Stephen A. Carter ’86
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
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[Transcriber’s note: There are periodic recording glitches throughout.]

[HUGH B.]

MAC NEILL: This is Hugh Mac Neill interviewing Stephen [A.] Carter for the SpeakOut Oral History Project. The time is 1—or is 10:15 a.m., and I’m interviewing him at the Ticknor Room, over the phone.

So, Stephen, I’d like to start with the first question: When and where were you born?

CARTER: Nineteen sixty-four.

MAC NEILL: And where was that?

CARTER: I’m sorry?

MAC NEILL: And where was that?

CARTER: Where was I born?

MAC NEILL: Yes.

CARTER: Waterloo, Iowa.

MAC NEILL: And can you tell me a little bit about your family?

CARTER: So I am—we’re a family of four. I have one sibling, four years older—a sister, who is four years older than me, and a mother and father who are still alive and still married. And then I guess that’s about all. [Chuckles.] I can’t think of anything more to say about them except they’re—they’re a pretty standard Midwestern family. All three of my family members are Christian, practicing Christian. My mom was a nurse; my dad was a trained electrician, kind of a—yeah. Both of them went to trade schools. She went to nursing school; he went to trade school for—for—to be an electrician.

My sister is a housewife now, but she owns her own business. She lives in Tex- —they all live in Texas at this point, so we were—they moved about the time that I was—started at Dartmouth. They moved to Texas. My parents moved to be with my sister when she was starting to spawn children, so I think that was about twenty-five years ago. That's where they're at now.

MAC NEILL: And can you give me the names of your parents but also your siblings?

CARTER: Yeah. [P. Donald] "Don" and Sybil [J.] Carter are my parents, and my sister is—married name is Janet [L.] DeYear [née Carter]. Janet is her—Janet Carter is her born name. Like I said, they're all in the greater northern Dallas area of Texas.

MAC NEILL: What was it like growing up in Iowa?

CARTER: It was pretty desolate. I—I—I mean, I grew up—I grew up in an—I guess you'd call it a suburban area. I—I was born in Waterloo, but when I was seven years old—it was a rather traumatic move. I think it was kind of a formulative time in my life, and my parents moved me from Waterloo, which was undergoing some forced busing, so there's a whole story about the kind of people that were around in the late sixties, early seventies that were resisting mixing schools. There were some forced school segregations, or non-segregations that got a lot of people kind of upset because we were living close to what was a mostly white school, one of the, quote, "better" schools, I guess, in Waterloo, which is a pretty rough urban area. I mean—yeah. You know, not—more of an inner-city kind of place.

And my parents didn't like the fact that I was possibly going to be forced to be bused across town to a mostly black school, and so they opted to move. I think they were making some other life changes, and they kind of wanted to get out of that urban area into more of a—a suburban one. So they moved to Des Moines. My father put in for a transfer, and when I was seven, I moved there.

So it was a very kind of—Ankeny was where we moved, a suburb north of Des Moines, Iowa. And it was much more of

a very quiet kind of life, very white [chuckles], you know, but—I didn't know a black person. we had one black family. I always say I knew one black family and one Schwartz, and they were Christian. [Chuckles.] So I had no exposure to anything but mostly, you know, white American kids.

But it was—I don't know, it was pretty—it was pretty normal, I guess is the best way to describe it. There was not a lot of crime. There was not a lot of craziness going on. You didn't hear about people OD'ing [overdosing] and committing suicide and—I can't even remember a single tragedy that happened, aside from a tornado in 1974, you know. So different times and definitely in that part of the county, you know, in the seventies, it was pretty sedate.

So I was always looking for a way out. I mean, from the time I was probably in junior high, I knew I was not destined to stay there. It was just kind of where I was going to grow up, and I was always looking out to something more than being in the Midwest.

MAC NEILL: If—if you can remember, what did a typical day look like when, you know, you were in grade school or middle school?

CARTER: I was really academically driven. I think that was—I—I have noticed that for—especially for [unintelligible] kids, I think that's a real driving factor. You kind of absorb yourself in your academics. My father even accused me of it when I came out, you know, because he noted that, that I was always, always absorbed in my academics.

So for me in particular, and this is probably not, you know, for most kids in the Midwest, but for me it was getting up, looking forward to going to school, you know, going to school, probably doing some kind of extracurricular activity after school, because I was always involved in something, either academic or administrative, working—working with adults within—in the school. That was always kind of my thing.

And then doing my homework in the evening, hanging out with my friends. I had a really strong core group of probably—mostly women friends, but a good mix. Always had, like, one or two close male friends, but, you know, there

was, like, six or seven of us that would go out for pizza, you know, hang out, talk. That's really about all there was to do in the Midwest, is just kind of go out to dinner.

The weekends, I'd hang out with my best friend. We'd go, you know, biking around, go out for lunch, go out to a movie, stay overnight with each other—you know, that kind of stuff. So it was just very kind of *Father Knows Best* kind of, you know, Midwestern—

MAC NEILL: Mm-hm. And were you close with your siblings at this point?

CARTER: Was I closer to what?

MAC NEILL: How—how close were you to your siblings?

CARTER: Oh, extremely close, yeah. My sister—my sister was my—kind of my best friend and my mentor from the time I was really young. She was a very typical older sister. And she's a extr- —an incredibly—incredibly [unintelligible] mother. She was, I guess, your—your kind of—I don't know what to call it. She's like the ultimate female role model, you know, from that time. She—you know, she played with dolls. She was always wanting kids. From the time she was young, she knew she wanted three kids. (She wanted triplets.) [Chuckles.] Didn't happen, but she was always, like, wanting—wanting to take care of, you know, a younger person. She was, like, born to be a mom, I guess.

And she babysat me, you know, in more ways than one from the time I was really young. She taught me to read at probably, I don't know, five years above my—my grade level when I was very young. From the time I was three or four, she was reading to me and teaching me to read, so by the time I got into first grade, I was reading at, like, a fifth-grade level.

She also was, like, my protector. She would—you know, if I came home and said that someone bugged me at school, she would actually confront them and, you know, kind of fend off bullies at school. And, yeah, no, we were really, really close. We—we still are now. We're just,—you know, between the miles and very different lifestyles, we're, you know, torn apart a little bit more, just as adults. But we still

stay in touch. We still confide in each other. We still, you know, kind of blurt out our feelings to each other and look for each other for guidance. But, you know, we were extremely close.

MAC NEILL: So when you say that she defended you against bullies, would—would you say that you were bullied a lot in middle school?

CARTER: No. I would get—and I can't even remember—and I have kind of a thick skin. I mean, I was looking at some of the stuff that I sent you, materials at Dartmouth. That things did happen to me throughout my life, but I have this kind of attitude of, like, if people do that, then they're just assholes, you know? It doesn't really—it doesn't really, like, bother me much, so it doesn't really resonate with me as part of my past.

I just remember that there were times when—I would guess they probably—probably came after me because I was, like, a teacher's pet. I think that was the only real, like, vulnerable point that I had. I was very quiet. I kept to myself. I didn't, you know, like, overly judge people. I didn't really have an attitude. So people really didn't have anything to bug me about. But I think that's probably what it was. And I wouldn't say I was bullied a lot. I thought I could be bullied a lot.

You know, I was always afraid of walking home alone. I was always—and from the time I was really young, and my mom could tell you, I would—I would not want to go to school. When we moved—that's why I said it was traumatic, as I didn't know the area. I didn't know the people. I had this kind of impression that people were—you know, could come after me, and I just didn't like that I had to walk to school. I would, like, hide in the garage because I didn't want to go back. [Chuckles.]

I loved school, but I didn't like the school environment. I didn't like other kids a lot. You know, as I said, I had certain friends, you know, like a group of friends, and that was the only people I really associated with, so I was a bit of a—of a loner and an outcast from the time I was pretty young. But mostly in my own mind, and so a lot of the—you know, a lot of the bullying was, I think, internalized. But there were—

there were times, I guess, when, you know, kids would bug me and say things, but like, I said, I have a thick skin. I just kind of let it bounce off.

MAC NEILL: And I'm kind of switching gears here, but—but how religious was your family, growing up?

CARTER: I'm sorry. Say that again?

MAC NEILL: How religious was your family, growing up?

CARTER: I still didn't catch it. How was my [unintelligible] growing up?

MAC NEILL: How—how religious was your family, growing up?

CARTER: Oh, how religious.

MAC NEILL: Yeah.

CARTER: Well, it's weird because church was just a given thing, and that was part of being in the Midwest and being—I don't know—I think it's just part of being a WASP-y [Anglo-Saxon Protestant] kind of person [chuckles] in the Midwest. Everyone went to church. Everyone was expected, you know, to go to church every Sunday. There wasn't a lot of stuff out of Sunday, but that was—you know, I think there were two kinds of people back then. There were people who just didn't go at all, you know, or maybe went for Christmas and Easter; you know, they didn't make it a part of life. In my family, it was just a normal part of life.

And it's weird because it—it was so routine. It was like everything else, growing up in the Midwest. Everything was very routine, and you didn't question it, right? I mean, that religion was—we didn't discuss it within our home. I don't remember God dropping all the time, and that happens a lot, especially in Texas, with my family now. They are religious to the point of God dropping all the time. You know, no sentence can come out. No tragedy can be spoken about. Even politics can't even be discussed without somehow God coming into the picture.

So it's changed a lot. I think it's the transition of times from the very kind of mellow seventies that we grew up into, you

know, a more global, traumatic—you know, stuff happening in the world has forced them to be more religious. But back then, it was—it was just kind of a part of everyday life.

They didn't kind of push me to do it. I mean, I take that back. No, we were—we were expected and probably criticized by my family if we didn't go to church. But like anything else, they didn't force us to do anything beyond that. You know, it was, like, "You go to church. You're not gonna stay home on Sunday. That's just not what happens." You know, "You're not gonna go to Hell. You're not gonna [chuckles]—you know, just that kind of thing. But I would say, on a scale of one to ten, we were probably a religious five—you know, like, very down the middle.

MAC NEILL: Mm-hm.

And what—what—do you remember the name of your church and what—what kind of Christian you were?

CARTER: Yeah, yeah, I do. And I was—and the reason I know that is because I was very involved in the church, probably starting during some real formulative, I think internally troubling times of my early junior high school. I turned to the church for kind of a social environment, and since—and this will—you will probably kind of noticed throughout—I—I focused on adult figures for my mentors, and they are my—my guides and the people who have always gotten me through almost every part of my life, including today.

