was a fellow who had been working part time in a pub in our neighborhood—their neighborhood, and he said, you know, "You work part time. Could, you know, Steve do something like, you know, loading kegs and things like this?" And he said, "Yeah, lemme introduce him to the pub owner." And so all of a sudden, I was working behind the bar in a little pub in Ham, Surrey, England, outside London. And they loved having an American behind the bar, and I was completely illegal, my working there, but I made a ton of money [laughs] in tips because they love[d] how I talked and they loved that I knew how to make all these drinks. (Thank you, Tri-Kap.) [Laughs.]

So it ended up being—I stayed there for a number of months and made a lot of money in tips and then bought a Eurail Pass and went—spent three months traveling around Europe before I came back to Hanover—

MIHALY: Wow.

JAMES: —and finished up. And that was great.

MIHALY: So that didn't set you back at all in terms of academic time line. You still graduated on time.

JAMES: Oh, it certainly did, yes. I had to do an extra semester by the time I got back.

MIHALY: Okay, okay.

JAMES: I had to—I had to do a second summer. I had—it was a mess. I had to do—I had an extra course one term. It was a really killer,—

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

JAMES: —but I came back. I finished the philosophy degree and finished the psych degree, taking, you know, those extra courses. So it—you know, all's well that ends well. It—it worked out really well for me.

MIHALY: Okay. And I guess I meant you still were able to graduate with your class; you just had to add—

JAMES: Oh, no. No, no, I wasn't. I was a semester later.

MIHALY: Okay.

JAMES: So I didn't actually go through a commencement ceremony. I mean, I watched theirs, but I didn't go—you know, I didn't process [pronouncing it pro-CESS, meaning participate in the processional], myself.

MIHALY: Yeah.

JAMES: I got it in the mail, which was fine by me. I didn't go to my high school graduation either. I was not into that sort of—

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

JAMES: —tradition. [Laughs.]

MIHALY: Okay. Why—why didn't you go to your high school graduation?

JAMES: I thought it was boring,—

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

JAMES: —and fortunately, my girlfriend then agreed with me, and so we went to the symphony and out to a nice restaurant that evening, that afternoon and evening instead.

MIHALY: That sounds lovely. [Chuckles.]

JAMES: It was. It was absolutely brilliant. [Laughs.] It was [Gustav] Mahler, and I loved Mahler, and it was just—it was great. [Laughs.]

MIHALY: So you'd mentioned that one of the hardest parts of, like, your identity growing up had been being biracial. Can you talk about what that was like a little bit at Dartmouth and if that was present, how?

JAMES: Yeah. It was hard because I really wanted to be part of the Native Americans at Dartmouth community, but the vast majority of folds in NAD at that time were very traditional Native American—coming from very traditional Native American communities, often with fairly strict Christian overlays to whatever their individual tribal beliefs had been, pre-Christian.

And they had very clear and definite ideas about, you know, what was okay and not okay in terms of sexual orientation. And they had, you know, similar rigidity around you're either Indian or you're—or you're not. And this, you know, business of, you know, physically looking like them but not sounding like them, having experiences that they couldn't at that time relate to in terms of, you know, having traveled and—and having different cultural interests that were often non-traditional.

I did have a, you know, somewhat traditional upbringing, intermittent as—though it was. And it was tough because when I would express myself as a Native American outside NAD, I was told, "Oh, well, why don't you go, you know, hang out at NAD?" And when I would hang out at NAD, "Oh, well, you know, what are you talking about this for or that for" or, you know, "Ewww."—you know? [Laughs.] You know, "You don't belong here."

And the—the message was very clear, but to be honest, I mean, I had experienced that all my life in my family, as much as my mother's parents had put on a brave face to her falling in love and marrying a Native American. They were not without their racism. In fact, the first time I ever heard the phrase "prairie nigger" was from my white grandmother. She didn't know I was in the next room and could hear her.

So, you know, I was always moving from, you know, one culture to the other and never feeling entirely comfortable in either. So it was very easy for me to, you know, figure out where it was most comfortable. In my family life, it was most

comfortable with my father's family—you know, the Native American side. At Dartmouth it was much more comfortable to be with the Gile and Tri-Kap guys.

MIHALY: Sure. So, then, if you don't mind my asking, like, at what point or were you at all publicly out during your time at Dartmouth?

JAMES: No. I was—I was not. None of us—well, that's not true. There were two guys in Tri-Kap at that time who were out as gay. I don't—none of us who identified then as bisexual were out at all, even though there was a fair amount of that in Tri-Kap. In particular, that's one of the reasons it was so comfortable for me. I guess a lot of the older guys that I had, you know, befriended through Gile ended up being in Tri-Kap for the very same reason.

MIHALY: So you say there were a lot of you, as in, like, you all definitely knew who each other were.

JAMES: Yes, and there were evolutions. [Laughs.] People changed during those years. They would experiment and then retreat or experiment and blossom, if you will. [Chuckles.]

MIHALY: Mm-hm.

JAMES: And some kept a very low profile and have to this day.

MIHALY: Hmm. And were there, like, relationships within Tri-Kap or within other communities that you were aware of at that time?

JAMES: There were no open relationships between brothers at Tri-Kap at that time. Relationships that brothers had were always with—the public ones were always with people outside the house. Is that what you were asking?

MIHALY: Yes, yes. No, that's good. Like, did—yeah, so did you—I mean, did you have, like, experiences with men while you were at—at Dartmouth?

JAMES: Oh, sure.

MIHALY: And are those people, like,—you found through Tri-Kap, or were there other avenues that people sort of were aware of each other, if that makes sense?

JAMES: Yes. Well,—oh, yes, there's—there were certainly many other avenues. I didn't pursue other avenues, myself—

MIHALY: Okay.

JAMES: —but I certainly knew other guys who did. But I, for most of the time I was actually living in Tri-Kap, had a female lover—

MIHALY: Okay:

JAMES: —who actually lived with me in Tri-Kap for a number of semesters. And at that time, I felt like I was bisexual on breaks.

MIHALY: What do you mean by that?

JAMES: That during breaks, she would go home to her family, I would go home to mine, and when I was home, I was essentially gay. That's when I would meet up—and very often with people who I'd known before.

