R. Bruce Myers Jr., Tuck ’94
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[DANIEL A.] FISHBEIN: My name is Dan Fishbein, and I’m talking with [R.[Bruce Myers Jr. I’m in the Rauner [Special Collections] Library in Hanover, New Hampshire. My interview subject is in Toronto, Canada. The date of the interview is May 17th, 2018, and it is currently two o’clock p.m.

I’m hoping that we can start with you telling me about where you grew up and what your childhood was like.

MYERS: Sure, absolutely. I grew up in a small town in southwestern Pennsylvania, which, as I had mentioned to you, is perhaps more like West Virginia except in all but name. It was a town of 5,000 people. It was probably about halfway between Wheeling, West Virginia, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, so we had a large-ish city not that far away, forty-five minutes, maybe, by car in those days. But it was—it was a small town and with all that would go with that: a fairly sort of sheltered environment in—in many respects.

And I—I had grown up thinking I was an only child, and the only child of two only children at that. It was clear to me that my family kept secrets, and what I discovered later in life was that I was one of the secrets. It turns out that I’m one of six children. My mother that I grew up with is indeed my mother. My—the father I grew up with was—was not my biological father. But I came to learn that in—in adulthood. But growing up, more to the point, it was—it was just the three of us. Small family, small town.

And my mother’s family was originally from Kentucky and had moved to Michigan around the time of the Second World War [World War II] and then on to Pittsburgh. And my legal father’s family was from—partially from Pennsylvania and partially from northern Ontario. And I came to find out that my biological father was from Kentucky as well.

So rooted, at least historically, in sort of the general region of Appalachia but with the big city of Pittsburgh, which was our amount of civilization not too far away.

FISHBEIN: Just to keep my details straight, what was the name of the town that you grew up in, and what sort of environment would you say that that town presented for its gay community?

MYERS: Yeah, the name of the town was Glen Osborne [Pennsylvania], which is a dot on a map. It's one of the—now it's probably considered a western suburb of Pittsburgh. The growth has come out far enough around that. And I remember—to this point, I remember asking my mother—I was probably in grade school—and I had heard the word "homosexual" for the first time, and I remember asking her what that meant.

And keep in mind, this is probably the mid-sixties in a small town in that part of the world. And she explained to me that it was a man who wanted to be a woman or a woman who wanted to be a man and told me that [chuckles] if I were to encounter such people, I was not to make fun of them, that it was a disability, just as you would not poke fun of someone in a wheelchair of whatnot. You were not to—you were not to make fun of homosexuals.

Now, for her time, considering that she, herself, was from Kentucky, it was a fairly enlightened view, although we now know that it was just totally wrong, up one side and down the other. But that was the—that was the image that I had, growing up. And in our little town, I used to say we all knew who the homosexuals were. There were, there were four of them in a town of 5,000. There was the hairdresser and the florist, and they lived together, and there were the two women who owned the hardware store.

And that fit into the paradigm that my mother had sketched out for me. And in a world before *Will & Grace* and lots of conversation and articles in newspapers, you know, that was the background against which I had to figure out who I was. A long way of apologizing, and I guess, in a way, for having taken so long to—to put it all together because I did come out somewhat late.

FISHBEIN: How did you view your sexuality while you were growing up?

MYERS: Yeah. I—I—I didn’t think I was gay. I should have known. I had sort of very intense friendships with classmates as I went through school. They were not physical relationships in the least, and I think in most cases the people that I had these intense friendships with were—were straight. And I—I always just assumed it was because I didn’t have siblings. I didn’t have brothers, that it was—it was not unusual for me to—to have these sort of intense friendships as sort of sibling substitutes.

And it wasn’t really until probably my mid- to late-twenties that, you know, on the heels of a—of a failed marriage to a woman, that I really understood that—I’d always had a sense that I was different, but I had a very hazy sense of what that difference was. And it—it took—it took a—a long time for me to get clarity around that.

FISHBEIN: You mentioned that gay people in your community stood out to you. Were you acquainted with any of these people whose sexuality you recognized?

MYERS: No, I wouldn’t say—yeah, I would say that there were teachers I had in school who meant a lot to me, and I came to find out in later years (these were sort of junior high school teachers)—came to find out in later years that they *were* gay. But it was not something that was part of my consciousness at the time.

FISHBEIN: You wrote that you went to high school at St. Mark’s [School], which is actually next to the town that I grew up in in suburban Massachusetts.

MYERS: I did.

FISHBEIN: When you moved north, did you find that cultural attitudes towards sexuality had shifted at all?

MYERS: Yeah, it was certainly a step in the right direction. It was a boarding school. We weren’t allowed off campus that much. I did get into Boston [Massachusetts] a time or two. But it was a small community and, in its own way, sort of—sort of sheltered. I will say that that's probably—again, it was an all-boys school at the time (not anymore). You know, certainly from classmates heard lots of conversation around being gay—I mean, usually hurled as a—as an insult, but—whereas it had just not been something that was ever really talked about tremendously in my home town, largely because of the overriding presumption of heterosexuality normality. There was just the assumption that there—there weren't any.

There, it—I heard more conversation around it. And I do remember a time when I was a senior, that one of the younger boys in my dorm developed a crush on the hockey captain and was very open about how [chuckles] much in love with this guy he was, which sort of took us all aback. I remember the headmaster calling us together and, again, in a—in a tone not radically dissimilar from my mother's, just slightly better educated, said, you know, "These things happen. We should just, you know, rise above them and not call attention to it. And, you know, don't make fun." He was a very bright child, the younger boy, and possibly, you know, what we maybe would now say a bit on the spectrum, so I don't think he really had the editing function that others would have, which is why he was so open about how he felt.

But that was—was an interesting experience for me because I saw for the first time someone who was being very natural and thought there was absolutely nothing in the world wrong with telling the whole school [chuckles] about how he felt about the captain of the hockey team. So it began to broaden—

[Recording glitch at 10:59. Recording resumes at 11:15 but pertinent conversation resumes at 11:34.]

FISHBEIN: Okay, I'm starting our recording again. To just reiterate, we've been talking about—I asked you at the beginning about your hometown, and then I've started to ask you some about your boarding school experience. And I wanted to ask you, what kind of inspired you to, you know, leave Pennsylvania and go to the boarding school?

MYERS: Yeah. It was a feeling—I would say my mother had a lot of ambition for me, and there was some concern that local high schools in that part of the world wouldn't—if I had continued on, I wouldn't have been able to get into a decent college. And so that, plus my parents—from their side, that was their interest in exploring the concept of a boarding school. From my standpoint, their marriage was beginning to deteriorate, and it was—I was happy to be out of it, in terms of getting away from them. I thought that, you know, going away, maybe they could figure out what they needed to do more easily than if I was underfoot.

So by mutual agreement, we all agreed that I would—I would go to a boarding school and try to be in a more competitive academic environment, and I—I think I picked the school out of a catalog, some sort of a directory of boarding schools. And I probably picked it because it was small. A lot of them seemed so big to me that it scared me being from such a small town.

FISHBEIN: So it wasn't necessarily the—I know you said that St. Mark's had a little bit more of a hospitable attitude towards the gay community. That wasn't really factored into your decision at all?

MYERS: No, it wasn't something that I would have—at least in any sort of a conscious way, have picked up, I think, either from the promotional literature that came in the mail or from the catalog entry. I just stumbled into it. And—yeah. And so it was—it was definitely, you know, sort of part of—part of a learning curve, which increased when I got to college.

FISHBEIN: I also want to ask you when—when did you kind of start to form relationships with your siblings—you know, kind of realized this family secret that hadn't really dawned on you when you thought you were an only child?

MYERS: Yeah. That was—that was quite late, actually, maybe along the lines of five years ago.

FISHBEIN: Oh, wow!

MYERS: So it was something that—yeah, I mean, very late in—not very late in life, but late in life, I mean, I discovered that there was a whole family out there. And they had been looking for me. I didn't even know to—to look for them. And it was—it was a remarkable experience, not what this call is about, but it turns out—you know, I have four brothers, and one of them is gay. And we all look vaguely alike. And so it's just very kind of wonderfully freaky, somebody who grew up being all alone and thinking that he was different.

FISHBEIN: I also wanted to ask you—you mentioned on the form that you initially filled out for this interview, that you're biracial but you don't think that's really had too much effect on you in terms of racial discrimination. Could you elaborate on, you know—

MYERS: Yeah. Yeah. I have—and, you know,—and I think I—I explained on the form, because it was asking racial identity, and I said it's a tricky question for me because, you know, for all intents and purposes I look completely European, that there's nothing about the way I look that would indicate anything other than a completely European background.

My non-European heritage is an aboriginal—well, in North America it would be called American Indian, but an aboriginal tribe from north Asia. So depending upon how the genetics get screened I either get screened, out as partially north Asian or east Asian. Sometimes it shows up at Middle Eastern, but it's—their homeland was a area that—you know, just north of Azerbaijan in really sort of the heart of central Asia.

And it came through my mother's mother, and that side of the family is very dark. I mean, not so much in their complexion but certainly in their hair color. And most of my—the relatives on my maternal grandmother's side—if you saw them, you probably wouldn't guess Asian, but you certainly would start guessing things like Greek or Spanish or perhaps Middle Eastern.