My pastor at the time was my mentor, and he was my crutch and, my, you know, just kind of like my guidepost, a really cool guy. His name was Pastor Biederman [archivist note: spelling uncertain]. He was—I think he was pretty much pastor the whole time I was there, but definitely in junior high school. And I—I had turned to being part of—of, like, the church elite, I guess. I had highest-ranking position for someone my age when I was in junior high school, I think it was. And I was a youth elder, and it was a Lutheran church. It was a Missouri Synod Lutheran church, which I subsequently found is the much more conservative branch of the Lutheran Church. It was called Holy Trinity [Lutheran Church]. It was Ankeny.

So, yeah, it was—I was very involved in the church for about—I would say about three or four years.

MAC NEILL: And when you were involved with the church, did you start thinking about your gay identity at all, or—or had that not come up yet?

CARTER: Did I think about what?

MAC NEILL: Did you—did you think about your gay identity at all, or had that not come up yet?

CARTER: It had not come up, no. I mean, there were signs of it, but it was—it was totally repressed. I mean, I—I—I don't—I think now I kind of internally turn toward the church as kind of a rock in the midst of, like,—yes, I at that point I had an unidentified identity crisis, but I was not—I think I really heavily repressed my sexuality during those formulative years—formulative—what I consider formulative years would be, like, junior high school and early high school, when, you know, kids start talking about sex and physically become more sexually aware.

I don't remember going through, like, a dramatic puberty. Like, my voice didn't drop. My public hair didn't grow. [Chuckles.] You know, all that stuff didn't happen. And maybe that led toward a much easier transition into puberty, but I think of a lot of it was repressed, too.

MAC NEILL: What—what signs—what do you mean by signs that you were potentially gay?

CARTER: I had always had really close male friends, and they were, like, extremely close. Like I said, we would sleep overnight with each other. We would spend days together. They were—I—I look at them now as, like, budding romances, but never anything sexual, except at a certain point, and there were some actual periods where I started wondering—I started having, like, physical feelings—you know, lustful feelings and, you know, wanting physical contact [unintelligible] when [unintelligible] my friend.

I guess it would have been about—I want to say it was still junior high school, probably about ninth grade, I think I had

my first real—and it's probably when I was, like, budding sexually, physically sexually—had my first experience of, you know, wanting to touch another guy. You know, and it was Kurt, the person who was my best friend at the time, who I spent all of these weekends—

And we'd gone on vacations together and stuff. I mean, our families were close, and they nurtured that, you know, really close friendship. But it turned into more around ninth grade, I think.

MAC NEILL: And was it reciprocated? Was he also gay?

CARTER: No. And I—I am in contact with him now. He's married. He actually pulled away. I think he suspected that I might be or there might have been change in our friendship dynamic. You know, I never made any advances to him. I only had urges to. But I think guys pick up on that.

I also was associating with people who were—in retrospect, probably would be considered openly gay. But no one had that label. No one—no one could identify as gay in the Midwest in the late seventies, early eighties. And—but they were the flamboyant ones. So I started having much more flamboyant friends and people who were rumored to be what people didn't really have a concept of, but—you know, the people "in the know"—I'm putting in air quotes—I guess the ones who were more, I don't know, more judgmental and probably had the labels that they didn't even understand, themselves, would have called them "the gay kids."

We just didn't call people that back then. I don't think there was the awareness of—of a gay identity. It was—you know, they were just different, so there were names for them. You know, they were "faggots" and "gay people." You know, they wouldn't even use "gay"; they just—they were just "faggots." They were "fairies," "faggots"—you know, all the derogative terms that didn't really necessarily go toward a sexual bent; they were just the different kids who dressed well and acted different and—yeah. It was more of a pejorative term than it was a labeling of their sexuality because I just don't think people had a sense of that back then in my part of the country.

MAC NEILL: So—so by the time you got to high school, had—did people call—did people ever call you a faggot?

CARTER: I think behind my back, and mostly because of the people I hung out with. I had one friend, extremely flamboyant friend, who kind of—kind of nurtured me through—I mean, I was always very much in control. Like, I never let things—until I went to college and broke out of my shell—I never let things get, like, really extreme. He was really extreme. I mean, I found out later that Russ—his name was Russ—was doing amphetamines in high school, and he was—it kind of like broke him out of his—he had no inhibitions at all. He would scream things at people who would call him a faggot. And he got called a faggot a lot.

But yet I continued to be his close friend, kind of his rock, because I think at that point there was nothing better for an outcast kid than to have a well-respected, you know, kind of stable, admired friend, and that was who I was, right?

So I started dressing more flamboyantly, dressing more—I wouldn't call it flamboyant at the time. I was—I was dressing formally at school when it was really popular to wear, like, jeans and T-shirts. You would never see me in anything less than dress pants, sometimes a suit, with, like, you know, susp- —this was disco time, right? We both came in with, like, four- or five-inch platform pimp shoes, polyester suits, and it was just really considered "out there," right?

He would make his own clothes. At one point, he came with, like, broad red—bright red and white, hand-made overalls. I mean, bright stuff. And so he was a target. He was just a major target. And that was about—that was about ninth grade, too. I think—yeah, I think I met Russ in ninth grade and knew him all the way through, all the way through high school until I left for Dartmouth.

MAC NEILL: How—how would you characterize your high school, in general?

CARTER: Very redneck, extremely redneck. We had a very—it was segregated between—I guess—we didn't really have nerds back then, but it was very—there was a dichotomy. There was, like, the normal kids, you know, and they—they varied

between the very academic people like me and a very normal kind of we just have to go to school and whatever. And then there were the "hoods." And we called them hoods.

It was—if you've ever seen the movie *Cry-Baby*, it's kind of like that. It was, like, there were the normal kids, society kids, ours were not so elite. But there was that normal group.

And then there were the hoods. They smoked pot, they did other drugs, they smoked cigarettes, they—you know, they dressed poorly or they dressed kind of cliquey. I remember one girl, Julie Davis, would come to school in, like, leather Indian tops. You know, it was very kind of country redneck kind of [unintelligible].

And this was—like I said, this was like a more urban-suburban area, so—but these people were, like,—I don't know. And those were the ones that were trouble. I would stay away from them, because they could potentially be the ones that would, you know, like, jump you in the school yard or whatever. Never happened, but we always had concerns that they would be—it would be that kind of aggression.

But they pretty much stayed away from me. In fact, some of them befriended me, in weird ways. They kind of—I think they respected me, and because I wasn't like Russ—I wasn't outwardly flamboyant or whatever—they didn't really—didn't really bug me much. They would taunt me—you know, they'd be, like, "Hey, Carter"—everyone called me Carter—"Hey, Carter, like, really nice shoes," you know. And I'd just kind of smile or whatever. You know, I'd never say, "Fuck you." [Both chuckle.] Because that would get them going, right? But—yeah.

MAC NEILL: And what's—what was the name of you're high school?

CARTER: Ankeny—Ankeny Senior High School.

MAC NEILL: And was it—was it a public or private school?

CARTER: I was always in public school. Yeah, it was a public junior high, public elementary. There was talk at some point of me—I think I mentioned to my parents that I would have preferred going to a private school. There was a couple of

private schools in Des Moines, which were really good. I don't know what that would have done to my life, but it was—they were expensive, and it just wasn't practical.

MAC NEILL: And so what was the education like at your school?

CARTER: It was—there wasn't a lot of—I mean, it was a pretty kind of standard curriculum. I think it was really strong. I mean, Iowa had, and still has, I believe, a really strong public school system. I think it's one of the best. I'd have to look at the rankings anymore, but generally the Midwest is pretty good. I mean, the teachers were dedicated. The course material was, you know, pretty complete. I mean, you know, reading, writing, arithme- —yeah, reading, writing and arithmetic kind of thing.

You know, math was very strong. There wasn't a lot of advanced placement. Again, it was just very—like, very standard kind of life, including education. But there was an opportunity there for some—you know, for some advancement. And there were teachers, and I befriended them, and they—they encouraged me and in some cases privately mentored me.

I was—I was actually tutored—I was actually tutored in [William] Shakespeare when I was in—when I was a senior, I was in—I got an honor of being named a Senate Page, so I was out of my senior year completely, and I had to take classes, you know, to continue getting my credits, so I was privately tutored in Shakespeare, and they loved that kind of stuff because, you know, they had their specialty, and—and they weren't able to really, I guess, practice them much in a public school in the Midwest because they didn't have, like, Shakespearean English. You know, they had English class. It was just standard kind of—you learned language, you'd diagram your sentences, you read the basic classics, you know. But *Catcher in the Rye* was probably pretty radical for Ankeny, Iowa. Yeah. [Chuckles.]

MAC NEILL: So how did Dartmouth come onto your radar? When did you start thinking about college?

CARTER: I think I was late thinking about college. I—I knew I wanted to get out, but I was just kind of like—I wasn't the kind of

person that really wanted to change things, right? Change was not really good for me. I think I was afraid of that transition.

But I did have—I think I had the help from my family. My parents just kind of let me do what I want to do, and one of the things I did was I interacted with the people who were kind of my—my idols at the time, right? I wanted to go into business. I actually thought, you know, *If I move to the East Coast*,—I think that started being, kind of my, my aspiration when I was maybe a junior in high school. I wanted to get out of the Midwest, and I was looking toward the East Coast—you know, go to New York [New York], go to, you know, Boston [Massachusetts] or whatever. New York was really my—my thing.

And I—part of the reason is because I had an uncle—he was—yeah, my uncle, who was really my father's second—whatever—cousin once removed. We called him an uncle. He was an investment banker in New York, and he had gone—he knew a lot of people that went to Dartmouth. He had not himself gone, but his wife had been in the Upper [Connecticut River] Valley with her ex-husband, and *he* went to Dartmouth.

But my uncle knew a lot of people in his business, investment banking business, that had gone to Tuck [School of Business], and so he said, "Go to Dartmouth. Go to Tuck. You'll get where I'm at now." He said, "You just need the good education." So I went early decision to Dartmouth because I was—you know, that was the place I knew I wanted to go.

MAC NEILL: How did your parents feel about you going there?