MIHALY: Interesting.

JAMES: Yeah, it was.

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

JAMES: It was—it was a very fluid and facile time. It was—it—it—it worked for me. She was aware of—of my inclination. She wasn't always aware of my behavior. But she was not threatened by that.

MIHALY: Yeah. Do you still—I mean, I don't know if you necessarily have an answer to this, but do you still feel like you identify as bisexual, or do you feel like that was something that wasn't quite true at the time, that you were just saying?

JAMES: Oh, I'm probably a Kinsey 5.75 or something. [Laughter.] I—you know, I—the only decision I had to—to make was what—to what extent was I going to take the things that

were, for me, long-term impacts of my enjoyment of heterosexual relationships into my gay relationships. And what I mean by that are the expectation of deep commitment in a relationship that would be long lasting and support having children. Those three things were really critical to me.

Now, back then, of course, we didn't have civil unions or marriage or adoption as possibilities as gay couples, but I knew we would find a way. I didn't know exactly how that would work, but I was trusting in that, and some of that perhaps was naiveté, but, you know, supported by the privilege that I had, living the kind of life that I—I had up to that point.

But I didn't feel like it was a choice to stop being bisexual and be a gay man. That was inevitable. I think it was just a matter of timing. I continued being bisexual in the—in the Peace Corps when I—right after, you know, Dartmouth I went into the Peace Corps and went to West Africa and had both kinds of relationships during those two years. And it really wasn't until I came back from Africa that I declared, you know, as a gay man.

MIHALY: Is that when you told your parents as well?

JAMES: Yes, mm-hm.

MIHALY: What did their reaction end up—end up being?

JAMES: Well, it was tougher on my mom than it was on my dad. She-you know, she will readily admit it was because at that moment she felt like I would never have kids. But, you know, over a period of weeks, she came to—understood that I *was* going to have kids. And I didn't know how, but [chuckles] I was going to make that work.

And she and my dad ended up being not just wonderful supporters of me and Todd [Herrmann, Class of 1980] and our family, but she became—you know, she became very active in PFLAG [Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, now Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays]. They both did. She became an officer of New Hampshire PFLAG [laughs] when she—when they retired to New Hampshire. She—she got out there on the front lines

and [laughs] has spoken, you know, to the press and at conferences and, you know, her state senate, and all of the state legislature, I should say, and all that sort of thing. And I would tease her that, you know, she didn't do that for me, but once she had grandkids [laughs], she got out there and really became very, very political.

MIHALY: Mmm.

I'm curious a little bit more about the—like, the feeling surrounding being gay or bisexual on campus. Is there any point where you felt, like, sort of unsafe at any of the spaces around campus?

JAMES: I didn't, no, but I know that other guys did, and some of the women that I knew did. You know, there were times when I would be somebody who would walk somebody home, women and men, or intercede in some way because I—you know, I had been raised in, you know, the first half of my life, up to that point, in military settings, where certain decorum was expected an enforced, sometimes physically. You just had to behave in a certain way, and you weren't going to attack somebody or, you know, if you were going to get into a fight, it was for a good cause. And protecting my friends was a good cause, so I wasn't afraid of—of that. I knew how to defuse situations and talk my way into—out of just about anything at that point. I never got into a physical fight while on campus but came close a couple of times. But, no, I didn't really. I could—I could read a situation, you know.

MIHALY: Were there places—

JAMES: I knew what—

MIHALY: —you avoided or, like,—I don't know, specific fraternities or anything? Like, I've spoken to other people—I mean, as you mentioned, I know there are other people who felt, you know, threatened during that time.

JAMES: Yeah. Well, it—it depended on the time of night. I mean, you know, it was pretty well safe to go into any of them at the beginning of the evening, you know, before things got carried away, and that's generally what I would do. If, you know, any of the really rowdy ones were having a great

party, I'd go early on but then leave after an hour or so because things could very quickly devolve. And as we know from those years—you know, from the mid-seventies to 1980, 1981, some very horrible things happened in some of the houses. But I never stayed long enough for—you know, to be witness to that or involved in any of that.

MIHALY: Great. So—

JAMES: It's just one of the things—if you—if you move a lot, especially to different, you know, kinds of cultures, you learn to pick up on the vibe.

MIHALY: Mmm. Yeah.

So following college, after you did graduate, although you stayed in Hanover an extra semester—is that right?

JAMES: Oh, yeah. I had—I had all sorts of psych courses to take, to finish up.

MIHALY: [Laughs] Okay. And then at that point, did you go straight into getting your Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy]?

JAMES: No, I went to the Peace Corps.

MIHALY: Oh, that's right.

JAMES: Yeah, I went into the Peace Corps, and while I was—well, let me think. My parents moved back from England I guess just before I went to Africa. They had come back to St. Louis, you know, where McDonnell Douglas was headquartered. And they were there—oh, golly—not very long, maybe just a few months, because they were in, like, a—what do you call it?—townhouse that they rented for that—and I was only with them for a couple of months between graduating and then going to training for the Peace Corps. The State Department [U.S. Department of State] had an agreement with Fort Valley College [Fort Valley State College, now Fort Valley State University] in Fort Valley, Georgia, where we did our technical training before going off to Benin.

And then, you know, I was in Benin until '83, and by that time, my parents had moved to Philadelphia [Pennsylvania],

just outside—northern suburbs of Philadelphia, which is where they were when I came back. And—when was that?—I guess it was Thanksgiving of ’83.

And then I went out to Los Angeles and roomed with one of my friends from Tri-Kap, who was living in Long Beach [California] with his lover at that time, and roomed with them for a few months before taking an apartment of my own in Pasadena [California] for a year before going back to the East Coast, where I then started Ph.D. work.

MIHALY: Okay. And why were you in Pasadena for a little while? Was there a draw there?

JAMES: Oh, yeah, I was working at a psychiatric clinic.

MIHALY: Okay, cool. Cool. So then—yeah, Ph.D. was from the Union Institute [now Union Institute & University]. Is that right?

JAMES: Yup.

MIHALY: Okay.