And I do have—or when I had hair, it was—it was black. But I don't have really the kind—I don't present as—as, I think, other than European, so—I'm very proud of the fact that I'm not 100 percent white. I think that's kind of cool, personally. But I didn't feel it quite right to just sort of check the white box and move on without saying much.

FISHBEIN: Do you think that this kind of identity contributed at all to these kinds of feelings of difference that you felt as a kid? Or—yeah, can you—if you can just explain, you know, what you—what you might mean by that term a little bit more. I'm a little bit unsure.

MYERS: Yeah. Yeah. That's a very perceptive question, because—again, my—my legal father was blond and blue-eyed, and my—my mother, like most of the rest of her side of the family, was—was somewhat dark. And she had cousins who lived in the same town, and they were even darker. So, again, you know, this is the 1960s. It's technically Pennsylvania, but for all intents and purposes, it's—it's Appalachia.

And the phrase that I heard a lot as a child was "got hit with the tar brush," which was a southern expression that meant there was non-white ancestry in that family. And nobody knew exactly how or why, but you could tell, or it was rumored that someone in their family tree was something other than white, and you could see it in their looks.

And it tended to be some- —and needless to say it's something pejorative, but it also was something that was more readily said about people at a lower socioeconomic level. And in the little world that I grew up in, my father's family was initially sort of high on the pecking order. It was nothing fancy, in the great scheme of things, but in the terms of that little world, my father came from a family on the right side of the railroad tracks, and my mother came from a family on the wrong side of the railroad tracks, so to speak. And the "hit with the tar brush" thing just kind of underlined that.

So growing up, I had this—I mean, we didn't—at that point, prior to genetic testing—we didn't really know how or why. My mother didn't want to even think about looking into it. She was afraid of what she'd find. And, of course, that was one of the secrets I was trying to uncover, and I eventually, when genetic testing got farther along, I was able to—to nail it.

But it did contribute to this sense that I was—I was different. And the outsider looking in experience is something that I really associate with in my childhood and, for that matter, you know, most of my life until I got into middle age.

FISHBEIN: What has that feeling of difference meant for you? Like, can you describe that emotion a little bit more, be it in terms of, you know, racial difference or just general kind of feeling like a, like you said, outsider looking in?

MYERS: Yeah. I think for me, I would describe it as a vague sense of unease that just follows you along wherever you go and corresponding to that, a desire to edit and to selectively present who you are and how you behave in a way so as to try to at least be, you know, accepted into the group. And that's a—you know, a little sort of philosophical, but wherever I went, whether it was being sent to a boarding school, and then I went from the boarding school, which was very small, and which I loved quite a bit, actually—get bounced into an Ivy League university, which was like a whole 'nother universe of strange for someone with my background.

That—that wherever I went, I—I—what I carried with me was this—not only this sense of difference but this—just being slightly ill at ease. No matter [chuckles], you know, where I was or whatever I was doing, I didn't quite feel like I belonged there. And as a way of compensating for that, I would study whatever environment that I was in and try to adapt to it, as a teenager, as a young man in my twenties. And it really—I think the—the process of being my own person and not trying to conform to what was around me necessarily didn't really begin until late twenties, when—when I came out.

FISHBEIN: You mentioned the transition that you made between a boarding school and Princeton [University]. Can you talk about that a little bit more? What was being at Princeton like for you in the early seventies, when you were there?

MYERS: Yeah, absolutely. It was a time of great change there, as an institution. My guess is that probably there were elements that I'm gonna say about Princeton that were probably also true of Dartmouth in the early seventies. But certainly the Princeton of the early 1970s was an institution that was—was changing fairly fast.

The first class—the fully coeducational class, a class that had been there co-ed right from the beginning—I believe that first class graduated in ’71 or ’72. I think the school went co-ed in ’69, but they started going co-ed by accepting transfer students. So the first four-year, all co-ed class was ’72. I arrived in the fall of ’75.

The last of the returning Vietnam War veterans were seniors when I was a freshman. The Gay Student Union, which is now called something else, was founded the fall of my freshman year by a classmate of mine, a brave thing to do as a freshman, I thought. And visible minorities were only just beginning to be enrolled in sort of significant numbers.

So the dominant flavor of the place was very white, very Christian, very straight, very WASPy [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant]. But it was definitely in transition to something else. So in some ways, the sort of institutional environment that I found myself in in the fall of 1975, you know, mirrored a little bit of what was going on in my own head, although I didn’t realize it at the time.

But that’s—and that was the place where I encountered socioeconomic difference on a grand scale for the first time. St. Mark’s, which was only 200 students in the whole school, had a whole series of rules and regulations that were designed to try to limit the ability to show class or status. So we had to dress a certain way, and it was within a narrow band of what was appropriate. We couldn't bring cars to campus. The amount of electronics you could bring with you was—was carefully regulated. And just the general spirit of the place at that time, at least, was that if you bragged about, you know, your family’s home on Martha’s Vineyard [Massachusetts] or what have you, you would probably be told to—to can it.

So that, you know, when I was there, unless a classmate took me home, you know, for a long weekend or something, I never really knew where my classmates were coming from or what their lives were like. But at Princeton, all of that was fully on display, and you understood clearly who was—you know, on one end of the spectrum and who was at the other.

And the thing [chuckles] that confused me a great deal when I got there is that invitations to cocktail parties, which I associated with my parents, not with, you know, eighteen-year-olds—invitations to cocktail parties would get slipped under the door of my dorm room, and from people that I had never—I mean, it was freshman year. I hadn't met any of these people. And what took me a while to realize was that people were going through the—the "Facebook," *The Freshman Herald*, the, you know, compendium of all freshmen. And they were just picking out by high school, so that if you had gone to a New England boarding school, they assumed you were one of them [chuckles], and the invitation to the cocktail party on some terrace somewhere, you know, got slipped under your door. And, you know, needless to say, the kids who had gone to public high schools and whatnot weren't.

So it was—it was a really eye-opening experience and didn't do a whole lot for my sense of being at ease, because I knew that—although I had stumbled into going to this particular boarding school, which prior to picking out of a catalog I never heard of—you know, I didn't realize that that would have meaning other than, you know, helping me get into a good college somewhere.

So I found myself sort of thrown in with a group that I immediately felt sort of disconnected to because it was, you know, very much, you know, a house in the Hamptons [on Long Island, New York] and summering here and there and skiing in Switzerland sort of a crowd, and it was—it was very confusing and I probably had as much social stress there as I had academic stress. And there was plenty of academic stress.

FISHBEIN: So I'm assuming you would have, at Princeton, identified as being from a low socioeconomic background? I didn't ask you what your parents did, but—

MYERS: No. I mean, my father sold insurance, and my mother worked for the telephone company. Neither had gone to college. I would have described myself as, you know, being sort of from a working-class background. You know, we weren't really the country club type of family, and it wasn't—again, it's a small town in a not particularly prosperous part of the world, so that—yeah, I would have—I don't know how I would have explained myself or thought of myself. But I—I understood that, you know, I was swimming in a different pond.

And I felt that more at Princeton than I did at St. Mark's because there were lots of affluent people at St. Mark's, but, again, the—the ethos of the place was such that all that got downplayed so that I'm just sort of a clueless teenager, so I didn't really pick up on it. But it was really up in your face when I got to Princeton.

FISHBEIN: I want to ask you more about this kind of Vietnam War backdrop that you mentioned. Was there any kind of, like, change in attitude between the kind of small Pennsylvanian town that you grew up in and at Princeton University in regards to, you know, what was going on in the United States at kind of the national level by that time?

MYERS: Yeah. The—the little town that I grew up in—you know, the older brothers of classmates had been sent to Vietnam. Most came back. Some didn't. And then when I got to—the draft was suspended my first—either my first year at St. Mark's or my last year back in Glen Osborne. And then Saigon [Vietnam] fell in April of my senior year at St. Mark's.

So the two years that I was at—and I was only there for two years—the two years that I was at St. Mark's were one of sort of shifting from a very patriotic, small-town, middle America kind of a world, although my mother was very vocally critical of the war, you know, at the dinner table when I was a little kid.

And St. Mark's, of course, was a very different environment. It was very sort of anti war. You know, all the faculty were opposed to it, and most students were opposed to it, so that it was a shift, but it was, you know, very much consistent with a lot of the things my mother had been telling me all along.

And so by the time I got to Princeton, I was very much in sort of the St. Mark's mode of the war was terrible, how lucky I was that I escaped, you know, narrowly being—you know, by a couple of years, the possibility of getting drafted. And I made the mistake at a bar my freshman year of mouthing off about what, you know, a complete waste the Vietnam War was. And I was within earshot of a senior, who was also a very large man, who had [chuckles]—who was one of the last returning of the Vietnam War vets. And he had a very different take on it [chuckles], and I nearly got the shit beat out of me, were it not for the intervention of some of my own classmates, who hurriedly got me out of the bar before I got pounded.

So it was—but generally Princeton in—you know, in the fall of 1975—I think most of America had realized the war was a mistake, and so I sort of lived through a bit of a transition from home to school and then on to college, and my own views about it changed a great deal as the time went on.