CARTER: I think they were pretty rattled. I mean, it was a big change. It was halfway across the country. My sister had always chosen—and this was true—this kind of gives you an idea of what the people were like, the kids were like and the whole school in the Midwest, is no one really left their close—you know, their—their family nest too far, right?

I mean, I remember there were three hundred and some kids in—in my graduating class, and toward the end, they asked

everyone where they were going. In fact, there were, like, things on the wall we could write. And there were three big schools. There was University of Iowa, Iowa State University and U of N I—University of Iowa, Iowa State and University of Northern Iowa. Those were the three big schools, right? Everyone was kind of expected to go. There were literally three of us out of 365 that went to anything but those three schools, if they were going at all. A lot of kids—and I still am friends with people who didn't go to college at all; they just stayed in their hometown.

So it was a pretty big—you know, it was a pretty big pill for them to swallow that I was going that far. I think they were very proud of the fact that I had gotten into an Ivy League school. They probably expected it would happen because I had been groomed for that. But it was very alien to them. And I think they were a little scared about me doing it. But they were very, very supportive. You know, they—

And part of the deal growing up—my sister and I both—my parents always kind of let us do our thing. As long as we were on the right path and we, you know, didn't do anything, like, crazy, extreme, you know, unconventional and negative, they encouraged it. "Just do what you want to do," and we expected they would fund us and back us, and they did. Yeah.

But I think mentally it was tough for them, for me to go that far.

MAC NEILL: And so before I move onto your time at Dartmouth, I did want to bring up a question about your mom. When we talked previously, you said you were really close to her, and you talked about your sister a little bit, but can you tell me more about your relationship with your mom?

CARTER: So Mom and I are pretty inseparable. We're—we still talk at least once a week for a couple of hours at a time. We're very—I—I kind of think it's like, the ultimate, you know, kind of gay son-mother relationship. She's—she's very nurturing. She's very understanding. She's very supportive. I—I would take some of my most intimate things to my mom.

A little background: Because she's a nurse, very early on, we had this kind of understanding that there was nothing that was off—out of bounds. I mean, she was uncomfortable with that sometimes because I pushed that limit [chuckles], but she didn't really expect to have a gay son, so I think that was part of it.

But, you know, everything was in clinical terms and—and very straightforward. I always tell people, "I never had a wee-wee or a pee-pee. I had a penis, when I was very young." You know, it's, like, you talk to Mom in, like, adult terms, and she, you know,—I could just be very open with Mom. Still can. There are very few things that Mom doesn't know about my life. But, you know, my sister and I have our secrets. But, you know—but no, Mom's—Mom's super close to me. And my sister. I think I'm more close to my—no, I think my sister's probably closer to my mom, too.

My dad's a little—my dad's distant and is not very—what's the term? He's not a real affectionate person. He's not a real personable person. And I think he likes to stay distant.

I grew up in a Pisces family [chuckles], like a total water sign family. Every woman in my—and they're all very nurturing, whether it's you know, for astrology or what, they're—they're all very nurturing, supportive, maternal kinds of women. And my father's a very unevolved Sagittarius, so he kind of was, I think—I still think today—he always felt like the outcast in my family, because everyone was very open. Everyone was very effusive, you know, with their emotions. And he was just not. [Chuckles.] Dad was not an emotion-filled person. And a very kind of keep to himself kind of guy.

MAC NEILL: So you've talked about kind of the social climate at your high school around being gay, but what would you say was the social climate in your family before coming to college?

CARTER: In relationship to being gay or just in general? Or being—

MAC NEILL: To being gay. But I also am interested generally speaking as well.

CARTER: So there was—again, it was, like, Mom was—Mom was like the center. She really was the—I guess the—kind of the axis

of the house. You know, I think it's very typical of a Midwestern family or just a normal family. Dad was the breadwinner. He was always out doing stuff on his own when he wasn't, you know, going to work and being the breadwinner. So it was—we were—we did a lot together. I mean, up until the day I left for Dartmouth, I think that summer we vacationed as a family, you know, and not separate.

It was weird because when we went to Europe just a few years ago, we all kind of split up and did our own thing, but we all had our own families and our own interests and stuff, but our interests were our family at that point. We were together. We stayed together. We—you know, whatever. So it was a pretty tight bond.

You know, Dad, again, kind of—he was the driver and the—you know, more like the chauffeur, a lot of times [chuckles]. He was just kind of there and [unintelligible] was the one that helped orchestrate things, but we were all kind of part of this family—I don't know what you call it. Just kind of a unit, right? We were the typical family unit.

We all had our roles, we all had our part, but it was always together. And we're still kind of like that today when we get together. We—you know, I go over there. We travel together. We do everything together. We sit in a room together. It's just—we are a family unit.

MAC NEILL: So leaving that and leaving Iowa to come to Dartmouth, can you tell me what your first impressions were?

CARTER: At Dartmouth?

MAC NEILL: Yes.

CARTER: Pooh! I think from the very beginning, I was overwhelmed. Just—I think in—in hindsight, it was totally different than what I expected.

So a little background there: I—you know, being that far away and being so determined that this was going to be what I—you know, what I was destined to do and, like, the perfect situation and the escape from the Midwest—I didn't

even—I didn't even tour Dartmouth. I had not been to campus until my freshman year. So it was, I guess like anything you do, in hindsight I should have gone—at least traveled—and I saw pictures and stuff, but you have to remember this was pretty much pre-internet. This was totally pre-internet. So it was mostly just print materials and pictures.

So the campus—you know, I knew it was, like, a small New England, Currier and Ives kind of town, and that didn't disappoint at all. But I think I was overwhelmed by the fact that it wasn't warm. People weren't—students, themselves, were not the open-minded, warm, inviting people. I saw a lot of contention, a lot of kind of—I don't know. And I think it's typical of probably any school. You know, when people are taken away from their families and forced to be out on their own, everyone is kind of like fighting for their identity and everything. But that was part of it.

But I think there was a greater level of detachment with Dartmouth students. I expected it to be the kind of embracing, "Hey, you know, you're here with all the rest of us. You're one of the—you know, the elite academics. You're—you know, we're all, you know, part of this wonderful world." And it didn't happen. It did not happen.

From day one, I was terrified of my roommates. The campus was overwhelming. The academics were immediately probably more challenging than I expected, and I was just, like, [Makes sound of distaste.] [Chuckles.] So I compensated for several month, until I finally had a breakdown. I just left—left Dartmouth. It was—I didn't even get through my freshman fall. So it was—yeah, it was pretty overwhelming. [Chuckles.]

MAC NEILL: And this—so this would have been the fall of 1983?

CARTER: Two. Two. Sorry, I went in '82.

MAC NEILL: 1982.

CARTER: Yeah, because I was an '86, so fall '82 I was put in a triple room in New Hamp[shire Hall], with two very typical, soon to be and ended up being fraternity jock guys and a whole—I

don't know what New Hamp is today—but New Hamp was—Dartmouth was so weird.

That's another thing. I didn't expect it to be so segregated. Like, even where you were in the dorms was determined by your elite factor, right? I mean, they put all of the—it was well known even back then. They put all of the Midwestern kids, lower-, middle-income, you know, outcasts from the elite East Coast prep school society kids into the River Cluster.

And I was very fortunate, I think, to have been thrown into New Hamp because it was mostly where the prep school kids were, right?—the ones that had kind of had their time away from their family, had already gotten into the drinking scene, into the social scene. I was not ready for that at all. That was not my scene then. It wasn't my scene in high school. It wasn't my aspiration when I went to Dartmouth. I did not go there to, like, party and get ugly and, you know, do the things that—that these guys just got—you know. Now they weren't even in prep school. They were way away from their family. They just wanted to go out and drink. And they were bullies. I mean, they were major bullies. [Chuckles.]

MAC NEILL: Can you describe—what do you mean by "bullies"?

CARTER: They burned my stuff. I had to go to the dean because in my triple room—so they shared the—it was a weird room. It was, like, two narrow rooms, right? And I think one of them was intended to be, like, a sleeping area; the other one was intended to be the—you know, kind of the gathering area. They decided that they wanted to be in the sleeping area, and I was in the other area.

So I had my own—I was—at that point, it seems like they had given me, like, "This is your corner," right? "And this is where you're gonna sleep." I think they had early identified that they were living with someone who was probably gay or definitely different from them, and I was put into my own little sector of the room.

So I was, like, physical separated from them. I wanted to be separated from them. I realized, *This is not gonna work at all.* It was uncomfortable being in the room with them. I

would get up early and come in late to avoid being with them. It was just—they were totally different from me.

And there were times when I would come back. They would have guys in the room. They'd be hanging out. I don't know if they were drinking at that point. Probably not. But they probably had been drinking or going out to party or something. And they were just very caustic. Like, they glared at me and wouldn't talk to me. I walked in and realized that they'd probably been talking about me behind my back.

And there were times I walked in, and I would have stuff—you know, that I had arranged on my desk that had been burned. [Chuckles.] I mean, just literally burned. Cologne boxes, Calvin Klein cologne boxes and stuff that I kind of arranged. I guess that wasn't acceptable to them, so they just burned them. Yeah. And I was in fear for my—my safety and my—you know, my own comfort. It just stressed me out a lot.

MAC NEILL: How did—how did that affect your mental health?

CARTER: Very, very poorly. I went through—I mean, I—at that point was—we had—so when I left Dartmouth, I was—had dropped probably—oh, God—I'd probably lost twenty pounds, fifteen or twenty pounds in that freshman fall. I was diagnosed anorexic after I went home and went to a family doctor. This had probably been a progressive thing as—you know, I was neglecting my—it was—you know, anorexia is all about control of your body and your environment. Anything that you can't—it's a compensation for other stuff.

So as I was stressing out in high school and going toward college and stuff, I was becoming increasingly more in control of my diet and in control of my fitness and all that. And it became out—it spiraled out of control, mostly during that freshman fall. So that contributed to my physical and mental breakdown, because of my experiences at Dartmouth.

But—you know, it had been leading up to that because I had dropped weight when I was in high school and was becoming frail and, you know, thin. But the experience that I had at Dartmouth was definitely the—the trigger point. I

mean, it was the—I mean, that was what really sent me into that spiral, but—because I was—I was becoming more—and I recognized this when we went through—when I went through therapy, is that I was more in control of my diet. I had then become, like, an ardent—

[Recording glitch. Sound stops and then resumes.]