JAMES: And I started a group practice with some other colleagues that I had met through internships in Tampa [Florida], and starting—you know, we had this group practice going. I was minding my own business, and—a nominal relationship. It wasn’t—it wasn’t going to last. I knew that. But my partner at that time and I were keeping house, so to speak.

And I got a call one day from a fellow Dartmouth alum, who had seen an article about me in the state gay newspaper. I had just been elected president of the Gay and Lesbian Business Guild of Tampa [sic; Tampa Bay Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and Tampa Bay Business Guild, now Tampa Bay Diversity Chamber of Commerce]. And in the interview, they asked me, “Where’d you go to school?” And, you know, he saw Dartmouth Class of ’80, and he said, “Oh, my God, that’s *my* class!”

And so Todd called me and introduced himself as somebody who had just moved to Tampa for work after he had just graduated from [the] Wharton [School of the University of Pennsylvania], and would it be okay for him to take me to

lunch and ask about, you know, life in Tampa. And I said, "Sure."

And so we met for lunch, and my boyfriend and I at the time sort of took him under our wing and, of course, hooked him up with every other single friend we had over the course of the next several months. And none of them seemed to work out, for some reason. [Laughs.] Until he made his move. [Laughter.] And now he'll own this. He owns this entirely, with—with tremendous glee [laughs], that he—he won me over, and he—he certainly did. That was thirty-two years ago.

MIHALY: Wow! Wait. So what year was that? And that would have been—

JAMES: Oh, good Lord.

MIHALY: Eighty-eight?

JAMES: We actually got together in—in '87. Well, it started in '86, I guess. [Chuckles.]

MIHALY: Great. So I guess—one thing—

JAMES: Yeah.

MIHALY: —I'm curious about a little bit, if you could just talk about the environment of the country at the time, in terms of gay and lesbian rights, because I know you had mentioned in your—in your note to us specifically that you had a lot of friends commit suicide or—or be lost to HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] as well. What was the environment like during that time?

JAMES: Well, you know, I think that it was in some ways a little different in—in the part of Florida where we were. But we were certainly aware of the national, you know, situation. You know, I was very aware of differences in European countries. I very often thought about just moving to Europe and being done with it. You know, being in London would have been so easier. [Laughs.]

It was—it was tough, because, you know, where we were living Anita [J.] Bryant was still a revered person, who was not just, you know, popular for her advertising career but also as a moral leader, and she and people like Phyllis [M.] Schafly [sic; Schlafly (neé Stewart)], who were—you know, who was based in Washington [D.C.], and others really seemed to be running things with the Moral Majority.

And it was—it was really, really hard in those early years of the AIDS [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome] epidemic because, you know, I felt like—I never bought into any of the conspiracy theories, that it was, you know, an intentional infection. But, boy, it certainly served some people's purposes. And some of the kinds of language that we were hearing in central Florida at that time made no bones about it, that it was God's will.

And I was, you know, raised a good Unitarian Universalist, you know, from the time I was a kid. That was one of my mom's rebellions, to raise my sister and I as UU's, and so, of course, I didn't believe that, but [laughs], you know, it was still hard. But, you know, it was one of the things that made me become an activist. And, you know, in my role as president of the business guild in Tampa, I had, you know, lots of invitations to make public declarations and speeches and whatnot, and I ended up doing that. That was not something that I took on lightly, but I embraced it and ended up realizing that it was important work. And it was something I went on to do through the American Psychological Association as well, [cross-talk; unintelligible].

MIHALY: What was your role in the—in the business guild? Like, what was that—what did that job entail?

JAMES: Well, it meant organizing the activities of the guild and overseeing, you know, the financial arm and, you know, we gave out scholarships and grants and things like that. It meant helping other people, you know, volunteer staff of the guild—we were all volunteers. I mean, it wasn't, you know, like a regular, you know, business kind of organization like—you know, that had hired staff or anything. So it was all, you know, done by volunteers.

But we did everything from, you know, putting on professional development seminars to doing fundraisers for different causes and charities and whatnot, to having—taking part in Pride Day celebrations. I made my—you know, made a public activist speech at the pride celebration—I think it was 1986—in the steps of City Hall in Tampa. Gave some fiery and probably repetitive screed on why, you know, the Moral Majority should be held to account and why we shouldn't have equal rights. [Chuckles.]

My dad sent me a copy of the video that I had shared with him. He was converting VHS to DVD, and sent that for my kids' viewing pleasure. [Laughs.] Embarrassing. [Laughs.] But they loved it. They loved it.

MIHALY: So—but you mentioned that you'd also been—like, served as an activist in the psychcol- — What was that a part of?

JAMES: Oh, the American Psychological Association.

MIHALY: Yeah. What did you—

JAMES: Yeah. Well, I—you know, I had—gosh! What was he? He was—I guess he had been supervisor of mine some years before, who rented space from us for a period of time, in the group practice. And he was—he was openly bisexual, and he was membership chair of Division 44 of the APA [APA Division 44: Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian and Gay Issues, now APA Division 44: Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity], and Division—in the APA you have all these divisions that are numbered. And Division 44 is the queer division. And so he asked if I would be interested in helping him with membership drive activities for, you know, the gay and lesbian division of the American Psychological Association.

And I—*Well, that sounds like a fun thing.* I was no longer, you know, president of the guild, and, you know, finished with my Ph.D., and so, you know, *Yeah, that would be fun.* And so I did that, and I loved it. I loved going to the conventions, and Division 44 always had a hospitality suite, where they'd have specialized programming. You know, they had, you know, seminars and whatnot, in addition to the

regular programming that each division gets within the national convention.

And I just ate that up. And it was so funny because my grandmother had done this after she retired from the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration]. She had gotten involved in Native American women's organizations in Oklahoma, and I—when I would go visit them, I would always be the one to drive her and her lady friends from these organizations around to all these different meetings they'd go to. And, you know, I felt like, *Oh, my God, it rubbed off on me, and I'm doing the same thing.* [Laughs.]

But the good news was that I enjoyed going to the conventions and being involved in those activities. And so I ended up becoming president of Division 44 and then, later, Division 45 [APA Division 45: Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minority Issues, now APA Division 45: Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race], which was the ethnic minority division. And they had different slates for different officers, you know, in rotation over a period—you know, calendar of years. And so I was often the Native American, you know, for treasurer and things like that until I became president of 45 as well.