FISHBEIN: So I'm a—I'm a history major, and I love this stuff. I want to ask you—I think two things that kind of changed in the country around the Vietnam War were maybe America's attitudes towards race and the civil rights on one hand and also their attitudes towards masculinity and LGBT issues. Did you kind of see your own opinions of those two categories changing around the same time, between, like, St. Mark's and Princeton, too? I know you mentioned that one of your classmate's had started the LGBTQ group at Princeton. Did you have any relationship to that?

MYERS: I didn't. I'm in touch now, you know, via Facebook with the classmate that founded the group. I would have been too scared to speak to him when we were at college together. I remember, not as a freshman but more as a senior, the gay student group would have dances, and they held the dance on the top floor of an administrative tower. There must have been a series of conference rooms or something up there.

And it was, by design—I think the university administration let them have the dances there because it was too far in the air for you to see [chuckles] who was there, and because it was a university administration building, there were, you know, a night watchman and guards there, so it was a safe and inconspicuous place for people to—you know, gay people to gather because of it was a time when you had to, you know, worry about safety.

But I remember going to the administrative tower and walking around it, trying to get up the courage to go in as a senior and just not being able to do it, which is, you know, on the one hand, slightly shameful, but it was—it was where I was at the time.

FISHBEIN: So, yeah, it seems like you had maybe experienced some development between your childhood, where, you know, you felt different but didn't really know that it was homosexuality and when you kind of maybe had, you know, owned up to that a little bit more at Princeton. Is that kind of correct?

MYERS: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: Like, your kind of views on your sexuality changed through your college process.

MYERS: Yeah. It—it did change. I was still kind of behind the curve. It—you know, a piece of the confusion was—again, this was a world where the male to female ratio was probably—and it's somewhere between two to one and three to one—so a lot of guys had trouble getting dates. I didn't. But the reason why I didn't have trouble getting dates, I came to find out later, was that I had a reputation amongst the women on campus of "he's a nice guy. He's pleasant company. He'll take you out. You'll have dinner, and he'll bring you back. He'll kiss you on your cheek and say, 'Thank you very much. And you don't have to worry about him."

I was a safe person to ask if you needed an escort to a party or something of that sort, that you didn't have to—you know, that—I think my female classmates understood who I was at some level much better than I did. But the fact that I was popular with girls wasn't doing anything to sort of clarify the issue. And, again, I should have—I *should* have known, because I had no particular desire to be—to get any of them into bed. They were just nice people, and I enjoyed hanging out with them.

So that probably should have told me that—and by this point, I was playing rugby, and certainly in the locker rooms I was hearing all kinds of conversation about, you know, who did what to whom last Saturday night, and, you know, it was quite obvious that, you know, I didn't feel that way. And, again—so I think there were lots of signs that were pointing in the right direction, but that I just chose to ignore.

But in my senior year I had my first physical experience with—with another man, and that began to crystalize things. It still took another, you know, eight, nine years beyond that to get fully crystalized, but that—you know, that was when it began to crack for me.

FISHBEIN: What was that first experience like, if you don't mind me asking?

MYERS: No. It was—it was New York, New Year's Eve, and it was a very nice guy, who was at Vassar [College]. And I think we met at a bar, so it wasn't anything particularly, you know, unusual, but it was—and I think he was kind of stunned that I was such a—I think it was my first time at a gay bar. I think I told him that. He thought that was kind of hilarious, that I was, you know, nearly twenty-two and, you know, "What have you been doing with yourself?" And it became clear as the evening progressed that, you know, being in a gay bar wasn't my first time for—it wasn't just my first time for being in a gay bar, it was my first time for a lot of things that we were doing. But he was very nice and very patient and sort of piloted me through it.

But—and after that I, of course, immediately went right back to the closet, but, you know, once you've crossed that line, I think it's hard to completely tuck that away, and so that was where I would sort of date the sort of beginning of my coming-out process.

FISHBEIN: What was it—did you have any fear about going to that gay bar? I know [the] Stonewall [riots] would have only taken place—

MYERS: Oh, gosh, yes.

FISHBEIN: —a couple of years prior to that in New York City, so, you know, what was kind of your relationship like with these maybe national events that were unfolding, you know, and the LGBT right movement really kind of taking off around that time that you were at Princeton?

MYERS: Yeah. I mean, Stonewall—I was—I was twelve when Stonewall happened in ’69 —

FISHBEIN: Okay.

MYERS —and it made the front page of the Pittsburgh newspaper, as I remember. And that may have been what caused me to ask my mother, “What’s a homosexual?” But the explanation that she gave me, which I told you about—you know, the picture I was seeing on the front page of the paper, which was men in women’s clothing, which, of course, they took pictures of the drag queens—that—that just kind of, sort of reinforced this notion of people who wanted to be a different gender.

And that was con-—but by the time I got to Princeton—let’s see here—New Year’s Eve—that would have been the New Year’s Eve ’78-’79, so it would have been ten years. But still, I was—I was petrified going into a—a gay bar. And by this point, I had walked in the Helm administrative tower three or four times, and chickened out, so I remember thinking, *You know, I’m an hour away from school. You know, there might be somebody from school in there who’ll see me, but I’ll just take that chance.* And I look back on that and think, *Wow, what a frightened little rabbit I was.* But I suspect there were a lot of people at that time who had similar experiences.

FISHBEIN: Did you have any fear then about the AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome] crisis? Like, had that dawned on you yet?

MYERS: No. And my class actually is—at Princeton—is one of the hardest hit by AIDS. I—I—I think—I mean, I may have the dates slightly off, but I—I think by the time we graduated in 1979, in June of ’79, I’m pretty sure the virus was already in certainly New York. And, you know, New York was where most of my classmates went after graduation if they weren’t going to grad school right away. And by our tenth reunion, a number had already gotten sick, and in the years probably between ’85 and ’95, you know, a large number of people that I—I knew were—died.

So that it wasn’t part of my consciousness then. By the time I was reading about what at first was called “the gay cancer” in newspapers, I was in rural Virginia in law school, and so in some respects, having opted to go back to the mountains for law school, you know, it—it—it protected me in a way that I wouldn't have—I just—I understood only in hindsight.

FISHBEIN: I want to ask you about a phrase you had mentioned when you first started talking about your time at Princeton. You had said the kind of changes taking place there, away from, you know, the white, straight, Christian, WASPy students to be a little bit more inclusive kind of mirrored what's going on in your own head, to use your words. What—what—what do you mean by that "mirroring" expression?

MYERS: Yeah. Yeah, that's a good que- —it—it—I think I had been—I had grown up with a sense of self that was, you know, *I'll—I'll own my role, and having created it or it being, you know, my sense of self*—but it largely was a product of my parents' ambitions for me and the environment that I had grown up in. So I certainly, in the fall of 1975, when I went into Princeton, I would not have—even if I had been able to access the information, I would not have admitted that I had any non-white ancestry. I, you know, was still an active churchgoer. I would have gotten very uncomfortable—(we'll come back to this in a minute)—if you had suggested that my background was anything other than Christian. You know, thought of myself as straight.

You know, that—that's sort of the construct of who Bruce Myers was in the fall of 1975 and the construct of who I was in the spring of 1979, four years later. It had—had evolved. I mean, it was still needed to evolve further, and, you know, probably even today it still needs to evolve further, but it was beginning to be more aware of difference and aware of people who had led different lives and being, you know, at the margin. It was very much sort of at the margin—getting more comfortable with the notion that—that *I* was different, and being able to—to think about that a little bit. It was still frightening, and it was still something I would avoid. The real sort of embrace, embracing of my difference came—came post Princeton. But the loosening up began—

I will say that—you know, the comment I made about Christian—I was raised as a Presbyterian, because my mother was a Presbyterian. My real father's family, the

Myerses, had historically been Jewish but had assimilated. And, again, in—in our little town, everyone knew that, you know, my great-grandparents were Jewish, and then my grandfather not so much, and my father hardly at all.

But that notion of—notwithstanding the fact that I was showing up at the Presbyterian Sunday school every Sunday morning—it was this sort of element of religious difference, that—again, I didn't really feel it much until I got to Princeton, where people asked me outright, "Well, aren't you Jewish?" And I—it's a complicated question for me, once again. But I would probably just say, "No."

And I remember one classmate saying, "Of course you are." You know, "All you people convert eventually." And it was just [chuckles] the most heinous thing I think that I remember being said to me at Princeton. But notwithstanding all of the things that Princeton was, the old Princeton that was still in place in 1975 was deeply anti-Semitic, and it was in the process of evolving to something else. And I was in the process of trying to sort of come up with a narrative of who I was that I would feel was truthful and authentic, and not hide at the same time.

FISHBEIN: You mentioned that your mom had an explanation for homosexuality that she gave you when you were growing up. Did you hear anything about gay people when you were *at* church and through that Christian identity that you had before kind of questioning it in college?

MYERS: No. I don't remember—I don't remember the subject of gays or lesbians being discussed at all in the Presbyterian church in my little hometown, nor, for that matter, you know, from the pulpit, at St. Mark's, which was Episcopalian. I don't think, you know, I was involved in student youth groups, Catholic groups in college. I don't remember that being—you know, the culture wars were to come later. And—so that the—again, I might just not be remembering correctly? But I don't remember having to hear sort of vicious homophobic diatribes coming from a religious context.

That—that, I really do associate with the—the—the 19- — late eighties, as when—when I was living in Virginia at that point. And it was very top of mind at that point in my life. You were hearing a lot about it. But not so much before.