MAC NEILL: So where we left off, you had been talking about your mental health and how your freshman roommates in New Hamp had been bullying you. I think—I believe my last question to you was how did their bullying affect your mental health?

CARTER: Yeah, pretty dramatically. So I had—I—I went to the dean—I mean, it was that serious. I had—I—I remember going through—I wouldn't have remembered this unless I'd gone through the material that I sent you, but my freshman adviser was named Judith [Burrows] Csatari [pronounced chih-TAR-ee] [Class of 1976]. And like any other adult who was in a position of—of mentor, I went directly to her, and she—I think she suggested I go to the dean. I know I reached out to a number of people in the administration. And I don't remember who the dean was at that time, but they were reported. I think mostly Judith Csatari was the one I said, "This is—like, I can't deal with this. I don't know what's goin' on."

And I don't believe that there was any talk of me—there may have been some discussion of maybe me moving or doing whatever, but I kind of at that point, until I left Dartmouth—my mental health became so bad that I—it's a total blank to me. To this day, I have this—this gray period. I remember certain things that I did from the time I had this break until I finally ended up home, in therapy. But that was the point at which I think I stopped really recognizing my daily activities. I mean, it was a serious mental break.

I decided at some point that I would—I needed to get out of the environment. I knew I couldn't go back to the room, you know, whatever. My—[Chuckles.] This is when my extreme side started kicking in. I decided that I would go to Boston and visit some relatives I barely knew. Actually, I think I just got on a bus and went to Boston. It was just the closest thing. I knew I had relatives there.

And I showed up on their doorstep without any explanation, really, you know. And this was, again, before cell phones, before the internet, before e-mail. And my parents were informed that I had left Dartmouth and I had suddenly shown up at these people's house. I think I probably got there and realized, *Well, I don't know where I'm gonna stay and what I'm gonna do.* I just had to get out of Dartmouth.

It's funny: I—I—I barely remember any of that. I don't remember getting on the bus. I remember I *got* on a bus [laughs], but I don't remember any of the, you know, specifics of what happened from the time all this was happening at Dartmouth and I knew that this was not going to work for me, and I ended up in Boston.

I think I had to come back at some point. I know I had to come back. I don't know how that transpired, but from what I can remember, Judith helped me—I think it was Judith, actually, who helped me get my stuff from New Hamp. I had decided at that point something was wrong. I needed to get out, you know, out of the environment. I needed to go back home. I needed to get myself better. She helped me get my stuff out of New Hamp and stored it in her home. I think.

[unintelligible] involved in that too. And this is an interesting connection with my religious past. Part of how I tried to get control and get centered at Dartmouth was that I joined the church there, Rollins [Chapel]. And I had a good mentor/friend, much like my—my Pastor Biederman at my church at home. He became one of the people that I kind of get grounded with, right? He may have been—I can't remember if it was Judith or him that stored my stuff until I eventually came back to Dartmouth and retrieved it. That was an incidental that I guess I just erased from brain, and it was tough to remember the things and all the stuff going on. [Chuckles.] But one of the two of them helped me get out of Dartmouth, or helped get my stuff out of New Hamp so that I could formally leave the school.

And that was around—oh, gosh, it was so close! I mean, we were—we were looking at finals. I had gotten that far through, and there was talk of "Are you sure you can't make it through the term? It would be a whole lot easier. You could

keep your credits," blah, blah, blah. And I was just, "I have to get out of here. I have to get out." There was no question. I just had to leave the school.

So it was a dramatic break. Went back home to freaking-out parents [chuckles] who wondered, "What the hell is going on?" And immediate visits with doctors and specialists, and I went through CAT scans and, you know, the whole thing, because I was obviously physically, like, sick and mentally not there. So it was—it was pretty bad.

And I do attach that directly to the bullying that happened at—at New Hamp. I mean, that was what caused my break. I probably could have made it. I was—in all other aspects of my kind of social, academic, physical life, everything was kind of falling apart, but that was the real—you know, that pulled the trap door out from under me. It's not even being able to have a comfortable place to call my—you know, my home at night away from everything. I had no escape—

MAC NEILL: Mm-hm.

CARTER: —from—from anything that was bugging me otherwise, so pretty big [chuckles]—pretty big problem there, you know? But, yeah, that was—that was [unintelligible]. [Chuckles.]

MAC NEILL: So—so—so when you—after you left Dartmouth and went back to Iowa, you were there for a year before coming back?

CARTER: Yeah. Yeah, I came back with the '87s, the next—the next freshman fall.

MAC NEILL: And during that year after you had stabilized, what—what did you spend your time doing?

CARTER: Oh! Putting on weight. [Laughs.] I was at that point—I mean, I was, like, a comfortable 125 pounds. I was always a pretty small kid. I was five foot seven, and at that point, I weighed just around 100, so I was really, really in trouble. I actually kind of—it was weird, and I think it freaked my parents out. With this control thing that happened, I had started picking up, like, eating trends. I had already decided—and my mom would say it happened when I was sixteen; I think it was

later—I had decided I was going to be a vegetarian. I had changed things.

That was part of the problem with my physical health, is that I was a kind of undirected, misdirected vegetarian without a lot of background in how to do it properly: get the calories, get the protein, and all the stuff I needed. So I spent time learning about that. I think that was my compensation for getting better, right?

How do you say it? That was, like,—I had to have something to focus on to kind of—kind of cushion the idea that I was, like, freaking out, right? But I was getting better, you know, so the doctor said, "You need to put on fifteen pounds or we're gonna feed you intravenously in the hospital." He was a very—this was my family pediatrician, and he was pretty—pretty hard core. He said, "There's nothing—there's no exception. You've just gotta gain weight."

So I did, and I spent time doing that. But at the same time, learning how to cook being a vegetarian—you know, learning how to do it properly. I volunteered at a—at a co-op, which was full of hippies and kind of the outcasts of Des Moines. I had done a little bit of that—you know, gone to, like, specialty food stores and stuff and, you know, kind of tree-hugging places when I was in high school, but I really got into that.

What else did I do? I mean, I had to keep myself—I started running. I kind of put myself into—because I was putting on so much weight so quickly, my fear was, *You're just gonna get fat and bulbous and ugly, right? This is not gonna work to, like, put on this weight.*

So I turned it into muscle. I tried to—and I did a lot of running. Every morning, I would go out and, you know, run a few miles and just to kind of get myself going. And I just started feeling better. You know, everything. I put on the weight, I felt more focused, and I started, I think at that point, you know, refocusing on getting myself back into, you know, academics in my life.

You know, I needed to go to school. I wanted to go to school. And it was probably, mmm, let's see, when did I

leave? I would say it was probably the spring of ’83? Maybe earlier. I don’t know how much time I needed, but at some point in the early part of ’83, I talked to my parents about going back to Dartmouth, because I had quickly gotten myself—I thought I had gotten myself back to physical and mental health, and I just wanted to get back into the swing of it. And that did not go over well. [Chuckles.]

MAC NEILL: When you say that didn’t go over well, it didn’t go over well with your parents.

CARTER: With my parents. Yeah, they—they could not understand—and they said to me, “Why would you want to go back to the place that”—and this was their impression, and this was, in my mind, kind of [unintelligible] the logical impression to have, is that “Dartmouth did this to you.” You know, so they said, “Why would you want to go back? Why would you want to go back to a place”—

[voice cracks] And I—I said then what I say now: “I needed to go back.” I had to face—I had to face [voice cracks] my fucking demons. [Weeps.] That’s a tough one. I didn’t think that would come back.

MAC NEILL: Yeah.

CARTER: Whew! But that’s what I did, you know? [Voice still shaky.] Couldn’t say it. I kind of realized that at that point I had a calling.

MAC NEILL: Mm-hm. So, yeah, can you—can you tell me more about how your perspective changed, I guess?

CARTER: Wow. A lot. So, well, along with getting my mental and physical health all kind of in order and getting focused on what I needed to do and, you know, how I was going to do it, I didn’t know what I was going to do when I came back to Dartmouth, but I—at that point started coming in to—just that whole year of transition. That was when I really started coming out as being gay.

I had my first experience that—no, wait, was it that summer? This is where I’m a little fuzzy. I think it was. I think it was the summer before I came to Dartmouth. I mean, that’s how

quickly I came back. I had some—I had a friend, whom my mom hated, and I think this was—I met Jim before I went to Dartmouth. But he was, like, a punk rocker. He was big, kind of sloppy, greasy-haired—you know, I mean, he was wearing, like, rosary beads and stuff. He was—he was a pretty extreme punk guy. I loved the guy. Still in touch with him.

My mom referred to him as the most disgusting person she'd ever met. She just did not want this person in my life. Yeah, I mean, she actually said that to me. [Chuckles.] And Mom's pretty—well, she's pretty supportive as you've kind of gotten the impression. She—she just said to me—she just didn't want to have anything to do with Jim.

But I had hung out with him more during that summer—spring and summer, I guess, when I was back. And he introduced me to, you know, other gay people, and I realized this was part of my breakdown. I mean, this was part of the reason—I've been repressing this for years, and so I found a community in Iowa, of all places, of people who were like me and had come to terms with things in much better—you know, in a much better way than I had. And I realized this was who I was, you know.

And I had my first openly gay experience with a guy named Mike that summer, I think, before I went to school. Now, I may be a year off because I—I went in '83 to Dartmouth, did my full three terms and then came back and had a pretty crazy summer. [Chuckles.] So it was either the summer before or the summer after, but I had already come out. I was already gay and flamboyantly gay when I went back to Dartmouth.

Pretty obviously. People—people to this day said, "I remember this guy came in, a real kind of mousy, Midwestern, quiet guy, and he came back with, like, dyed hair and crazy gay." [Both chuckle.] And that's—that was the fall of 1983, when I hit campus and was a different person.

MAC NEILL: And you also mentioned, previously when we were talking, a near- —a near-death experience? Did that come af- —after that, or was this around the year that you were in Iowa?

CARTER: I'm sorry, the—when what came out? What experience?

MAC NEILL: You—you had mentioned, like, a near-death experience, or—

CARTER: That was—yeah, that was that exper- —that was what I consider a rebirth. I always—to this day, I look back at the time when I kind of broke at Dartmouth, with all the stuff that happened in the fall of '82. I had—that was my near-death experience. I was—I mean, they put me in the hospital, almost. I was—because my—I just—everything shut down. You know, my—my perspective changed. I mean,—no, I can't even say that. I just blacked out. I really just blacked out.