And I represented Division 45 in the Council of Minority Psych Associations [sic; Council of National Psychology Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests (CNPAAEMI)]. So there's a Society of Indian Psychologists. There's a national organization of black psychologists [Association of Black Psychologists]—you know, Asian psychologists, Latino-Latina psychologists, et cetera.

And they have a, you know, umbrella organization that I've represented APA at.

And then for my work in those kinds of things and on some of the APA committees, I got to be known within APA, and then was asked to serve on the board of trustees of the American Psychological Foundation, the grant—research grant and scholarship arm of the APA, where I served for ten years.

MIHALY: Okay. Great!

So then I guess—I know that you and, like, Todd eventually started a family,—

JAMES: Yeah.

MIHALY: —so can you talk a little bit about when you—when you guys got married and when you guys had kids?

JAMES: Well, we actually had three ceremonies, if you will.

MIHALY: Okay

JAMES: The first—the first one—we had gotten together in Tampa. Todd lost the job that had brought him to Tampa, and he was struggling with what to do. He had been working for a hospital organization but didn't really enjoy it. He thought he wanted to go into consulting. And it took him several months to—to find a position with a consulting firm that had an office in Tampa.

But their head office was in Chicago [Illinois], and so when they hired him, he had to go to Chicago for nine months—or, no, seven months. I'm sorry. And so just at the beginning of our relationship, we were suddenly in a long-distance relationship. And that was okay. I mean, we made the best use of it. We talked on the phone almost every day. Each week, we would trade, you know, those little mini-cassettes. I don't know if you'd even see these things. [Both chuckle.] We used to have little cassette recorders that had maybe an inch-and-a-half-wide cassette tape, and we would trade those each week. And so I—he'd get one from me, I'd get one from him, and we'd have a week to record our response. So in addition to our daily phone conversations, we would, you know, have these more lengthy and considered tape responses. And I've still got those.

MIHALY: That's wonderful.

JAMES: I intend to—I intend to do something with them someday, but I think it'll have to wait of retirement. But anyway, you know, each month we would—I would either go up there or he would come back to Tampa. And so as that time passed and

our relationship progressed, we realized that we wanted to commemorate our relationship somehow. We didn't have marriage. We didn't have civil unions.

And so we decided, okay, when he's done in Chicago, I'm going to go up there and help him pack his car, and we're going to drive back to Tampa. Now, in that seven months, his parents retired and moved to South Carolina. He had come out to them but just, and so I had only met them once, right before the retired and left New Jersey to move to South Carolina, so this was going to be the second time I had really spent any time with them.

And we were going to recognize the moment that we would count as our anniversary somewhere on that trip. And, you know, we took our time. It was a very leisurely, you know, week-long trip form Chicago to Tampa. And we—I—I like to plan things like that, and so I found us this wonderful old bed and breakfast in Macon, Georgia. And it was fortunately right down the street from a really fine restaurant, and I got us reservations there.

Well, the—the weather that day was horrible. It was absolutely horrible. It was in September, and it was just, you know, torrential downpour. We, you know, pulled into the bed and breakfast and got settled, and it was time for—the dinner reservation was coming up, and, you know, it was still raining out. And I thought, *Well, let's just go—it's only, like, three doors down. We're not gonna drive down there. That's ridiculous.*

So we decided we would walk and just, you know, take raincoats and umbrellas and brave the storm. And as we walked out onto the little cobblestone street in old Macon, the clouds parted enough to let sunshine through, and it shone on us and the bed and breakfast, and we looked up, and there was a triple rainbow.

MIHALY: Huh!

JAMES: And—excuse me, I'm getting choked up—but it just—it was perfect. And we looked at each other and realized that that was the moment, and I'm sure it had been done before but

perhaps not in broad daylight. We kissed on the cobblestone streets of old Macon and then went and had a lovely dinner.

MIHALY: That sounds wonderful. [Chuckles.]

JAMES: It really was. It was—it was magical. And we both felt very blessed. That was—it was really remarkable. And so that was the day that we carried as our anniversary until 2001, when we changed it because it happened to be September 11th.

MIHALY: Mmm.

JAMES: And by that time, we were living in Massachusetts, and had a Unitarian church that we belonged to, and so we changed—we had a commitment ceremony, which was what we had at that time, at the Unitarian church in Newburyport, Massachusetts. And our parents came—

MIHALY: What year was that?

JAMES: Oh—oh, boy! Now, here's the embarrassing—[Laughter]. I remember the first one. Oh, in between, we had a civil union in Vermont. No, that was—that came later. That came later. I'm sorry. I'm getting confused. You asked me what year that was. Golly! That must have been '95, '96?

MIHALY: Okay. That was the commitment ceremony, right? And then—

JAMES: Yeah.

MIHALY: Yeah, yeah. Oaky.

JAMES: Right. Todd remembers those things. I can remember some things really well, but not the intervening ones.

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

JAMES: But it was a big deal. We had—you know, and the church was packed. Our families were there. Todd sang in a—in a choir, a chorus, Cantemus [Chamber Chorus] in Boston [Massachusetts]. And they came, and they sang for us. It was—you know, it was really special, and it was a lot of fun.

But then later, after we had adopted [Gregory X.] "Greg" [James-Herrmann] and Vermont had civil unions, we went to Woodstock [Vermont] for a weekend, and Greg helped the town clerk or justice of the peace, rather, officiate for our civil union.

And then in—what was that, 2003, I guess it was?—when marriage became a possibility in Massachusetts, we had our marriage in the same Newburyport church. But we did it over lunch break because by that time it was like our third or fourth thing, and we didn't make a big deal of it. We just went and had it—sort of a quickie wedding at the church. [Laughter.] It was a little anticlimactic [sic] after Macon and Newburyport the first time.

MIHALY: Yes. Well, you had enough climactic [sic] wedding ceremonies that then—

JAMES: Right, right. [Laughs.]

I'm sorry, you asked about our starting a family. So we were in Tampa, and we had moved into a house up in Safety Harbor [Florida] (that's at the top of Tampa Bay) and were minding our own business. We had a five-year plan at that time that would take us away from Florida to a state where we could adopt. And there were only two at that time, Vermont and Massachusetts. And we were both thinking it would be Vermont because we really loved Vermont, the landscape and that sort of thing. And to us, Massachusetts was just Boston and hectic hoo-hah.