Again, it was just ignored. I think that that was the—you know, part of what my mother was trying to tell me is, you know, "Polite people just don't acknowledge this, and you just look the other way." And that seemed to be the—the dominant motif.

FISHBEIN: Let's move on to that time when you were living in Virginia. So you graduated Princeton in '79 and then went to Washington and Lee [University] Law School after that. What was that transition like?

MYERS: It was in some respects like going home again. Washington and Lee is in a town of 5,000 people in the Shenandoah Valley, about forty-five minutes from the West Virginia border, so it mirrored, in many respects, where I had grown up, only there, we were in Pennsylvania, forty-five minutes from West Virginia. Here, now, we're in Virginia.

But they were very similar places. I felt very comfortable. I had a great time. I had lots of good friends. I did not have a particularly active social life, but it was law school, so not many people did.

And it was there that I met a funny, bright young woman who had gone to Smith [College], who understood vaguely that she wasn't like other girls, which seemed to mirror my understanding that I wasn't like other boys. And so we ended up going out, and we ended up getting married. You know, as things have progressed along, while I would have been somewhat sort of unsure about exactly how I would, you know, put a pin in my sexuality, I—I might have been willing to admit to being maybe bisexual at that point. I hadn't had a lot of experience with women, nor she with men.

And the marriage didn't last very long. It did produce two children. And my coming out was, in many respects, a non-issue for her. She said she never would have married me if she thought I was straight. [Laughs.]

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

MYERS: We remain good friends. I'm not exactly sure how she would describe her—her sexuality. You know, it's not for—not for me to describe. But suffice it to say that we've remained good friends and have remained partners in the parenting of our two children, but the marriage itself—the friendship endured; the marriage was not a success, partially because it just put both of us sort of face front with the notion that this isn't just, you know, a sit-com or a movie, where we get to play people in our house with a picket fence. You know, there are expectations of intimacy that go along [chuckles] in a marriage, and neither one of us was really keen on that.

FISHBEIN: Do you think that was because of your sexual identity that you maybe couldn't fit into that role?

MYERS: Yeah, absolutely. And that, I think—you know,—and, again, it's, you know, my coming out of the closet was rather—you know, I wasn't so much one of those few that sort of kicked the door open as I cracked it and peeked out and then shut it and then cracked it a little bit more and eventually sort of slowly opened it.

But I ended up going to therapy in my late twenties, to try to understand why it was that—and it sounds like such a naïve question—why it was that I really was quite fond of this woman, and yet I didn't really want to have sex with her. And I was—I should have been equally concerned with the fact that she didn't really want to have sex with me, but I was more wrapped up in it from—from my side.

And that was very helpful, and that sort of, I think, began speeding the process along. Once I got into therapy, I was willing to sort of look at the issue sort of head on for the first time and really sort of try to ask myself honestly, *Okay, in—in terms of sexuality, who am I?* And being willing to—to look at the—the possibility of—of answering it truthfully and then acting upon that.

FISHBEIN: What do you think kind of led to you being in that position, where you felt comfortable asking those questions that you might not have asked, you know, earlier in your life?

MYERS: Yeah. Well,—great question. You know, I—I—I think at some level, I felt that I was a failure as a husband or that I wasn’t doing this right, this husband thing. I mean, we got married on a Saturday afternoon, and on Wednesday afternoon, the Wednesday following, we looked at each other and I think—I can’t remember which one of us said it, but we—one of us said, “You know, if we don’t consummate the marriage, are we really still married?” [Chuckles.] And we both had the vague notion that in order for it to be a real marriage, you actually had to have sex, that if you didn’t, it could get annulled or something.

So eventually, like, Wednesday, we decided to, like, you know, get brave and—and—and do the deed, you know. And that—that, in and of itself, should have been a major red flag to both of us that we had not—both of us were not on the right path. But we—and as we went further along the—the—we weren’t married that long, but as the years roll on, I just realized that the lack of—the lack of intimacy in my marriage was making me think, *I’m just doing something wrong.*

It also was the loneliest place I’ve ever been, notwithstanding the fact that I—I liked her, and we got along. We were great roommates. We got along just fine. It was a very lonely place being in a relationship that was supposed to be intimate but wasn’t. And I think the combination of loneliness and some misguided guilt on my part was what led me into therapy in the first place.

FISHBEIN: So you mentioned that your coming out experience was kind of like you cracking open the door a little bit, peeking out, and then going back in, and it seems to me like you were saying that kind of at the end of your time at Princeton—you had, you know, gone to some gay bars in New York, and then after that, you decide to, you know, move back to maybe a little bit more conservative of a Appalachian town for law school. Do you kind of see that as part of this trend, too? Like, what a—why did you, you know, choose to go somewhere like your home when maybe you had some ambivalence—

MYERS: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: —about that, if you did.

MYERS: Yeah. That's a—that's a great observation, and actually I'd never thought about that. But I—I—I definitely wanted to get off the East Coast and had the no- —I wanted to go back to the mountains. And I hadn't necessarily thought about that as part of my hesitancy to more fully come out, but I think you're right. I mean, I think that it—it probably at an unconscious level had to have played into the choice of—because I could have gone to law schools in more urban areas, and I chose, you know, one of the most remote law schools, you know, in the eastern United States and one that had itself only recently gone co-ed, and the college it was attached to was still all male.

So it was a—a very male-centered environment, and, you know, I think was still trying to sort of figure out what—what masculinity meant, and I've had acquaintances along the line who are today sort of out gay men who, you know, back in the day went to a military academy or something of that sort. And, you know, I think—I think there is a draw for people who are confused about their sexuality in going to an environment which is where the definition of what it is to be a man is—is very tightly defined. And I think that was part of what was going on there.

FISHBEIN: I just want to be cognizant of time here and make sure that we have ample opportunity to talk about you experience at Dartmouth, so after you graduated law school, it looks like you spent about ten years doing some work for, I believe, Bank of America then? Is that correct?

MYERS: Yup. Yup. Yeah, it is correct. I practiced law for eight months and twenty-six days. I liked it that much, and I had an opportunity [chuckles] at around the nine-month mark to go work for a bank, and I leapt at it because being a lawyer just struck me as being mind-numbingly boring. It's a wonderful profession, if that's where your headed; it just wasn't right for me.

And so I went to work for a bank and worked in a bank in Norfolk, Virginia, which coincided, for the most part, with my marriage. And, you know, there was nothing—the—the—the progress that I made while I was there was in therapy, that—my outward life did not change much. I worked for the bank, and, you know, I was married, I had kids, blah, blah, blah.

But there was a lot going on underneath the surface in terms of the therapy that was going on, and—but things didn't really change in a more outward and more visible way until I went to Dartmouth in 1992 for grad school, again.

FISHBEIN: How do you divorce your wife by the time you went to Dartmouth? Or—

MYERS: We divorced in 1994. Again, two little kids. We were still friends. So she actually followed me to Hanover, and—so that she and the kids could be there and they could see me, and she stayed in Hanover after I graduated, for a year or two, and then eventually she moved to the Boston area as well. And so we—you know, until I moved to Toronto, we—we lived in close proximity to each other, which facilitated the parenting aspect.

So we hadn't divorced yet. We had clearly had the hard conversations, but ultimately, she decided to come with me to Hanover, and so she was there, you know, in the—in the vicinity as I was starting to date, and that was interesting. But—yeah, so that's that story. I have not led a tidy life, Daniel [laughter]. There's all sorts of aspects of this that just people scratch their head and say, "Wait a minute. You—you—you broke up with your wife because you were coming out of the closet, and she moved with you"—but, yeah, that's the way it went.

FISHBEIN: No, I'm [laughs] not passing any—any judgments over here. One thing that I did want to ask you was, you know, I think Dartmouth often has a perception of being a very masculine campus that I'm sure was a lot more of a feeling around here in the nineties than it is today. What had you maybe heard about Dartmouth while you were at Princeton, and what were kind of your expectations before coming to Hanover?

MYERS: Yeah. When I was at Princeton, I don't think we ever played an away game in Hanover, but certainly, you know, the Dartmouth rugby team was everything you would expect the Dartmouth rugby team to be, especially in—in the—in the 1970s, so—and when they would come on campus, it was—it was usually a fairly wild game and a—and a wild party afterwards. So my—probably my—to the extent that I had an image of Dartmouth, it was sort of like out-of-control frat boys.

But I had also known some—some good people from St. Mark's who had gone there, and as I was looking around for where to go to get an MBA [Master of Business Administration], the—the appeal, again, of being, you know, in the woods [chuckles], in a small environment was really—was really kind of compelling. The choice for me was largely one of going to Tuck [School of Business] or going to Northwestern [University] and Kellogg School [of Management]. You know, eventually the pull for towards a smaller environment was—was very strong.

So I came with—sort of with an open mind. I've always been sort of favorably disposed towards thinking about small environments, and I'd had such a good experience both at St. Mark's and at Washington and Lee, and a kind of indifferent experience at Princeton, which was larger, that I thought this made sense. It also made it easier for Sally to come with me and to bring the kids—the cost of living and all that kind of good stuff.