I—I—I've never fainted in my life. I've never had experiences that made me become detached with my body and my mind. But that all happened then, and that's why it's kind of a blank. And when I came out of it, I was a different person. And that's what started my kind of rebirth to being this new identity. You know, same person, just different identity. It's very weird.

I—I—it's kind of me. You know, now that I look back at it, it's like I always do things in a very—usually, I'm pretty straight—straight and narrow, but something dramatic happens, I do it in a very dramatic way, so it kind of fits with my personality. I had to, like, go through a complete frigging break and then come back as a completely different person.

MAC NEILL: Hmm. So coming back to campus, you're out, and can you talk about the—your—your—the reception, I guess—like, of—of you coming back?

CARTER: Yeah. Just logistically, what they did is I had—so now I'm remembering this a little bit! In that preparation period from the spring or so, however much time I needed to, like, get readmitted, I, you know, called and I said, "I want to come back. What do I have to do?" And had to write the letters and get the formal whatever.

Part of that I—because I knew that I was going to have to do something better with my diet and stuff, I was determined that I was going to stay on this path, and to this day, I'm still

a vegetarian. I have been since that point. I needed to have something better provided on campus.

Thayer [Dining Hall, now Class of 1953 Commons] was a nightmare for me. I was working there my freshman fall. That was, like, awful, you know, because I—I didn't want to be around meat. I didn't want any of that stuff. And Thayer then was not vegetarian friendly. They were trying, but they just weren't doing it. But I did go to Collis [Café] , so I already had gotten in touch with Collis before I had left. Part of what I was doing in my spare time was just kind of seeking out, you know, kind of what I thought were just, like vegetarian friendly—but Collis was also, like, a gay friendly, progressive friendly area.

And I had known—I had been introduced to Linda [Skewes] Kennedy, who was the head of Collis at the time, and had already arranged to possibly work for them. It was a vegetarian café at the time. And when I came back, I came back to that, so I had already arranged—I was given a single in the River Cluster, of course, because that's where all the outcasts go. Got a single there, so I didn't have a roommate.

And they mollycoddled me in the administration. I know, because they knew—they had already reported these people and had to leave the college. They knew they had to put me in a single. And I got a job with Collis, which I carried through for the next five years. Best job on campus.

I was a cook for them. I was a counter worker, and then I quickly became a cook. But—so that was kind of how I transitioned back to make my life better at Dartmouth, right? All those things.

And the other thing I did was immediately—and I just kind of like—like a magnet, I attracted all the other gay people on campus. I mean, all you had to do in the eighties was show up with an earring or your hair dyed or whatever, and suddenly you found this small community of out gay people. Very small community. But we all became very closely aligned.

I met Eileen [G. Brown, Class of 1987], who's still a great friend today. Big fag hag on campus. She met me in a class,

and we hit it off, and all of a sudden I was part of this clique of—of radical gay people, you know? [Chuckles.] It was—it was pretty cool, because I really needed that. You know, I didn't have that in '82. I didn't even identify with it in '82, so I would never have sought it out, but suddenly Dartmouth became a totally different place, for me.

MAC NEILL: And so you mentioned your friend Eileen. Do you—do you know her last name?

CARTER: Yep, Eileen—it's a weird last name. Her last name is Brown, but her full name is, like, [Gramshare? 1:07:29] Brown. Eileen Brown. She has a hyphenated last name, but I can never remember it. I think back then she used her whole name. She was an '87.

MAC NEILL: Hmm. And what—what kind of groups did the radical gay people in Dartmouth run in?

CARTER: What kind of groups?

MAC NEILL: Yeah.

CARTER: Drama. Mostly everyone was in drama costuming. Hardly anyone was in a frat. David, who is now Scipio [C.] Garling [Class of 1986], was an academic in the Latin Studies Department. Art history people—and that became my major when I went back and realized, *I don't like these, like, economic classes, and I don't want to waste my time doing these mundane things. I want to do something, like, interesting and fun and, you know, things that will put a different perspective on my life.* And I fell in love with art history.

I met a lot of people—a lot of gay people in art history, but mostly drama, mostly drama. Hung out at the Hopkins Center [for the Arts] and, you know, film societies. I mean, it became a totally different place. I'd done a little bit of that, because I think I'd mentioned to you in our talks before that Mom and I would go to, like, you know, dinner theaters, and I was going to theater when I was in junior high and was, like, big on live shows.

I did all the Hopkins Center stuff, even in my freshman fall. When I had not identified as being gay, I was—that was my little escape, right? It became my full life, you know. Everyone around was going to film and going to—you know, involved in, you know, being in or producing plays at Hopkins Center and stuff. So it was—it was fun. [Chuckles.] And we went to, like,—[unintelligible]. I loved this place, you know.

MAC NEILL: And so when you came back, were you totally out to both your family and the people at Dartmouth?

CARTER: No. [Chuckles.] I never talked to my family about it before I left. I don't think I was—I really don't think I was self-identified gay. I mean, I had a gay experience, but because I grew up in the Midwest and you just didn't talk about it, even then I didn't have a name for it. The people at Dartmouth gave me a name for it. I mean, we were gay, you know. It all fell into place. It's like, *Well, that's what's different. I know I like this—you know, the guy I had sex with, and you know, before I came here, and all those feelings were part of who I am and everything.* But I really found a, you know,—I hate to say a label for it because that's just such a negative word, but I—I—I—I got an identity with the people, you know, that were more out than me, or maybe they're in the same position, but we all kind of fell in together.

But with my family, because I had not identified, I didn't feel comfortable talking to them about it. I had not come out to them. I had to come out to them, and I did so via a letter, probably as early as—let's see, that would have been '83—before 1984, when the whole Tri-Kap [Kappa Kappa Kappa] thing came down. I realized I had to let my family know because I was becoming newsworthy. I mean, I was getting in *The Daily Dartmouth*, and my name was going around.

And I know that they had—my parents are not legacies, obviously, and they didn't run in circles with other Dartmouth alums and stuff, but they heard about stuff. I mean, Dartmouth's really good about keeping them informed by sending them stuff and keeping them in touch. And I knew they would get a copy of *The D*, and there it would be, on the front cover. So I preempted that, and I was, like, *Okay, I have to come out to them. I'm not there. I'm not gonna go*

home just to come out. I'll just do it in a letter. So—but I was out at campus long before I was out for my parents.

MAC NEILL: What were your parents' reception?

CARTER: Oh, my God! [Chuckles.] So I did not send it to you, but I will share with you a letter that my father sent me, which was—and I accused him of this in a pretty rabid response, via letter. Pretty typical Midwestern Christian, you know fed by the media response [chuckles] to a son coming out.

And that was, "You've taken the easy way out. You've got other sexual problems. You're—this is a cop-out. It's being—it's something that—there's more of in the news, and so you're just thinking it's what it is. You've always wanted to be extra-dramatic. You always wanted to be different. You need to sit back and relax and deal with your obvious sexual problems and not just label yourself as gay because you can't deal with women." Which was totally not what—that's how out of touch my father was.

My response to him was, "Dad, this is not gonna fly." I mean, at that point, I had already become pretty militant and pretty set in the fact that "this is who I am, and I'm not gonna put up with shit, even from my own father." And I said—reminded him, you know, I had—I had no problem with this. I said, "You may have been shy with women. I never was. I always had a girlfriend. I've had experiences. I know I don't like them as well as this." And I was just—"This is not the response I expected from a loving father. You know, this will not fly." I laid it out on the line with him very early.

Mom, on the other hand, became the typical doting, worried mother. You know, "Oh, my God, my son's life. After all this, and now he's, you know, going off on this other tangent, and he's ruining his life." And just turned into a sobbing mess [chuckles] that my father had to deal with. They did not take it well at all.

Snapped out of it pretty quickly once they realized that, you know, I was not having another breakdown. [Chuckles.] I was not—you know, I was not—I was not on drugs or something, and I was, you know, going off in some horrible tangential direction. It—but it took a while. It took a while. It

took several years, probably a decade, for them to, like, really understand that this was a permanent part of my always identity that I had finally gotten in touch with.

But, yeah, it was tough. It was tough for the family. And I wasn't there, so it made it a little easier for me. I think I had to detach myself from my close family, even my sister, for a while. But I think that's a necessary part of it. I think it was another reason I left, went back to Dartmouth, and, you know,–because it was an easy way for me to get away from my family. To come in touch with identity because I knew I had to do it.

And since Dartmouth was the place that kind of broke me, I decided—and I loved Dartmouth. I really did. I liked the area. I knew [unintelligible] there. I loved the—the administration and the faculty. Everyone I met there, outside of the students and the attitudes of the students, and the whole social environment—I loved the place. I really did. And that's—you know, that's what brought me back.

MAC NEILL: So after you wrote that letter to your parents, did you kind of get a sense that there were other gay people on campus besides your radical group?

CARTER: I'm sorry, I didn't follow that. Did I get [unintelligible] from—

MAC NEILL: So I—I'm not—this is actually maybe not a necessarily connected question, but, like, did you—were there different groups of gay people on campus besides your radical group?

CARTER: That's a good question. I—I didn't identify them at the time, but yeah. [Chuckles.] Yeah, there were—there were lots of little nests of closeted—everything from closeted to kind of not so well known except in little circles—gay people, all of whom came tumbling down in 1984 with all the crises that happened. That's what Tri-Kap was all about.

There were people who sought out other gay people and kind of bonded with them in these very secret ways, in these very isolated ways. It suddenly became well known. I mean, I think part of the radicalization of gay identity at Dartmouth in the early eighties was to kind of unlatch all of these closet

doors, much to those people's chagrin, you know, because they were comfortable being in Tri Kap, and being a kind of not so well known but okay. Air quoted "okay" group of—of people who were allowed to use places like Tri Kap as a sequoistered [sic] area for their—you know, whatever.

And I'm not putting a value judgement on it. It worked for them. Didn't bug us. What bothered us was the hypocrisy that happened once that whole nest opened and the—and the bigots started reacting to it. And it had a major backlash on these other sectors of non-radical gay people. They hated us, you know, because we messed up their world. But this was the beginning of, like, a big gay liberation all through—all throughout the United States, you know, and we were just spurred on by it, and we were not stopping.