And so we were only two years into our five-year plan when Todd got a call from a headhunter asking if he knew of somebody who might be interested in a consulting firm in Massachusetts, and as they described the job, it was perfect for him.

MIHALY: Sorry, the five-year plan being?

JAMES: Our five-year plan to advance our careers—

MIHALY: Got it.

JAMES: —to the point where we were comfortable making a move somewhere else.

MIHALY: Understood, okay.

JAMES: You know,—so he called me and described the job, and I said, “Well, that’s perfect, you know. Are you going to apply?” And he said, “Yes, I—I really want to.” I said well, “If you got it, when would—when would you start?” And he named a date that was just weeks away. [Chuckles.] And, of course, he got it, and he had to leave. And so he left. [Laughs.] He left me to pack the house and sell the house and to deal with my practice. And just by—no, it took a couple of months, and he came back at regular intervals.

But as luck would have it, we had both closings, the sale of the house and the sale of the practice, within the same week, which is just, you know, like a triple rainbow. It’s—it’s unheard of [chuckles], you know? It was just very lucky that way.

And he was—he had taken an apartment north of Boston, near his office, and so we put all of our stuff in storage. We had very good friends in Florida who took care of our dogs, and so squeezed into his apartment for about a month, I guess. I went around with the realtor, looking at houses. And the first day, driving around with the realtor—he was a very friendly, gay fellow—asked me what I did. And I told him, and he said, “Oh, you should talk to my friend. He works at this organization in Boston. They’re looking to start up something for gay street kids.”

And two weeks later, I was the founding clinical director of the Boston Gay & Lesbian Adolescent Social Services program, just completely without any intention. I mean, I just sold this practice. I thought, Oh, well, I’ll start practice in Boston. And this sort of fell in my lap, and it was lovely. It was part time, but it was—it was a really fun exercise in, you know, how do you establish a clinic in a place that never had anything like that before, for kids who are not home based. They’re living on the street. They’re forced into sex, you know, work in order to survive. And you’ve got to, you know, pull together different organizations that work with them and set up a walk-in, you know, mental health clinic.

It was—it was a tremendously exciting exercise, and I loved doing it. I loved, you know, taking the train into Boston, you know, three times a week and getting that started. And it was a two-year project, and, you know, it was clear that it was going to transform into more of a walk-in sort of community center kind of thing that would have more of a focus on work preparation and basic—you know, connecting the kids to basic social services.

The clinical piece was being picked up by other organizations and hospitals in the area, which was a good thing, because they had many more resources than the Justice Resource Institute, JRI, which was running it, could offer. And so it was a really good handoff, if you will.

But one of the things that happened during that time was I got a call from some friends in Florida, and I was talking to them about, "Yeah, the JRI gig is—is gonna be coming to an end here in a couple of months, and, you know, I'm thinking now's, you know, the time I'm gonna have to, you know, start getting—going on a practice." But, you know, I met a lot of people, so I felt—I felt pretty good about that.

But one of my friends said on the phone, "Well, that's interesting because I have a friend who's chair of a psychology department up in a little—quirky little college in Vermont, and they're looking for somebody who's got specialization in either sexual orientation issues or ethnic minority issues. And you've got both. Would you be willing to talk to her?"

And I said, "Sure, I guess, you know." [Laughs.] You know, I never thought of becoming an academic. And now it is twenty-five years later, and I'm the dean of Goddard College.

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

JAMES: Once again, my grand plan [laughs; coughs] changed, and once again, I've gotten off track. You asked about—[Laughs.]

MIHALY: No, no, not at all. This is all good. This is all good.

JAMES: [Laughs.]

MIHALY: Did you, by any chance, move the phone? It's gotten a little bit less clear in the last couple seconds.

JAMES: It's gotten what?

MIHALY: Oh, now you're back. It's all good. [Chuckles.]

JAMES: Oh, okay. Sorry.

MIHALY: No, no. It's all good.

JAMES: No, I had something in my throat. So—okay, so we moved to Massachusetts. It was one of the two states that at that time was still—you know, there were only two states that allowed us to adopt. So I—you know how I am. I—I make lists, and so I researched adoption agencies across the country that had good reputations, and there were seventy-some on my list. I had to call sixty-two before I had two that were willing to work with us.

One was a tiny little single-person agency run by a lesbian lawyer in Boston, and the other was a large agency that would work with us only in—for international adoptions, because at that time, while technically legal in Massachusetts, gay adoptions could still be challenged by any biological relative, no matter how distant. And the case law had, up to that time, supported the biological relatives. And that was a tough ethical decision for us, because Todd was, like, "Well, you know, if it's allowed, then let's do it."

And my position was, "No, I'm not willing to have the conversation with a child about why they have to go live with somebody else now, who they don't know, because they happen to be cousins or grandparents or something of their birth family." And I just wasn't willing to have that risk.

And so we decided to have our first adoption be international. And it went really well. Our social worker was really good, working with us, and when we were cleared to become—you know, be eligible by her organization, she said, "Okay, now we need to start talking about how to prepare for your trip to China." And I said, "Okay, what do I

pack?" And she said, "Well, that's not what we're talking about." [Chuckles.] I said, "Uh-oh. What?" She said, "You're gonna have to pass." I said, "Yeah. What do you mean?" [Chuckles.]

"You can't be calling Todd every day. You can't let anybody know that you're gay, because if it gets out, you have to assume all the Chinese around you speak English, because while many of them do, you never know who's who. And if they find out that we've brought a gay person to adopt, they will shut us down, and that's not just your adoption but everybody's adoption."

And so I felt this tremendous pressure to pass,—

MIHALY: Mmm.

JAMES: —which I didn't have a problem with except having to be careful about my communications with Todd. That was very difficult. But I went to China. Two weeks later, I came back, and when I knew we were past the point of Hawaii, flying from Hong Kong to San Francisco—so that I knew if we had technical trouble that didn't kill us, we would land in Honolulu, I went around to all of the other families with us, you know, and came out. And so they weren't surprised by, you know, who is this large fellow who is going to be hugging and kissing me and Greg in San Francisco [International] Airport?