So I—I came with sort of an open mind, and, you know, my memory of the environment—it never crossed my mind that I might—you know, that there wouldn't necessarily be a lot of out gay people in Hanover. That wasn't—I mean, I assumed probably that there wouldn't be, but, you know, it ended up being a very welcoming environment and one that I enjoyed a lot.

FISHBEIN: I know you mentioned your involvement with rugby at Princeton and kind of how that introduced you to Dartmouth. Could you maybe talk about your experience, you know, playing rugby throughout your life but specifically while at Tuck on their rugby team?

MYERS: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, no, I started playing at Princeton and then played at Washington and Lee for three years, played or some town teams in Virginia, took a couple of years off around the kids being born, and then went back to playing in Tuck. I think I ended up playing sixteen seasons over a twenty-some-year period. So it was a big part of my life, and I loved the sport. I wasn't necessarily great at it. I wouldn't want to try to pass myself off as some particularly advanced player, but I was, you know, an okay player, and I really loved the sport.

And, you know, the very first people that I came out to at Tuck were the members of the—of the Tuck Rugby Club, and I was very nervous about that, largely because probably my closest friend at Tuck was the captain of the Tuck team, and so I was particularly concerned about doing damage to that relationship. As so frequently is the case, I needn't have worried. If anything, I had to, you know, apologize for having taken several months to get around to telling them. He was, you know, mildly upset that I hadn't been willing to tell him sooner, but a great guy, who's still a close friend. And incredibly straight.

So that was my first experience being in a—a friendship with another man, where we knew, you know, early on, "You're gay, I'm straight, and, you know, neither one really cares about that, but we're still gonna be friends." And that was an experience that I'd never had before. I'd had experiences where—I had a friend in school back home or at St. Mark's or at Princeton, who was a good friend, and then I found out later that—that they were gay. But I had never had an experience where, you know, I was authentic about who I was and that it was not a barrier to being friends with another guy.

And, you know, my hope is that things are—are different now, but certainly for my generation, that was a big barrier. When I came out, I lost most of my straight friends. And partially that was because they were from Virginia and they were more conservative, and they didn't really approve, blah, blah, blah. But, you know, when you crossed over to play for the other team, you know, there—there—you—you—I mean, it's not uncommon at that point in time that you—you left behind communities, either geographical communities that you'd grown up in or church communities or friends or what have you. And you had to, you know, sort of start over and—and rebuild a community around you.

And that was certainly my experience. Again, I would—I would hope that maybe today things are a little different, that there's more conversation sort of across the straight-gay divide, and we're all understanding that it's more than just gay and straight; it's—it's so much more multifaceted than that, so—but that was sort of my experience.

And so Andy, who was my captain, was the very first time that I had a—a friendship with someone who was—who was not gay when I was gay or where I didn't have to pretend I was going to be straight in order to be friends with him.

FISHBEIN: You mentioned in one of your e-mails to me about how a conversation with one of your rugby teammates helped you kind of rethink your expectations about gays in sports. Can you talk a little bit more about that and maybe say, like, what is your kind of understanding of the narrative leading up to those conversations?

MYERS: Yeah. And it was actually a Dartmouth undergrad, and he wasn't a rugby player; I think he was the captain of the tennis team. But, you know, I—I had not really—probably at that point in time, I had not really met anyone who was passionate about playing a sport and who was also gay, that—I mean, I knew that, you know, such people existed. You know, there were—but, you know, certainly in terms of professional sports, there was, like, one or two people that had come out by that point. It was still, you know, freakishly odd if—it's still unusual, but it was incredibly odd then.

And, you know, when I was in—in gay space, there wasn't—you know, sports were not a heavy component of that. And here, for the first time, I was meeting someone who seemed very comfortable or was gaining comfort with who he was, and yet at the same time was—you know, didn't—I mean, the thing that I learned from Sam was that they weren't mutually exclusive worlds, and, if I'm remembering correctly, he went on to have a career, a successful career, which I think is still going on, in working for a sporting goods manufacturer. So that he has, you know, continued to live his life, as best I know, involved in the world of sports, albeit from a—from a business side.

And he was the first person I met that seemed to—at least to me, to be reconciling those two aspects of himself, and I was still sort of struggling with that. So it was helpful for me to—

you know, to—to be able to know him and to be able to talk about, you know, what sports means for him.

And then, of course, you know, after Tuck, you know, I went to Boston. You know, I joined a gay gym, and there were gay sports teams. I mean, then things started to sort of open up in a—in a much wider sense. But at that particular point in time, that was still something I was trying to struggle with. I didn't want to talk about sports with my gay friends because, you know, they weren't really into it.

And I, you know, didn't think I could talk about gay things with my straight, you know, sports teammates, so this was two pieces of me that needed to sort of come together and eventually did.

FISHBEIN: So you also mentioned in your e-mails how you find a gay community in the Upper [Connecticut River] Valley through your involvement with—I am blanking on what this acronym stands for right now. Hopefully you can remind me. SAM?

MYERS: Yeah, Social Alternatives for Men. [Chuckles.]

FISHBEIN: Right.

MYERS: And there were—there was a—in those years, there was a gay newspaper—it was published in Burlington [Vermont]—called *Out in the Mountains*. And I assume like most print media it has—it has gone onto its reward, but you could find *Out in the Mountains*, a stack of them, you know, at the Co-op [Food Stores] or—they were scattered around town, that they would drop off stacks of these things.

And it was in one of those that I saw an ad at the back for a get-together for Social Alternatives for Men. And I can't remember much about that or—but it was clear that it was just sort of a casual gathering of gay men in the—partly wasn't clear to me whether it was Upper Valley or it was Vermont or Vermont-New Hampshire. But, yeah, especially my second year—because I came out about halfway through my first year at Tuck, so especially in my—in my second year, it was a big part of my so- —I mean, what—I didn't have a lot of time for socializing, but SAM was a big part of that.

And I remember it just being a fun group. And the thing that was I thought really cool about it is that this was the first time I was in a social setting with people of a wide variety of ages, a wide variety of educational backgrounds, a wide variety of socioeconomic origins, that—most of my experience in life up to that point had been with—with, you know, a pocket—you know, my little town or St. Mark's or Princeton or Norfolk. And there was—you know, those pockets tended to be fairly homogenous.

And this was really eye-opening in the sense that, you know, I—you know, you would gather and, as I think I said in a note to you—I mean, you'd have everything from Ph.D.s [Doctor of Philosophy], you know, teaching at Dartmouth to, you know, auto mechanics. And, you know, all kinds of ages, from kids who were—they probably didn't let people under twenty-one coming, because they tended to serve alcohol. But it was probably everything from twenty-one, you know, into people in their seventies.

So it was—it was multigenerational, and so that was—it was just really cool. I just—I—I loved getting to know those guys and to hear their life experiences, and it was a lovely, supportive community.

FISHBEIN: What was your relationship like with your racial identity at this time? I know you said that when you were growing up, it was something that you didn't really think about all that much. Did that kind of change as you got older, or when did that really, like, become a topic—

MYERS: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: —of thought for you?

MYERS: Yeah. Like most of my life, it was sort of a—a process. I chose to have black roommates for most of my time at Princeton. You were assigned a roommate freshman year, but past that—and sometimes I was in doubles and sometimes in triples and sometimes in quads, but at least one of the group was usually African-American. I think that that was, although I wouldn't have understood it at the time, was an effort on my part to try to understand a broader sense of ethnic origins than what I had known in my little town, growing up.

Certainly—Norfolk was a majority minority city, and so it would have been I think very hard to—to live in Norfolk, Virginia, and just have friends of one race, although I'm sure people pulled it off. I mean, it was—this was the natural thing, was that you had—and it was primarily a white-black distinction. Asians or other races were not much in evidence in Norfolk. But had great, good friends who—from Norfolk days—who were, you know, very helpful to me in—in gaining a bit of an understanding or beginning to gain a bit of an understanding of what it meant to grow up with not just the—the interior knowledge that you were not completely one race or another but the physical disability of it.

I mean, that's the—the thing about my situation, is that it's not visible, so unless I tell you that I have some non-white ancestry, you'd never know. And that's a luxury, in a way, in a society that still has issues around difference, that I had—you know, my black friends didn't—I mean, you knew. And so, you know, understanding what their experience was—was—or trying to come to an understanding—was—was—was—was a real sort of learning curve for me but one that I—I valued their friendship, and I valued what I—what I was able to learn from them.

You know, here in Toronto—and this is a city of six million people, whatever. Half the city wasn't born in Canada. And, you know, 150 languages are spoken on the street. So it's—you know, there is—you know, it's a—a truly sort of multiracial city. And the—I think that's one of the reasons why I felt so at home here, even thought it's—it's not home—I mean, it's not where I'm from, but it's—it's certainly where I have—have come to live by choice.

FISHBEIN: Did that process of seeking out people who looked different than you play out at all at Dartmouth? It sounds like this SAM group was pretty, you know, diverse, in what you were telling me about it.

MYERS: Well, it *was* diverse in—you know, in metrics like socioeconomic status and age. The Upper Valley that I knew in the—in the mid-nineties was a pretty white place. I don't—

I can't speak to what it's like today. I do think there—I do think that the guy I briefly dated, who worked at—was the computer center—is it still called Kiewit [Computation Center] or is—

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm, yeah.