You know, it was, like,—we—we befriended a lot of these people. We found out that a lot of these non-radical gay people were part of the drama group that just—we just didn't know were gay or we suspected and, you know, just kind of let them be who they were.

But we had to kind of like work with them and work against them at the same time, so, yeah, there were—there were lots of different gradations of gay at Dartmouth. But what you really saw was our group of radical gay people, the ones who were vocally and visually out.

MAC NEILL: Can—do you know of, like, specifically other groups that, like, these more closeted students might have been a part of, besides Tri-Kap?

CARTER: Any of the—yeah, Alpha Theta—any of the co-ed fraternities were kind of like accepted spots. Tri-Kap, I think, was—actually, I think there was a couple other fraternities. I—I knew of a couple other gay people later, who were probably somewhat known in other all-male fraternities, but really Tri-Kap was the only one that kind of had a—it just attracted—it attracted gay people.

And I think it's true of a lot of the Greek system. I got into Tri-—I got into Alpha Theta because [chuckles]—well, the people there were my drug dealers. [Chuckles.] And so we bonded that way. But it—it's just one example. You—you

socially hung out with certain people or you were attracted to certain people. And if they were part of the Greek system, you were invited to be with them, right? So the Greek system was all about, you know, creating an environment, creating a house with people who were like you, right? But it was never always a homogenous kind of whole group. It was always like little pockets of people who coexisted.

Even in Alpha Theta, where I ended up eventually, not a whole lot of us were really best friends. Some of us didn't even really like each other. But we were parts of these larger sub-clusters of people who bonded together and pulled their friends in so that they could be a part of this house.

I think that's what happened in Tri-Kap and some of the other male fraternities but not so much, but mostly at Tri-Kap it was the few kind of non-out, not really comfortable gay people that had other kind of gay friends—I don't know. I don't know the dynamics. I wasn't part of it exactly, but it seemed like they were these kind of closeted group—they were groups of closeted people who could be closeted together, and they closeted themselves [chuckles] in—in Tri-Kap.

I don't even if closeted is really the best word—just non-radical, non- —non-known or secretive—we'll call them secretive gay people. I'm trying to think of where else they may have hung out. I know that [The] Tabard—Tabard had some gay people, but I don't think it was—the dynamic was not as—as great there. What was—what was it at the time? I can't remember.

Phi [Kappa] Psi [now Panarchy]—Phi Psi had another—but Phi Psi was a completely different thing. That was—that was—what is it called now? I can never remember. They changed the name of it. It's the off-campus Greek house. Uh! It was the drug house at the time, so that had a totally different dynamic. I mean, there was bound to be a lot of gay people, because there were a lot of freaks in that house. Let's put it that way. [Laughs.] It's Panarchy, is what I think—is it still called Panarchy?

MAC NEILL: Oh. Yes, it's still called Panarchy.

CARTER: It used to be called Phi Psi. Phi Psi. And we had—we had out gay friends who were at Phi Psi, but within Phi Psi there were closeted gay people too. That, I found out later.

And then there were—I wouldn't say that there were—yeah, no, Tri-Kap was really unique in its way. There were other gay people I knew from other Greek places—you know, other Greeks that were members, active members of houses. But I don't—they had that brotherhood of gay—other closeted gay friends like Tri-Kap people did.

MAC NEILL: So we've kind of been talking around this issue, but, I mean, I'm interested in your—in your understanding of the 1984 Tri-Kap purge.

CARTER: First hand. [Chuckles.] I started it. I started it in my radicalness, and I was the first person that it broke news with, and you'll see that in this article. I was—so we knew that Tri-Kap was homophobic. That was pretty well known. And it's—so I don't think we understood the irony of it until things started actually rolling down.

Tri-Kap was well known well—long before—what was that, the winter of '84?—winter and spring of '84 when all this happened? Was well known for not allowing openly gay people or people who were perceived to be openly gay or who were different from, you know, going into their parties, dancing. They were kicking people out. And it was not publicized, but it was—the rumor was: Don't go to Tri-Kap because they're not going to allow you—especially if you're out, you're going to get kicked out.

And that was just kind of—I mean, that was just fodder for radical people, right? It's like, "Really? That shit's not gonna happen." [Both chuckle.] But it happened to Sean [P.] O'Hearn [Class of 1986], it happened to Michael—so these were people in my—in my group of friends. They had gone to parties before—before all this happened and had been told to leave because they were out and gay, and people knew about them, and they didn't want them in their house.

Yet they had gay people, and—and—Joel [O. Thayer, Class of 1985], who was their social director—later came out after he was kicked out of the house, was forced out of the closet,

but they kind of knew they had gay people in that house. And it was this—it was just this weird—I still don't understand the dynamics, except that it was this—this guarded homophobia, right?

I mean, I think it—and it happens a lot. I think people, and families who have other gay—who have gay people in their own circles are the ones that tend to be most homophobic because it's closest to home. And I think that's what happened in Tri-Kap, is that they kind of knew they had these people, but they didn't want to be perceived as being tolerant of them, so they took it out on people outside the house, to protect their own, right?—and to justify their own acceptance of people who might even be within their own ranks. And there were a lot of them. Five—at least five that I know of, who are subsequently depledged or quit because they didn't want to be a part of this open homophobia that happened after the winter of '84.

So I went to a party. I was invited. I was working at Collis at the time, and—and one of the—I can't tell you what house she was in, one of the sorority—friends of mine, who I think was a lesbian but I'm not sure, invited me to a party and said, "You know, there's this party at Tri-Kap. You should come. Let's dance and just, you know, have fun."

And I'm, like, "Tri-Kap? Are you fucking kidding me?" [Chuckles.] I said, "I can't go to Tri-Kap. You know that they're gonna kick me out." She's, like, "They won't kick you out. You're with me. Just hang with me. I'm inviting you. They can't kick you out." They kicked me out. [Chuckles.] They kicked me out in a big way.

So we had danced, and I think my—I think *The Harbinger* article I sent you, which is the best account of what went on, describes what happened. I went in. I danced three songs with her. I was hanging around, probably just standing there, smoking or whatever, waiting for her, and I was approached by at last three—I want to say two or three Tri-Kap brothers, who came directly up to me, and they said, "Are you Stephen Carter?" I mean, they confirmed my identity, right? They were confirming my identity.

I said, “Yeah. Why?” And they said, “You’re not welcome here.” And I said [chuckles]—and I think I must have said to them, “Why?” And they said, “You are not—you’re not allowed in this house. We’re asking you to leave.” And I said, “I was invited here.” And I mentioned, you know, that—oh God, I had her name earlier today because I was thinking about her, and I can’t remember. But anyhow, I said, “My friend is downstairs. She invited me. We’ve been dancing. I’m staying.”

And they’re, like, “You’re leaving the house.” And, they,—and I left. You know, I didn’t want to cause—I certainly didn’t want to get in a fight. [Chuckles.] But I went immediately to the media—to friends, and then they said, “You need to bring this to *The Dartmouth* [*Review*]. You need to bring this out and let people know.”

And I was—I was kind of like—I’ve been that—I was like that throughout my high school or my college career. I became a person who kind of like went to the media and who was the vocal person that people spurred on, right? They would through me out in front of evangelical radical campus and say, “You need to go talk to this guy.” You know, you be the flamboyant gay person to, you know, like, talk to back to him and make a scene or whatever.

And that’s what I did. I went to *The*—I went to *The Dartmouth*. I don’t know if they covered my arti- —my story, but *Harbinger*, which was the left-wing answer to *The Dartmouth Review*, that was around for maybe—maybe a year; I don’t think it was much longer than that—they ran the story about what happened.

And then it tumbled down. Then you started seeing all the articles. *The D* picked it up, Homophobia Is Hitting Dartmouth. Tri-Kap incident, it became the Tri-Kap Incident. Dean [Edward J.] Shanahan responded to it. There were letters that I think I scanned and sent you that were his reaction to what’s going on at campus. There were—Tri-Kap was being put up against [Committee on] Standards for homophobia.

There was talk about whether or not there was equal opportunity clauses properly in place. You know, I mean, it

came—it became a discussion about ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]—you know, how can we allow ROTC that's openly anti-gay? You know, it just opened this Pandora's box of equal rights, and Tri-Kap was at the—at the apex of it because that's where it all kind of happened.

It's weird. I mean, everyone—everyone in my class I think could tell you that was—that was the point at which everything exploded, was that Tri-Kap incident. And you know about it. [Laughs.] So it's—it's ancient history at this point, but it's still well known as, "Oh, my God, the Tri-Kap incident!"

MAC NEILL: Mm-hm. And so the Tri-Kap incident also coincides fairly closely to *The Review*'s outing of members of the Gay Straight Alliance [sic; Gay Students Association], I believe.

CARTER: Right, and I don't—yeah, that was—yeah, it was very close, and I don't remember if Tri-Kap happened before or after that because it was all kind of a flurry of activity. [unintelligible] the article and look at the time frames, but Teresa Polenz [Teresa A. Delany, née Polenz, Class of 1987]—I was in that meeting, the taping of the—of the GSA meeting. I don't believe I was the president at the point—at the point. It seems like, from my—that one page transcript that I gave to the—either the dean's office or *The Dartmouth*—I can't remember if it was the media or the dean's office—describing what happened.

It sounded as if I may have been the president. I was the president for I think a year of the GSA. But I think— I wanna say Scipio [formerly David] [C.] Garling was the president at the time that that happened, but, yeah, that—that happened all—so that—that, in combination, you're right, with Tri-Kap kind of like,—Tri-Kap kind of covered it all, right? Because that was the Greek system. This incident at which Teresa Polenz was big news, but I don't think as big as, you know, the explosion, because that trickled down to all the other houses. Every house suddenly became—you know, put in question as having, you know, the potential of being anti-gay.

And, is the whole Greek system—does it need to be abolished? Is it inherently misogynistic? Is it inherently

homophobic? Is there a place for the Greek system? So that's why that became, I think, such a big deal versus the Polenz incident, which was—well, you know, they're getting money from the college. You know, it's questionable whether or not they were really doing anything worthwhile, and why is this splinter group—you know, that became more of a political, isolated thing.