So that's how we adopted Greg.

MIHALY: Yeah. What—what year was that, do you remember?

JAMES: That was January of '97.

MIHALY: Okay. And so, yeah, what was it like getting to the airport? I mean,—

JAMES: You mean coming back to San Francisco Airport?

MIHALY: Yeah, and meeting Todd—

JAMES: It was—well, the flight we were on had three other groups of adoptive American parents coming back from China, so this

[Boeing] 747 was packed with screaming infants. Along the way, three of the four bathrooms became inoperable. [Laughs.] So you've got an entirely packed plane. I just weeped for the poor people who were thinking they were getting on a fun flight from Hong Kong to San Francisco, who were *not* adopting. [Laughs.] The plane reeked. It was loud, and it was—it was horrible. [Laughs.]

So, you know, when we got to San Francisco, it—we just poured out of this plane with all of our, you know [chuckles], mess, and it was just so exciting to—to see the look on Todd's face as, you know, we rounded this corner, and I'm carrying Greg in, you know, this pouch thing on my front and dragging suitcases behind me.

And he started crying, and I started crying. Greg, of course, feeling me being upset, started crying, and it was just, you know, wonderful.

MIHALY: [Laughs.] Yeah.

JAMES: Yeah, it was. And I was never so relieved to hand over my son as I was to put that carrying thing on Todd and let him carry Greg for a while.

MIHALY: [Chuckles.]

JAMES: [Laughs.] But it was a wonderful experience. I loved being in China, and I really loved the people who would come up to me on the—the street. You know, I was always very careful about passing as straight, but I didn't follow the rules about staying in the hotel. I—Greg and I went all over the cities that we were in along the way, getting out of China.

We had to go to one city where the orphanage was, and then we went to another near the orphanage. We didn't go to the orphanage, but they brought the kids to us. And then to another city, where the embassy was, to do the paperwork, and then finally to Hong Kong. And in each city, Greg and I would go out at all hours to sample street food and to see the sights. And—and people would just come up to me, and—and we were told to dress the boys as—there was one other boy in our group—as girls because they were afraid

that some people would resent us taking boys out of that culture.

And I dressed him ambiguously. And yet people would ask, "Is that a boy?" And I would say yes, and brace myself, and to a person, they all thanked me. And here, I'm getting choked up again, because they were so happy that he was getting an opportunity to go have a different kind of life than he—he would have had there. And it was repeatedly, and without exception, very touching to me, the love that they had for this strange kid and this strange man doing this adoption. It was profoundly moving. I was so grateful for the warmth and the love that I felt from those people.

MIHALY: Yeah.

JAMES: So—so, yeah, it was a wonderful experience. And last week, Greg enlisted in the [U.S.] Army and is heading off for basic training soon, and after that, he will go and use his college education in computer sciences to be a nodal systems operator. And I am greatly relieved because the servers that support the nodes have to be air conditioned [chuckles], so he's going off to the Army, but he's going off to Army air conditioning. [Both chuckle.] So it's—you know, it was—it was only fair, as my dad said, you know, that, you know, I—I gave them the experience of coming out as gay, and he's given us the experience as an intellectual UU kid going into the Army. And I have to think he's going to be really good for them.

But it's one of those things that, you know, when I—it's funny how Dartmouth comes up in different things. When I've been talking to Greg and—and Todd—Todd's still not quite there to support Greg completely in his choice, but, you know, I remind Todd of some of the values that, you know, really made Dartmouth important to us, and they're the same values that Greg talks about that he's looking for in the Army. And that doesn't really ring true with Todd at the beginning of this process, but lately it has: the idea that you're doing your best for things that you really believe in.

And now I'm getting a message from the construction people. I'm going to call you back in just a moment, if that's okay.

MIHALY: Sounds great, yes. Thank you.

JAMES: Okay. I'll be right back. Okay, bye.

[Recording interruption.]

MIHALY: Awesome. So—so you guys have a second son as well. Is that right?

JAMES: Yes, Max [James-Herrmann]. Now, in the years after we brought Greg home, the case law changed.

MIHALY: Okay.

JAMES: And so, you know, when we felt we were ready to consider a second adoption, we felt, you know, stable enough with Greg and his development and, you know, addressing the issues that he came home with, we, you know, looked into the case law. We consulted with the family attorney that we had used before. And she, you know, advised that it *was* safe, that the courts had recently upheld for adoptive families in challenges by biological relatives. And in the situations where it was clear that the adoptive family was the better place for the child, the courts had upheld the adoptions. And so we felt safe moving forward with a domestic adoption.

And we had to go through a training program through the Department of Children—Children's Family Services or something like that—Children and Family Services, I think. And did that, and we had to meet with a social worker and talk about what we were willing to consider in terms of attributes a child would have and things like age as well as, you know, any challenges that the child might have.

You know, we only put a couple of stipulations on the—those attributes, that we wanted the child to be younger than Greg. We didn't want an older child coming in and sort of displacing his place, if you will, in the lineup. [Chuckles.] And we were willing to wait for a child who would be healthy. And we were told because of that we would have to wait a couple of years.

And that was fine. You know, we had had that meeting. We'd finished all the paperwork, and we'd begun our waiting and, you know, had made it real clear to Greg, who was I guess four at—no, he just turned five, I guess. And that it was going to be—you know, we were going to wait a couple of years before he would have a little brother or a little sister. And he was—he was fine with that.

And then there was a Thursday afternoon. It was about two thirty, and Todd was at work. He was at that time working for Children's Hospital. And I was working from home then as a frontline faculty, I think, at that time. I don't think I had become chair yet. No, I was still frontline faculty, I'm pretty sure. And picked Greg up from—what was he in? I guess he was still in kindergarten then.

We were minding our own business, and the phone rings about two thirty, and it's the social worker, and she—the first thing out of her mouth was, "I just want you to listen to this." [Laughs.] And she went on to describe a situation where a child coming out of the NICU, the neonatal intensive care unit, had been on the road with his social worker to a foster-to-adopt family. And they called the social worker while she was en route and expressed their concerns that they were not going to be up to caring for this child.