MYERS: Is that the name? Okay. He worked at the computer center. He was a Dartmouth alum of about my vintage at Princeton, and he was—he was African-American. And I'm pretty sure I met him at SAM. I can't think of where else I would have met him. And we dated once or twice. And so—just the nature of the beast was that it—the—that part of the world was not very racially diverse. There was one person of c- —one—count them: one person of color in my Tuck class.

FISHBEIN: Wow.

MYERS: And there had started out with three, but two dropped out pretty quickly. I just can't imagine it was a comfortable environment for any of them. But one stuck it out, you know, so it was—it was a pretty white place. And we did have—it was probably my first experience getting to know Asian people in any significant sense of the environments I'd been in up to that point. There were very few people in the population in the places I was living that were—were Asian. And, you know, I don't really know why. And I imagine it could be therapy fodder.

But most of the people I dated from the time of coming out until finding my life partner—you know, about five years, six years later—almost all the people I dated were—were non-white, were African-Americans or Asians or—or mixed race of some sort. So I think—and I just sort of shrugged it off as, *Well, that's who I think is beautiful*, but I suspect that it may have been my—you know, an element of my own understanding of my mixed-race background, and either feeling more comfortable with them or actively seeking them out because most of the people I was in a relationship [in] were—were, you know, non-European—of non-European ancestry.

So, again, therapy fodder for what that meant, but I think it is a part of the answer to your question of how was my sense of being mixed race playing out real time in my life at that—at that moment. And most of it was—you know, it's not something I thought about a lot consciously, but I think at a subconscious level it probably had a role to play.

FISHBEIN: Other than SAM, were you involved with any groups for gay people while you were at Dartmouth?

MYERS: I did go to—and I can't remember now exactly what it was called, but it was—it was essentially the Dartmouth gay and lesbian student group, although I think people from the staff came as well. I don't think it—it was sort of Dartmouth writ large community, as opposed to specifically Dartmouth students. But they would have meetings and speakers come in. There was a lot of speakers, who usually had sort of an academic component to it more than a social component. SAM was all about, you know, bringing in a casserole and just having a few beers. The Dartmouth group was more about, you know, bringing in an outside speaker to talk about current pending litigation that was of interest to the gay community.

I remember a professor from the University of Michigan coming to talk about that. That was sort of the first rumblings that eventually led to the gay marriage decision. It was stuff that was bouncing around in lower courts at the time. And I remember [Michelangelo] "Michel" [pronounced like Michael] Signorile [pronouncing it seen-your-EL-ee], who was a columnist at—at *The Advocate*, I think, at the time, came and talked about what was then quite controversial, sort of the force to outing of public figures in the press—some of them were for it, and some were against it.

So I remember sort of events like that, which—a lot of them went on at some student center called Hinman?

FISHBEIN: That's a mail service now [Hinman Mail Center]. Our student center is called Collis [Center for Student Involvement] at the moment.

MYERS: Oh, Collis. That's what it was. No, no, no, it *was* Collis, right. It was at the student center, Collis. So, you know, that's where they would be held, and because I did meet some—some folks who were Dartmouth employees but not necessarily academics, and—I may have met them at SAM, but I think they would also sometimes show up for these—these talks as well.

FISHBEIN: So you mentioned—

MYERS: So, [unintelligible] it wasn't a lot.

FISHBEIN: Sorry. Keep going.

MYERS: There were a couple of different outlets you could plug into in the Upper Valley at that time to sort of find gay folks, so it wasn't a complete wilderness in that respect.

FISHBEIN: To go back to that litigation issue that you brought up, were you at all involved with any sorts of LGBT activism when you were coming out at this time? I know, I mean, the marriage issue probably would have been one thing to, you know, mobilize around, but also I was doing some research on some involvement that Dartmouth gay students had with organizing for AIDS clinics in the Upper Valley. Were either of these things on your radar then?

MYERS: Yeah. I—in my—in my Norfolk years, I was very active as a volunteer with the [Tidewater] AIDS Crisis Task Force, as it was called, in Norfolk. But when I got to Dartmouth, the demands, the academic demands were such that if there was a lot of activism going on, and there may very well have been, I didn't have a lot of time to participate in it.

The thing that was really key during those years, though, and I desperately wanted to be a part of it, and it—I mean, I had finals, so I just couldn't do it—was there was a pretty massive march in Washington [D.C.] in 1993. It was probably in May-ish if it conflicted with finals.

And that was, I think, a—a big turning point in sort of the average American's consciousness. It also was something I followed. You know, I scraped together a small amount of money to send them as a contribution, getting a poster as a result of it. So I still have the poster. So that 1983 [sic] march was—was the first time, I think, that people all across America saw images of thousands and thousands and thousands of gays and lesbians.

And that, coupled with the fact that for the preceding, you know, five to ten years, people all over the country had been dropping dead, just, you know, shattered completely the notion that this is a small group of people or a group of people who are just in the cities or just on the coasts, or [chuckles] men who want to be women or women who want to be men, or whatever the misconceptions of what it meant to be GLBPTQ [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer]—were that—that was a big part of it, I think.

So that was going on the spring of my first year at Tuck, and on the heels of that, then, I had an internship in New York that summer, which was educational from a career standpoint but also just a tremendous amount of fun. And then the twenty-fifth anniversary of Stonewall was a major celebration, again in New York, that took place a couple of weeks after I graduated, and I was able to be there for that.

So those are sort of—while none of that is sort of political activism, those were, I think, things that did propel political activism forward.

FISHBEIN: I know you mentioned you were pretty busy while you were a Tuck student, but did you have any longer-term relationships with men than you'd had in the past? I know you mentioned how you had, like, that brief nightclub experience while you were a senior at Princeton. Was there anything, you know, between then and your kind of current partner that would have been a little bit more significant?

MYERS: I—I had—you know, I was—I actually had a reasonably active social life in Hanover in the sense of being able to sort of go on dates with interesting guys that usually I had met in either SAM or the college gay group. The two sort of significant relationships of—of that time were—by significant I mean it was more—it lasted months rather than weeks.

One was a guy from Woodstock, Vermont, who was a—was a carpenter, and the other was a guy who worked for [The] Timberland [Company], the boot company, as assistant corporate counsel. And those were the two more meaningful relationships at that time. And I'm actually still in touch with the guy from Woodstock. And then it was after I broke up with the guy at Timberland that I—shortly after that, I met Ken [Harvey], and we've been together ever since.

But those were the—those were the two. And, again, the SAM orbit drew from as far south as Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and occasionally we'd have events down there. I remember a Paul Monette event, Monette being a poet and memoirist and novelist, who was gay and had recently died.

But anyway, so those were—they were possible, and the college seemed to schedule, you know, a couple—and by that I mean, like, you know, once a semester or twice a year—sort of events, cultural events that either they suspected would draw on the gay and lesbian community or they just wanted to have that representation.

There was a singing group called the Flirtations that was based in Provincetown [Massachusetts] that they brought up to the Hopkins Center [for the Arts], and when something like that would happen, you'd have basically, you know, every gay and lesbian person within, you know, a fifty-mile radius would—would come out for those, so they were really kind of fun events.

But those were my two, sort of briefer relationships before Ken.

FISHBEIN: Did you face any discrimination here at Dartmouth or know of any instances of it going on after you came out?

MYERS: I would say no. My—it—it—arguably it was a low bar for me. Unless you were coming at me with a baseball bat, you know, I really didn't [chuckles] give it much thought, so—and I do—I mean, so I remember controversies or things that were controversial. It didn't affect me personally. It was a couple, a gay couple in the Tuck class immediately behind me, who asked for married student housing, and that was the first time I think Dartmouth had allowed two people in a relationship who were not legally married (because at that point, of course, you couldn't) occupy married student housing.

And there was some—I think there was some chatter and conversation about that on campus. You know, there has—

there was, at that time and perhaps now still is, some sort of publication that—at Dartmouth that was kind of geared toward social conservatives. I never read it. I never picked it up, so I was kind of oblivious to whatever they were saying, but I suspect that it may have appeared in—in their pages.

So there were things like that, I mean, where it was clear that the envelope was getting pushed and people's comfort level was getting nudged in a way to be a bit more expansive. But I can't think of anything that I personally experienced, which actually I think was—I would have expected something, but I never happened.

FISHBEIN: I think you were probably referring to *The Dartmouth Review* when you mentioned that publication—just—if that refreshes your mind at all.

MYERS: Yes, exactly. Again, I never—I never read it, so it was kind of off my radar, but, you know, I was vaguely aware that—that from time to time something would get said in those pages that would get people riled up—you know, whatever it was.

FISHBEIN: You also had mentioned to me that during your time at Dartmouth, your political opinions became more "edgy," to borrow a term that you used.

MYERS: [Chuckles.] Yeah.

FISHBEIN: What do you mean when you said that?

MYERS: Yeah. Well,—and, you know, so much of—of this ex- —the Dartmouth experience for me was encountering viewpoints that had not been part of my world. And it was in the Dartmouth student group—some of the undergraduates who—who were there—it was the first time I [chuckles]—I remember a debate about assimilationism or being an assimilationist or assimilating, that—the thought had never really kind of, you know,—it's amazing, for somebody who gone to some reasonably decent schools, I was so obtuse.