But it was big news for us, because it potentially outed a number of people that *The Review* didn't name, and they were classic—classic *Review* tactics. They didn't name them, but they described them in great detail, so it was obvious who they were for—to anyone on a small campus. So they potentially outed them, but it wasn't like the Tri-Kap incident that turned into, you know, the big political, all-campus kind of, you know,—what's the term?—philosophical kind of anti-discrimination conversation that they started.

MAC NEILL: Do you remember the—that meeting at all, when Teresa Polenz—

CARTER: Oh, yes.

MAC NEILL: —taped—

CARTER: Oh, yeah. [Chuckles.] Yeah, when I read it in the transcript, it became even more clear. I remember minute by minute, yeah. You know, this girl we had never seen before, very preppy, blonde kind of—and we all kind of looked at each other like, "What the heck is she doing?" It was an open meeting. You know, we read a confidentiality statement at the beginning. I guess which was routine. I don't remember that myself. But, the people in the group—we all concurred this happened, so I guess it happened back then.

And we start—because it was an open conversation about stuff that had happened and things you were feeling, and she came in there—in there—you know, she sat down, with her Kenya bag, and she, you know, kind of didn't introduce herself but just kind of looked around like a curious puppy and then started asking weird questions. Like, she was—she was saying, "Well, how do you all know? When did you know that you were gay?" And, you know, she said, "Because I kind of had feelings myself." And we're thinking, *Yeah, right.*

You're a sorority girl or whatever. But, you know, we're open to this. It can happen to anybody.

And then she started asking about, you know, funding—you know, these questions that were just, like, off. And we started looking at each other, thinking, *This doesn't sound right.* Well, thirty minutes into the meeting, she left, excused herself and said that she had to meet a friend. And then she said, "I'll be back." And she did. She came back, and almost like clockwork, thirty minutes later, she left.

Well, this is the era of tape recorders, right, with thirty-minute tapes, so we put it together. We all went, you know, to drinks afterwards. She wasn't there. She had left and, you know, we started talking and saying, "Didn't that seem weird to you? And what was this thirty-minute thing?" And they're, like, "She taped it."

I mean, we knew then that she was taping it. So I—they went to actually find *her*. I—I was not part of this. I probably would not have agreed to be part of it. I didn't think that coming after her would be the answer. I think I probably suggested, and we did, go to the administration the next day. But a group of them actually, knowing her name, figuring out who she was, actually went to her dorm room, I think, to find her. And I think they were unsuccessful.

But they later found out that she was—that she was with *The Review*, because they knew her name, and they brought it to the administration, reported her. And then it turned into, you know, an investigation—an investigation by the administration that potentially—and eventually went to state—state wiretapping laws. And she was indicted.

The Wikipedia article on the Polenz taping was actually partially inaccurate, and I corrected it, so what you—what you would read on Wikipedia if you look up Teresa Polenz and *Dartmouth Review* is a pretty accurate description of what happened, from my—you know, from my recollection.

MAC NEILL: And did get a—were there any of the same people who were running in the Tri-Kap incident also involved with *The Review*, with—I guess, like, I'm—I'm trying to see if there

was some crossover between the Polenz incident and the Tri-Kap incident.

CARTER: Yeah, I think there naturally would have had to have been, because there were so people out gay people, you know, kind of openly out gay people on campus, and they were all involved in both, so those of us that either were kicked out of Tri-Kap or who were vocally pushing that whole Tri-Kap thing were also in the GSA and were in that meeting. So, like, Scipio Garling was—he was not a real social person except within our group, so he didn't go to those parties. He had—he had kind of academic friends within his department and us as his gay coterie of friends that he would hang out with.

But he was vocally involved and wrote some of the articles you'll see that I sent to you, as, you know, kind of the academic voice, the openly gay, you know, kind of philosophical, theoretical, you know, voice of reason kind of person. But he was in that meeting.

Two or three—I don't remember if Michael [R.] Williams [Class of 1986] and Sean—Michael Williams and Sean O'Hearn, both '86s, were very very close friends of mine. I think they were in that meeting, but I can't be sure. I can confirm that because I'm still in contact with them. Scipio—Scipio and I were definitely there and were definitely involved with Tri-Kap, and Michael and Sean, who were probably there, had previously been kicked out of Tri-Kap. So they all became very vocal and involved because they were victims of previous actions that Tri-Kap—Tri-Kap took against gay people.

MAC NEILL: And also, like, on the other side of that, like, were there—were there members of Tri-Kap who—

CARTER: *Review* people?

MAC NEILL: Yeah.

CARTER: No. I don't believe so, no. *The Review*—so Tri-Kap—and this should probably be made very clear: I do not believe Tri-Kap was in any way associated with *The Review*, right up to their very bigoted, Nazi—almost Nazi-type president at the time, [J.] Nuno Pedro [Class of 1984, now Maximillian Nuno

Rayner], who was single-handedly responsible for the backlash at Tri-Kap and kicking people out of the house in reaction to what was happening.

So we blew the top off their homophobia, right? And their reaction to it was to purge the house. That's where it became really crazy, because these clustered—you know, cloistered groups of people that were comfortable in their own right in that house got outed within their own ranks and within their own brotherhood. And it was at the hands of Nuno Pedro.

God knows how—and it's funny, because Alpha Theta at one point had a president, James—I can't remember his last name—who didn't really like me as a gay person, so I could see the dynamic happen, where, you know, you don't always have people in ranks in those kind of places that are tolerant. But usually they listen to the people in the house, right? No one in Tri-Kap, I think, aside from Nuno and his close buddies that he kind of pulled in- —into that little cloister—probably people in control—really wanted those people kicked out of the house. Why would you give up your best social chair if he's not out? You know, he's not a threat, right?

But Nuno was, like, "No, we need to get all these people out of this house. We can't be the—the—we can't be the house that has all the gay people in it." So, anyone who was suspected, they're out. And Joel [O.] Thayer [Class of 1985] got a letter while he was in an off term in Scotland, I believe, saying he was depledged during that Nuno Pedro purge.

So—but yet they were their own enemies. They were cross-over—Nuno was not part of *The Review* that I know of. No one in that group was. There were two simultaneous yet disconnected forces of evil going on [chuckles] at the same time. It was just kind of weird.

But, you know, I never really thought about that until you brought up the question, but now I don't think there was an cross-over.

MAC NEILL: And can you tell me the name of the Tri-Kap president one more time? I didn't hear it.

CARTER: Nuno—Nuno Pedro.

MAC NEILL: Nuno Pedro.

CARTER: Nuno Pedro. His father I believe was—he came from a very elite family. From what I understand, his father was an ambassador in some South American coun- —some South American country, or a high-ranking official. And he was—he was quickly replace- —replaced after all that, but he—yeah, he was pretty—he was pretty rad- —we all disliked him, because we knew what was going on, and all the people who subsequently became depledged, and a lot of them moved to Alpha Theta—

And that leads into other stories I can tell you about, like how I ended up with their rush [unintelligible] stuff. They all gave it to me because they all were brothers of mine in Alpha Theta. When they left Tri-Kap, they sought out other houses, and two or three of them pledged and were immediately brought into the folds of Alpha Theta. They all spoke very, very negatively [chuckles] of Nuno, so we built this impression of him. He was the Nazi. You know, he was the Nazi president that was responsible for all this.

MAC NEILL: So when you say "Nazi," what—what do you mean, I guess, by that?

CARTER: Just—just super—super bigoted. Like, you know, he had the oligarchical control of Tri-Kap. He had his little SS officers. You know, it was a dramatic way of saying he was this rabid, homophobic leader who single-handedly instigated this purge. It was like he just exterminated the gay people in Tri-Kap, as a reaction to, you know, Tri-Kap kicking out gay people. You would think any normal, sane individual would try to keep control in there and not be seen as—not do anything that would put themselves more in the limelight.

He did quite the opposite because he was so ardent that these people, if they existed in his house, would not be there any longer. It was just that kind of crazy, radical, you know, anti-gay sentiment that he was—was pushing to all of his people. And they went along with it, for whatever reason. I don't know enough about the—the brotherhood, but I

suspect there were a lot of, like, semi-weak people who just followed along and didn't want—they didn't want to be seen as sympathizers, right?

So it was very much like—you know, like Hitlerian World War II stuff. It's like you may not have agreed with it, but you went along with it because you didn't want to be seen as someone resisting the force—you know, resisting the leadership or being aligned with the enemy, the gay people.

MAC NEILL: So I want to talk about the—the last controversy that—or the last controversy that you—that you would have been on campus for, which would be—the—the destruction of the shantytowns in 1986—in—in 1986.

CARTER: Right.

MAC NEILL: Can you tell me what your experiences around that were?

CARTER: So after—with all the Tri-Kap and *Review,* Polenz stuff—you know, it wasn't just the Polenz thing. I mean, *The Review* at that point was getting pretty ardently left—or right wing and attacked, you know, most—most things on campus, whether it was women's rights, you know, black—black rights. They poked fun at—at the black houses, at the minority houses. They started getting into, you know, alumni—alumni affairs, you know, and talking about, you know, what—what the—what the school should be doing, what they should be funding, what they should not be funding.

And the backlash to that was—and then this whole anti-apartheid stuff that came up—it was—you know, those of us—and I wasn't spearheading this at all. I was kind of following with this group that kind of got—what's the word I'm looking for? We got empowered by—I think starting from the Tri-Kap thing and just the whole environment at that time—it empowered this whole group of radical gay and lesbian—most—a lot of minorities, who were backing these social issues and found out that Dartmouth was heavily invested in South Africa.

So they were—you know, there was a big movement with—it kind of started with in weirdo corner in Collis [chuckles], which was, like, where all of the radicals hung out. Kanani

[L.]—Kau—Kanani Kauka [Class of 1988], I think is her last name—she's in San Francisco. Ingrid [L.] Nelson [Class of 1988]. There were—I can see faces, but I can't—most of them were led by kind of a core group of very—very ardent, like, non- [unintelligible]. It's hard to describe. It was just a left-wing movement.

There was almost like a—I don't want to call it an Antifa [anti-fascist] group. But it was. It was a pretty—it was a pretty ardent movement. I mean, these were outspoken, heavy-handed, intelligent, driven people, who really wanted to clean up Dartmouth. And that became—I became part of that, more as a participant. And a lot of us—and a lot of gay people became more of participants in that movement because it all—it was all part of cleaning up Dartmouth's image, moving Dartmouth into a more progressive, fair, just, non-discriminatory, globally aware kind of school that we found out it's not, you know?