And the little boy was ten days old, had spent those ten days in NICU but was still three weeks premature and had a lot of issues. And I said, "Well, I don't think so, but let's get Todd on the phone, and let's just go through, you know, the process." And so fortunately, I was able to get Todd on the phone—you know, a three-way call with the social worker.

And she went through the process. She told us that by that time that the social worker had gotten back to their office and was making similar calls because if they couldn't place the child with a foster-to-adopt family, then he would go into emergency care and bounce from home to home every day or so until they did.

So everybody at Children's that Todd was working with knew that, you know, we were—had adopted one child from China, as had a number of them and were in line to adopt a

second child. And so when she'd gone through the—what little was known about Max at that time, we had all sorts of questions. And Todd let his folks know that we needed, you know, people with experience to come to his office and say, "What questions should we be asking?"

And so [chuckles] all of a sudden, I can hear this room full of nurses and physicians and who else, firing questions. And so here, I'm writing the questions down that we're asking our social worker. She's asking Max's social worker—she knew some of them; most of them she didn't. Some she, you know, was willing to call the hospital and ask.

And after about an hour, an hour and a half of that, it became clear that there was a lot of information we didn't know, and what little we did, didn't match with what we had said we were interested in, and we weren't quite sure what to do. And so we got the social worker off the phone. We got my parents on the phone and explained the situation briefly to them. And they were no help at all. They said, "We love you, and we'll support whatever decision you make." [Laughs.] Great. Thanks. [Laughs.]

So we got them off the phone, and he and I went through the list, you know, as we do. We went through the list of, you know, the pros and the cons and what matched and what didn't, and what matched was zero, and what didn't match was everything else. And I said to him, you know, "This is not feeling like a head decision. This is feeling like a heart decision."

And as soon as I said it, he said, "I want that baby." And as soon as he said it, I knew it was the right thing. And so Max and the two social workers were at the house thirty minutes before Todd could get home from Boston. And fortunately, they knew to bring stuff with them, because we had, of course, had torn down the nursery. The crib was in the attic, and all, you know, the baby stuff was—you know, that we kept was put away in the attic. And I didn't have any baby stuff.

And in the intervening—what?—thirty, forty minutes between when we hung up with the social workers, saying, "Yes, go ahead. Bring him on." and then getting there, I realized I had

to explain to Greg what was going to be happening. And I said to him, “You know, we’ve been talking about it being a couple of years, but actually you’re going to have a little brother today.” And he said, “You mean after Christmas?” And I said, “No, today.” “After my birthday.” “No, today.” And he said, “Well, when?” And I said, “It’ll be, you know, about thirty, forty minutes.” And he said, “Oh? Why do we have to wait so long?” [Laughter.]

Okay, you’re gonna be fine. Now I’ve got twenty-five minutes. What the hell am I gonna do? Because I can’t get the crib down out of the attic by myself. So I vacuumed what would become the nursery in a couple of days [chuckles]—several times in that twenty-five minutes.

Max spent his first night with us in a sweater box. He was a little over four pounds. You could literally hold him in one hand. It was—it was terribly frightening when we saw him, because he was just very, very tiny and very thin and very quiet. But that was seventeen years ago, and he’s now a healthy, strapping teenager with all the wonderful challenges that teenagers bring into your life [chuckles], but he’s our last. [Laughs.]

And so that’s how we became a family of four.

MIHALY: Yeah. Wonderful.

JAMES: Yeah. Well, what’s—what ends well—you know, I don’t know, what the hell is that saying, “All’s well that ends well”? [Both chuckle.]

MIHALY: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES: [Chuckles.]

MIHALY: Yeah. I mean, you kind of mentioned a couple of times throughout that story that Dartmouth sort of—Dartmouth values and Dartmouth other things keep coming back. What do you think, in retrospect,—like, how—how is your view of Dartmouth now, and what has changed over time?

JAMES: Oh. Well, I—my view of Dartmouth as a place that was instrumental in my becoming who *I* am remains a very

positive influence. Dartmouth was a place that challenged me in mostly supportive ways. The college, you know, did what it was supposed to do. It provided me with an opportunity to explore and evolve, you know, my intellectual life, my moral life, not only in ways I think that all colleges do for residential students but there was something special—I mean, and I'm saying this not just in, you know, retrospect of who I was then but also as somebody who's lived in a lot of different kinds of places as well, now, as an academic, myself. I mean, I see Dartmouth as one of those very special institutions that creates an ethos for its students. Or at least it did for me in my time there, of compassionate excellence.

The striving was important, but the journey was as essential as the outcomes. Yes, we all wanted to do amazing things, but at least as important as that accomplish was a sense of doing them well by one another and by doing things in the world to make it a better place, which is why it was so easy for me to—to go into the Peace Corps right afterwards.

And I know that that's not true for everybody who goes to Dartmouth. I had a very challenging experience at my very first alumni event when I got onto [Dartmouth] Alumni Council. I had a small group meeting with classmates. I was there representing DGALA [Dartmouth Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni/ae Association], and as I did for several years on Alumni Council.

And one of my classmates, who was there—I don't remember what he was representing, but he came up to me, and he said, "Yeah, I hear you're teaching now." And I said, "Yeah, over at Goddard." I was starting into why I really felt Goddard and Dartmouth had a lot of really good things in—in common. And he cut me off, and he said, "That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard of. They can't be paying you shit." And I was just stunned. I mean, he and I—you know, we knew each other. We weren't close friends or anything like that, but the idea that that's what he took, you know, from Dartmouth was appalling to me.

And I felt insulted for the institution. I—I—it—it really got my hackles up. And, you know, I just excused myself because it was not going to end well otherwise. I felt like he was being very disrespectful to the insti- —we were standing, you

know, in the Alumni Hall, and he's saying this, and I just felt like, *How dare you?* You know? And, yeah, I don't get paid shit; I'm a frontline faculty member. That's not the point, you know? [Laughs.] You know, how dare you do that at Dartmouth? You know, I just—I—I felt like, you know, *Your education was wasted on you,* you know? [Laughs.]

MIHALY: Yeah.

JAMES: And I know that that's, you know, just my being naïve and idealistic, but—

MIHALY: [Laughs.]