The notion that there were societal pressures to conform to heteronormative standards and that those pressures should be resisted was a really, like, bolt from the sky thought for me, that I just had never—I just—my mind had never gone there. But, of course, it's absolutely true, and it's still true, and—but that—the beginnings of that learning and that learning curve, you know, started in a conversation or two or three in the Dartmouth student group at Collis.

And so that's what I was really referring to about the edgier piece, was the degree to which there was a pressure to conform and a desire or a feeling that the sort of heteronormative paradigm should be challenged.

FISHBEIN: It's interesting to me that you were having those conversations at a place like Dartmouth, where you said there were, you know, fewer out gay people than you might have encountered in Boston or Toronto, but—yeah.

MYERS: Yeah. I'm sure if I had—although I can't remember a lot of those conversations in Boston once I got there, but maybe I just wasn't looking in the right place. And that's one of the wonderful things about a place like Dartmouth, is that—I mean, it's a relatively small environment in a relatively small town, and so if you're open to it, you can more easily interact with a wide variety of people.

Even in a larger, more diverse place, it's so easy to get bucketed into a world where, whether you intended for it to be the case or not, you're—you're just dealing with people who are largely—have had the same life experience as you have had so that some interesting stuff sort of went on for me during those years at Dartmouth about sort of opening my eyes and—and learning and being presented with some ideas that I'd never thought about before and kind of shaking me up a little bit and getting me to and getting me to think.

And by no means did I end up agreeing with it all or adopting it all, but it absolutely broadened my—my world view and was, you know, in some ways as important an education as what I was learning in the classroom at Tuck.

FISHBEIN: Despite maybe not finding those same conversations in Boston, do you think that kind of broadened world view is something that you've kind of stuck with since leaving Dartmouth?

MYERS: Yeah, and I ended up marrying a guy who's arguably, you know, far more evolved than I am, and so living with him for the last twenty-five years has continued the educational process for me, so, yeah, I—I did—I did settle down with a—a good, solid, leftie, who has—helps me continue to try to come to grips with the—you know, the problems around us. So it definitely continues. I didn't regress back to where I had been, I think. At least I hope not.

FISHBEIN: So it sounds like Dartmouth was really kind of an important turning point in your life.

MYERS: It was, absolutely, And, you know, in some respects, you know, I have—almost all respects—I have a much stronger sort of bond with my experience at Dartmouth, which was only two years, than the college experience I had at Princeton, which was four years. And you're supposed to be—you know, you're supposed to be more loyal to your college than your grad school, but for me it's not really that way. I—I—and maybe it's because I was such a late bloomer that it took me until grad school to have all the wonderful experiences and eye-opening adventures that you have more typically in your—in your college years.

But it's—yeah, I think—I think very fondly of my time there, so—I'm sure others face all sorts of adversity, and, you know, I'm sure there are people that had, you know, difficult times at Dartmouth, before I was there, while I was there and after I was there. But for me, it was—it was a wonderful experience that helped me move forward in—in a variety of different ways.

FISHBEIN: I know this might not be possible for you to differentiate, but do you think that was, you know, due to Dartmouth, or do you think that was kind of due to where you happened to be in your life at that time?

MYERS: Well, that's a good point, and—and it's also where the institutions were at that point in time. If the experience had been reversed and I had been Dartmouth Class of '79 and had gone to Princeton for grad school in the mid-nineties, you know, my feelings maybe, could be completely different, that—my guess is that the Dartmouth that I knew in the mid-nineties was a different place than what I might have experienced as an undergraduate there in the mid- to late-seventies. And vice versa with—with Princeton.

So it probably—it was where I was as a person at that particular point in time, where the institutions were in their own sort of life trajectory and also just the actual chronological period, what America was like in 1975 versus 1994. So all that factors in, absolutely.

FISHBEIN: Can you elaborate a little bit more on that? What—for you, what do you think changed about America between 1975 and 1994?

MYERS: Well, you know, I—I do think that as a country, the—you know, with the understanding that Stonewall was in 1969 and that a lot of important events occurred in the 1970s, they were—they were primarily, I think it's fair to say, in urban areas, in a small number of urban areas. And the difference between 1975 and 1994, for me more than anything else, is the degree of visibility and acknowledgment, that we just weren't visible in 1975, that, yes, [Alfred] Kinsey had made his report that said it could be as many as ten percent of the population, but, you know, that it's just—you would look around and say, "I don't—I don't think I'm, know anyone who is gay."

And so many of my generation talk about how, you know, whenever it was in their lifespan, that they realized that they weren't the only one, you know, or they weren't one of a—of a small number of, you know, flawed people. I—I don't remember off the top of my head what year it was that the American Psychological Insti- —Association, the APA, declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. I think it may have been 1973. I'm pretty sure it still showed up as a mental disorder of some sort in the Psych[ology] 101 textbook I used at Princeton my sophomore year, 1976.

And it was a small group—supposedly a small group of people who were on the periphery and the fringes of society and, you know, quite possibly exhibiting some sort of mental pathology, you know, twenty years later. It was—it was clear that we were everywhere, that we were in small towns, and the AIDS crisis, for all of its tragedy—that was, you know, one of the few good things, that it just made people realize, as people all over the country were dying, that this isn't just a small number of people and it's not just in Greenwich Village [a neighborhood in Manhattan, New York City, New York] and The Castro [a neighborhood in San Francisco], that there—you know, we are everywhere.

And with that, I think, we were able to find a voice, that—you know, it was still early days for a lot of the legal battles to come in 1993, '94. But it—you know, I think we were—we were on our way, that people knew we were—we were a part of the fabric of the country and not something that was just a fringe element.

FISHBEIN: Can you maybe talk a little bit more, in the last twenty-five minutes or so we have together, about, just briefly, what your life has been like since you left Dartmouth and also how your queer identity may have developed and how you might or might not have, you know, tried to have some of this visibility that you were talking about as really having changed over your lifetime?

MYERS: Yeah. Well, one of the things that—I mean, when I worked for Bank of America, and it's a very different place today, but when I worked for Bank of America in the eighties, if you came out, you were either fired or you were transferred to somewhere where you weren't visible, where you couldn't be seen, like the operations center, with the exception being the branches inside the gay neighborhoods of—every city had one, even then.

So it was—they put a good face forward in terms—if you were—you know, if it was the branch in The Castro or what have you, but by and large, it was career death. And it's a very different place today, I'm sure.

One of the things I was quite determined when I left Tuck was not that—I didn't want to go back in the closet to have a career, and so I spent a lot of time trying to find—I wanted to do finance, which is a very sort of—you know, all the sort of business things you could do is a fairly sort of straight aspect, and so I looked really hard for a place where I could do finance investing work, but do it in a way where I could be myself. And I—I found it, and I'm still at the firm that I joined in 1994. I'll retire at the end of this year. So that's been fine.

I was the first openly gay man at the firm. There was a lesbian that preceded me by about six months. And, you know, it—it wasn't always comfortable being the house gay guy in the sense that after the two of us were hired, the lesbian and then me, I think they waited, like, ten years before they hired anyone else who was openly gay or lesbian.

So there was probably a certain amount of window dressing going on. And I think there was definitely also some nervousness on the part of the firm about whether it was good for business to have openly gay people. I remember being part of some conversations once I had gotten up to the sort of management level, where people would come through the recruiting process and—now we're talking, like, 2005—they would come through the recruiting process, and you would see right on their résumé that they were—you know, when they would list their extracurricular activities, they would be part of a campus gay and lesbian group or something like that.

And—and my straight colleagues would say, "But how—what will their presence be like with clients? Will they be able to earn clients' respect?" Without ever identifying what about this person was giving them cause for concern, that—you know, that was, at least in my part of business or in the firm I was heading, that was the—the challenge in more recent years, was to try to not let a statement like that just lie on the table but to—with some kindness and some patience, probe on it. "What is it about this person that makes you think that they will not be effective in client situations?" And sometimes they were able to cough up, you know, some other reason, but most frequently they just sputtered and stood down, and—

But, you know, I think that in many parts of the business world—and that's all I can speak to, certainly the sort of securities industry, investment business—it's probably less of the career kiss of death, absolutely, than it was back in the day. But it is still something that I think a lot of people struggle with, the degree to which they will reveal information about themselves. It's what I call "mask and reveal," that some of us—and I'm just, you know, at this point too old and too ornery to do it. Some of us will wear masks—and I certainly did it as a younger man—will wear masks to put a face towards clients and colleagues that will be accepted. And others of us dropped the mask.

And I think it's hard to be fully authentic, to bring your whole self to work every day, so even having done this for so long—I mean, I would be less than fully truthful if I said I didn't put the mask back on every so often, with certain clients. But that still remains an issue of how much of the real me do I show my colleagues and my clients, and will that interfere with my career and, you know, what will I sort of keep hidden and what do I show?

And, you know, my—my hope for—for your generation and the generations to follow is that with the passage of time, that whole business of mask and reveal will—and the anxiety around where to draw the line—will continue to dissipate.

FISHBEIN: What does that full, authentic self look like for you? And, you know, how did you get to the point where it is now? Did Dartmouth play a role in that process at all?

MYERS: Yes. I think that—well, to answer the second part of the question first, you know—and, again, it was a function of where I was in my life, but it was in Hanover that I first stood up and said, "Okay, this is who I am" and was willing to be open and honest about my sexuality, at least that part of me.