JAMES: —that's how I felt. That's okay with me. [Laughs.] That's how I get through the day.

I'm sorry. I feel like I went off track again.

MIHALY: No, not at all. That was exactly—no, not at all. [Chuckles.]

JAMES: Okay, good.

MIHALY: Yeah.

JAMES: Was there more to that question that you were asking? I just feel like there was something else that I didn't address.

MIHALY: No, I was just asking about your retrospective view of your experience at Dartmouth, but I think that—unless—is there anything else you want to say?

JAMES: Yeah. I—I think that—I had the opportunity to share a couple of important interactions with John [G.] Kemeny [president of Dartmouth from 1970 to 1981] while I was on campus, and I got to tell you, I think that he really helped me in that regard. And it was out of a conflict that he and I were having in *The* [*Dartmouth*] *D*. And it was—it was really a good example to me of what Dartmouth was about, because we were having this political conflict, and he repeatedly invited me to lunch to discuss it. And we did not end up seeing eye to eye, but we ended up being able to talk about it in really profound and—and—for me, at least, it was profound; for him, it was probably just another student, you know, lunch. [Chuckles.]

But I really appreciated the fact that he was taking time to have those conversations, because he could have very easily just sent me a note—you know, "Cut it out. I don't like what you're saying about the administration in *The D,*" or [laughs] something like that. But he didn't. And he was willing to have conversations.

MIHALY: Yeah.

JAMES: And it really made a difference to me that this—because here's this, you know, Hungarian fellow, who rose, you know, to one of the, you know, most prominent places in such a career, in a place that—you know, I know that there were a lot of alums in those days that did not appreciate him, and not just because of what he did but who he was.

And the fact that he was able to make Dartmouth more of itself, in terms of its own values, than a lot of the people around him, who were opposing his bringing women to the school or reaching out to Native American students, and the other things that he was doing was really moving to me. And he—I consider him a real example of the best of Dartmouth and, frankly, the best of America, that people of very different backgrounds and talents and perspectives can work together with respect and openness to constructively disagree. [A dog barks a few times.]

And it really made Dartmouth come alive for me in my—in my experience then and now, as—in my own career. I mean, I carry some of those conversations with him when I'm preparing for a difficult conversation with a set of students or even faculty, because—you know, I don't remember jokes really well, but I remember a couple of jokes he told about faculty—and not about specific faculty but about dealing with faculty. [Laughs.]

And, you know, I can remember, like, two psychology jokes and two academic jokes, and I remember one of his. [Chuckle.,] So it had to be meaningful because I can remember it. [Laughs.]

So it—Dartmouth has—and its values have been important to me, not just because it was a supportive and challenging

place in—in the best sense of the synergy of those two actions, of support and challenge, but it has led to my finding my—my husband of now thirty-one years—thirty-two—oh, he'll correct me when he hears this. [Chuckles.] Because our values matched, and we were in sync.

Now, we do not agree about everything, and that's the understatement of the day, but it's that ability to approach constructive conflict and important differences with respect and openness that was—maybe it didn't begin at Dartmouth, but it was certainly fostered and exemplified by some of the people at Dartmouth that were important to both of us. And Todd could tell you his own stories along those lines that I just shared with John Kemeny.

And I think that when we talk to our kids about Dartmouth, when—it comes up very naturally in difficult conversations about choices that they're making, because when Greg said that he wanted to go into the Army, that was not what we had anticipated or hoped for for him. But when he talked about *why* he wanted to go, it made perfect sense to me. Well, that's one of the rea- —you know, he's describing why I went to Dartmouth, why I went into the Peace Corps and why I should support *him*. And so it made it very easy once I heard why he wanted to go and what it meant to him, to serve others, to work in concert with like-minded people for values that I could relate to.

MIHALY: Got it. Yeah, that makes sense.

Is there anything else that I haven't touched on that you wanted to talk about today at all?

JAMES: Hmm. I wish Dartmouth as a community were more reflective—what you're doing with this project is an example of the kind of reflection I wish were happening more. Dartmouth does a lot of looking at itself in the mirror to make sure that things look okay. It doesn't do a lot of—of staring into the mirror, into its own eyes to understand itself in these important ways. And if any place is going to benefit from that, I think Dartmouth would—

MIHALY: Yeah.

JAMES: —because it has so much to offer in such an exploration and so much to learn.

There are a lot of places with very diverse faculty and students who—you know, where a sense of community is fostered, if not always maintained, but I think that there are a lot of us who have had a Dartmouth experience that could benefit from looking at how that has shaped us, through the kinds of questions that you've been asking me today.

And I don't see Dartmouth doing that. It did it in the seventies, when there were open conversations that were fostered by the administration and not just with students who were easy to have collected on campus but with alums as well, about what did it mean to change from an all-male institution to a co-ed institution.

MIHALY: Oh, one second.

[Recording interruption.]

MIHALY: Yeah, so I think you were just talking about how there had been a lot of open conversations in the seventies, when the institution was sort of switching from male—towards coeducation.

JAMES: Well, my point was that I think that Dartmouth would really benefit from more of this kind of—of project and having it be more communal. You know, I really do think that Dartmouth has something special and different to offer, and my concern is that in the rush for standing, compared to the other Ivies and schools in that tier, that Dartmouth is beginning to look like others. And that worries me. And I think that there is a strong tradition of self-reflection at the college.

It has changed tremendously in a number of ways over the course of the institution's life, and I would—and I believe it's time for some deep reflection on a communal level in order to prepare for what's coming in terms of the changing economy, the changing social structure that it's going to have to carry its place in if—if it's going to be something different, if it's going to, you know, do for itself what it does

for its students when it does its best job, that it needs to take that on very purposefully and openly. So.

MIHALY: Yeah, great.

Thank you so much. I think that I have had everything answered today that I—that I want to, unless there's anything else, but I really appreciate the time.

JAMES: Well, you're quite welcome. Thank you for doing this. I appreciate your taking part in the project and making it so easy on me.

MIHALY: [Laughs.] Yeah, well, it's been—it's been lots of fun to learn—to learn so much, so thanks so much.

JAMES: You're quite welcome.

[End of interview.]