And I think that experience, that, you know, I did it. I stood up and said, "This is who I am," and the world did not cave in on me. I still graduated. I still got a job. I still had a career. And—and so—and not only that, but the response I got back from the Dartmouth community, if you will, when I held out a more authentic version of myself—what I got back was, you know, at best a lot of affirmation, and the worst that it got was just a shrug, which looked like a victory to me at the time.

So it gave me confidence that I could do this. This is not—this is not going to kill me. [Chuckles.] This is not going to be the end of me if I owe up to being what at the time was considered a despised minority.

So, you know, I thank Dartmouth for both an environment where I would have the courage to stand up and say, “Okay, here I am,” but also giving me enough positive feedback that it launched me into the world with a determination not to go back to being any less authentic and to continue the progress of trying to be more authentic going forward.

So, yes, I do credit Dartmouth, or at least, you know, the environment and the friends that I had there.

What does the fully authentic me look like? Yeah, that’s a good—[Chuckles.] Wow, that’s a great question. I mean, certainly, the—you know, I—anyone that I interact with, you know, more than casually, whether it’s in the workplace or in a social environment, you know, has—knows that I’m married to a man, so that that, and thankfully we’re at a point where I think that is just like sort of a ho-hum sort of thing and that’s all for the good.

What I do encounter—I’m in a firm where I am reputed to think differently about issues than others, and that’s not always a comfortable place. I mean, I—I build portfolios. They look difference than the portfolios my colleagues build. And I’ve been told more than once, “Oh, it’s because you’re so creative.” [Chuckles.] Which, frankly, just pisses me off more than I can possibly tell you, because I don’t think creativity has anything to do with it. I think—and besides, I think that’s an indirect reference to my sexuality.

But I do think that, especially in the business world, dif- —you know, there’s some employers that value different ways of thinking and different ways of approaching problems and actually encourage people who think differently to work together so that they’ll cross-fertilize each other. And those are the—the—probably the employers that tend to do well in the future.

You know, finance being such a conservative career, it takes, still, some bravery on my part to advance an opinion. You know, and an opinion about investing. We’re not talking about social issues, or—it’s an opinion about, you know, what will make money, you know, in the next five years, that I know even before I open my mouth, it’s just that most of my colleagues will either not like the idea or just will find it an odd idea, that—so maybe I never will lose fully that outsider looking in kind of status. I'm happy to claim it at this point and see it as a strength rather than a liability.

FISHBEIN: As a last question, I want to keep this pretty open-ended, but if you could maybe reflect some on what your coming-out process, what Dartmouth, what everything you've told me really means for you today, yeah, and how kind of, you know, you've most really seen yourself changing over that time. Again, I want to keep this open-ended, so if you have any other concluding remarks to add, I would love to hear those in the last thirteen minutes that we have together.

MYERS: Yeah. Well, I will say—there's two things I want to say. One is—it really is sort of a direct response to your question, which is that it took me a while to work through several different layers of guilt, guilt about having taken so long to come out, the years that I was willing to live in a less than fully authentic life. Certainly I regret about that. But, you know, I—I will talk now more naturally about the fact that I spent so long in the closet, you know, perhaps as recently as ten or fifteen years ago. I would have been reluctant to talk about that because I—I—I found it somewhat shameful. I've sort of gotten over that.

For gay men of my generation, especially ones who spent most of the eighties in the closet, survivor guilt is very real. So many of my good friends from college, and high school, lived authentic lives much earlier than I did and ended up dying in the—in the AIDS epidemic. So, you know, there's—there's been some series of guilt that I had to work through, and—but—and that work is probably ongoing.

The second half of your question was about whether there were other things I wanted to mention, specifically I think something along the lines of the experience of coming out and—and how—you know, how it's influenced the rest of my life.

As it turned out, one of the children that I have is transgendered. We were under the distinct impression that we were having a girl, and she came out as—as transgendered and has made the transition to being male. And I think that the life lessons that I learned along the way about the cost one pays when one is not able to be who you truly are and the experience that I had at Dartmouth that was so positive, when I finally did sort of launch myself into the world has perhaps equipped me to be a better parent to Steven [C. Myers], my son.

And I did have to make the adjustment of going from the parent of a lesbian daughter to a straight son, which [chuckles]—we joke. I mean, that it was—in some reasons—in some respects, having a lesbian daughter was—was something I understood and could get my hands around a little bit more readily, but it's been a learning process for—for both of us as a part of that journey.

But I'm—I'm so grateful that I was able to do some of my own work, beginning at Dartmouth, because I think it put me in a position where, when Steven made his choices, that I was able to—to be there for him and to help him along. And that, probably more than anything else, is—is so important to me, to be the supportive parent to my children, that, for good or ill, my parents just couldn't do for me.

FISHBEIN: What is your relationship like with Dartmouth now? I'm assuming you got involved with this interview process through the DGALA [Dartmouth Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni/ae Association] alumni/ae association?

MYERS: Yeah. You know, my relationship with Dartmouth now is, you know, I send checks once a year, not huge ones at that. But I will say that in—Dartmouth—if you make a contribution to DGALA, it counts and is recognized as a contribution to the college.

And Princeton has, for its own reasons, not done that, that—at Princeton, the gay alumni/ae—they *can* give to the university if they wish. Many of us choose to give to the gay and lesbian alumni/ae group, who then turns over a single, large check to the university. That, I'm convinced, has given gay and lesbian alumni/ae more of a voice in the university in the past, but they still won't count it towards annual giving.

So when I'm called for a donation to Princeton and I say, "Well, I give to the Fund for Reunion," which is what the gay group is called, they say, "Oh, but that doesn't count." And I said, "Exactly. Exactly. I'm not giving to annual giving."

So I think Dartmouth has, in some respects, been more highly evolved on this front, and they have welcomed, you know, contributions from gay alumni/ae more readily than other schools, and I appreciate that.

I go to my class reunions. It was a small class. We got to know each other very well. By and large, they're a great group of men and women, so that's sort of the status of my relationship with Dartmouth today.

FISHBEIN: Well, thank you so much for spending this time to talk with me. I guess kind of out of my own personal interest, if you have time for one more question, I saw on your LinkedIn page that you have been involved with a Buddhist institute. Can you kind of talk about your process of, you know, finding that religion to somebody who also, you know, practices Buddhism somewhat regularly?

MYERS: Yeah. You know, that—I—I—one of my kids got very sick about twelve years ago. Ended up recovering. All is well. But she nearly died. And I found that when I went to the sort of Presbyterian faith that I had been brought in, as—you know, sort of for comfort—and not a criticism of the religion; it just was where I was as a person—it just didn't help me anymore.

And so I—I went looking [chuckles]—I went shopping for—for a new religion, which sounds like an odd thing to do, but I had—I had—at that time, I read a book that was, you know, a very basic introduction to Buddhism, and it really sort of resonated with me and made sense. And then I realized that *Oh, there's about a hundred different schools of Buddhism, so now I've got to sort through which one.* But eventually I—you know, I found the denomination that made sense for me, and there's a temple here in Toronto, which is lovely, so I get to hang out with those guys every so often.

And then, as—life plays funny little tricks on you. Once—I'd already decided to become a Buddhist and had been practicing for a couple of years by the time that I finally nailed down the—the genetic piece of my non-white ancestry. And as it turns out, that funny central-Asian tribe—they are Buddhists,—

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

MYERS: —at least as far as, like—Some of them still are. They live under Russian rule, so many have converted to Russian Orthodox. But that's their sort of historic faith, so—which was a odd sort of way of the, you know, cosmos having—sort of telling me that, you know, I was perhaps on the right track.

It—it's meant a lot to me. It's been a great—I mean, yes, I'm probably not as diligent meditating as most people who acknowledge being Buddhists are. The denomination I joined is one—they're fairly light [chuckles] on their requirements for meditation.

But it's—you know, it's helpful. It keeps me balanced. I have a crazy career, and—where it's very easy to get wrapped up in all sorts of mundane, you know, micro-problems that really, in the great scheme of things, just aren't that big a deal. And so it keeps me sort of balanced. And it's been—it's been very rewarding.

And so I went through the process of taking a course or two that essentially licenses me to teach [chuckles] Buddhist Sunday school or what is called Dharma school, although I haven't ever, but it's—that was what you see popping up on my LinkedIn page, that I did the educational component to sort of fill in the gaps, since I was a—a late-in-life convert.

FISHBEIN: Great.

MYERS: That's wonderful, Dan. Thank you.

FISHBEIN: Well, thank you so much.

MYERS: Thank you. Oh, thank you.

FISHBEIN: This has really been a wonderful time getting to talk to you.

MYERS: Well, I've enjoyed it as well. I appreciate the opportunity to yammer at great length about my life experience, and—

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.] There's so much more I want to ask you. I'm sorry we have to [laughs] end now.

MYERS: Right. Yeah. Well, good luck as you get closer to launching yourself into the world.

FISHBEIN: Thank you.

MYERS: You know where I am on LinkedIn, so keep me posted of—you know, where you go in future years.

FISHBEIN: [Laughs.] I'll—I'll do that.

MYERS: Okay.

FISHBEIN: Maybe I'll send you a request. [Laughs.] Have a good one.

MYERS: Great. Take care. Bye-bye.

FISHBEIN: Bye.

[End of interview.]