So the shanties were built as—as a protest. It was pretty—and I was very impressed, again when I looked at the stuff that came from Dean Shanahan's office—you know, from Parkhurst [Hall]. It was impressively in favor of keeping those [unintelligible] shanties up. I mean, they—they were happening during Winter Carnival. The alumnis [sic] were coming in, seeing this, and *The Review* in particular—anyone who aligned with, you know, the old traditional ways were, like, "We can't have this." You know, "We don't care what their position is. These are unsightly, horrible"—you know. "It looks like we've got homeless people camping out on the [Dartmouth] Green."

So—so that was all happening as—as—as part of the splinter movement of radicalism that was going on. And as you know, they were—they were torn down suddenly. And I'm not—I can't really tell you what happened. I kind of bowed out of that. It was—I wasn't directly involved. I went to all the protests, and I kept up with the news and kind of like supported anything they did until it got to the point of, like, I didn't stay in the shanties because I feared that people would come out and—you know, and, like, taunt us and—or do worse. You know, if they were going to get burned down or bulldozed or whatever while people were in there. There was a lot of potential for there to be some physical

altercation. People were really up in arms about this—about that—that whole shanty thing.

MAC NEILL: And so were there—I guess, like, in a similar question that I asked you previously—like, were the same people—like *The Review* attacked, like, who were involved with the Polenz incident and also involved with kind of the destruction of the shantytowns?

CARTER: Yeah. Yeah, that was all—that was all that group of Laura [A.] Ingraham [Class of 1985] *Review* people. Laura was kind of—at the time was more in the background. I can't remember—oh, that was the time that Dinesh [J.] D'Souza [Class of 1983], I think, may have been involved or—I may be wrong about my timing there. He may have been involved later. I believe there was a cross-over between Dinesh D'Souza and Laura Ingraham. That they concurrently were heading *The Review*. I can't tell you for sure.

But I know for certain Laura was at the forefront of—of the Polenz thing, and she was still in control of *The Review* and—and very vocally in the background (if that makes sense) [Chuckles.] She was driving things in the background at *The Review* during the shantytown.

Laura was—she was an interesting person. She and I never met. We never butted heads. But she said a lot of stuff indirectly about me in *The Review* and anyone that was like me, in *The Review*. She was a very careful—I think even back then, she was very careful about not being libelous, openly libelous to the point of being, you know, legally accountable [chuckles] for what she said.

But she was driving the stuff in the background, and Teresa was sent out directly from—by Laura Ingraham. That was pretty well known she was heading it, and she assigned her to that.

She also assigned the people, you know, to—to taunt the shantytowns, to take action with the trustees and with the administration to make sure that the shanties got destroyed. It was—it was Laura, I think, at that point. But I think Dinesh was involved, even as early as the Tri-Kap thing, if my timing is not wrong.

MAC NEILL: Yeah. I guess—I'm interested in seeing if the kind of administration of *The Review* had been constant since—since—from the Tri-Kap purge all the way to the destruction of the shantytowns, or maybe, like, the leadership had changed hands.

CARTER: Yeah, and I think part of it was the Dartmouth plan—you know, that people were not always on campus and off, you know, on exchange terms and stuff, so there was a little bit of confusion always in any kind of leadership, even in our own house. Like, who was president at the time [chuckles] and who was off when.

But Laura was—Laura I think had a pretty strong hand in—throughout that—you know, the—that mid-eighties—early to mid-eighties period. But I think Dinesh came in maybe even after the shantytown. I can't tell you for sure when he started. But it would be very easy to find out just from—he's pretty well known, still. And I think Wikipedia even talks about his—like, when he was on *The Review* staff and stuff.

But—but there were a lot of minions. There were a lot of underlings who were doing stuff with a real—it sounds pretty devious, but it was. They—they would assign people like Polenz to go out and do the dirty work, so there were a lot of people who were peripherally involved who are not well known, who to this day may not even be known as, like, *Review* instigators who were writing articles and, you know, doing the stuff from the background and, you know, spurring on alumni and saying stuff about—and confronting the administration at Parkhurst and stuff.

MAC NEILL: So did you ever interact with the faculty—one of the faculty advisers to *The Review*, Jeffrey [P.] Hart?

CARTER: No, I didn't. Yeah, his name—his name came up a lot. I think he subsequently kind of disavowed himself with *The Review*, if I remember. But it wasn't during *our* time. It was well—well later. I remember there was some surprise about him actually maybe speaking out, maybe kind of like certain people at Fox News, who actually become sane [chuckles] and [unintelligible] what's going on.

But, no, I never interacted with him. I think I may have gone to—you know, I read a lot of the stuff that came out in *The*—in *The Review* and—and *The Dartmouth* and kind of followed along, but I never had any—I never really had any direct—any direct confrontation or anything with anyone in *The Review*. It was all this peripheral, you know, tell the campus that I might stop dying their hair blue kind of references to me and—and other out gay people and other radical people on campus. A lot of them didn't. They made themselves very unattainable, which was part of their tactic, I think, is to just stay up on the hill and, you know, write their nastiness.

MAC NEILL: So, on the other hand, were there—were there faculty members who were supportive of you and of the radical gay people on campus?

CARTER: Very—and they got—and they got slammed in *The Review* on a regular occasion. Dean Shanahan and President [David T.] McLaughlin [Class of 1954; Tuft Class of 1955] were both—more Dean Shanahan. He was a personal friend and mentor to me and a lot of other gay people. We felt very comfortable going to Dean Shanahan. He would occasionally put on that Parkhurst hat and come up with officious replies and statements. We could always depend on Shanahan to have a very equal-handed, if not a progressive point of view on things.

And he was very easy to talk to, and he got stuff done, and he made a lot of statements. You'll see the—the stuff that came out was signed by him in support of the shantytown and free expression, and the Polenz thing—you know, I think it was difficult for him to write that response to the Polenz thing, that they're not going to press charges against her and—and kick her out of school.

And I think he was clear in saying that there was other things going on. I think he knew at that point that it wasn't up to the *school* to decide. She didn't really violate any standards that they could pinpoint on her, although I think they tried and probably, you know, personally tried to see if there was anything he could get her on, because he knew it was wrong. But he kind of handed it over, as more of a, "We're not gonna deal with this." I think he knew, because there

were state and federal laws, which she may have, and did, end up violating.

So—and I don't know if it's like this now. You may know. You may identify with this—if Dartmouth hasn't changed in this regard, but Dartmouth never wanted to—and this is one of the things I loved about Dartmouth and it worked to my advantage—is that Dartmouth didn't want to damn its own people, right? They did anything they could to protect the students.

Campus police—they knew what was going on all the time. Parkhurst knew what was going on all the time. But they would let other things take their course, like federal and state issues if it got really serious. And just kind of treat people equally and fairly so that they didn't get in the news and they didn't—they didn't want people to get kicked out of school.

And they told me as much when I threatened to leave. I shouldn't say "threatened to leave." I advised—went for advice to—to transfer because it just got too crazy for me at the end of my sophomore and junior year, that I went to Shanahan, and he explained to me that the attrition rate at Dartmouth was so high, and it's what pushed them down in the—in the Ivy rankings so much, that they'd do anything they could to keep anyone on campus if they possibly could.

So I think that was another motivating factor for not wanting to kick Polenz out or, you know, take action. Plus, I think she was a legacy kid, you know? You don't want to get the alumni pissed off and be seen as being partial. So they kind of laid their hands off all this stuff as much as they could, until they were forced to, like, really make a statement.

And—and Shanahan pushed that ticket a lot of times, and *The Review* really went after him for it, because he was seen as being pro-gay and, you know, pro-radical and all this stuff.

MAC NEILL: So I—I don't mean to wrap this up too quickly, but this is actually—I—I have one more question for you. And, of course, as we've talked about, we can meet again to potentially talk more about this, but what—looking back, do you have any advice for queer or gay students at Dartmouth now?

CARTER: [Sighs.] Well, I guess from—and I don't think this has changed much. I mean, we're talking thirty, forty years since I was there, right? But I—I think core things have not changed about any—any marginalized person in any kind of environment like Dartmouth. Dartmouth is still not the most progressive school in the world. There's still a lot of conservative alumni. There's still a lot of, you know, legacy bigotry that—you know, just that whole underpinning of the past all-male school going on.

Not nearly as bad as it was in the eighties, but any time any marginalized person wants to be a part of a place like Dartmouth, my advice is always, "Just be who you are, and fight for it," you know? It's, like, you—you can't—I mean, and then this is kind of the radical gay person—the more radical gay person, and I don't assimilate. I don't think it ever helps. And I think the Tri-Kap incident helped to make people realize that you can't always assimilate into an environment like Dartmouth.

There is an academic as well as a personal reason to be out and be aware and try to move things forward, try to be progressive, because you could be the victim. You know, it goes—it goes back to, you know, the World War II stuff, with people who were not involved. I always think of the—I can never remember the name of the pastor. Moyler? [German Lutheran pastor Martin Neimöller] [Chuckles.] I can never pronounce his last name. Who said, you know, he basically said, "If you don't speak out as everyone else is getting purged, you're gonna be left," right? "I didn't speak for the communists because I wasn't a communist. I didn't speak for the Jews because I wasn't Jewish." You know, at the end, it's—no one's there—no one's gonna talk for you, right?

Get out there and do what you—you know,—you know, be involved, be true to yourself, be—and to your own comfort level, be involved. You know, be at the forefront, because it—it's—to me, it was really, and always has been, enriching, you know, both to my academic career and my personal life. And—and I really saw a lot of people—through their lives suffer because they stood on the sidelines and didn't speak out, you know?

I knew a lot of people—boy!—I—to the point of people I've known that have, you know,—have almost been ruined by not—by not being who they were back then. I think—I think the college experience sets the whole formulative, away from your family learning experience. Those are the times when you need to be very aware of who you are and try to work toward things to kind of make your life work, right?—and to make society work *for* you, because everyone is fighting to, like, find a place, right?

And I think if you sit back and not let that stuff happen and are not actively part of change and progress, you kind of—you kind of wasted a part of your potential growth, you know? And I think that's what I really learned when I was at Dartmouth, is that it wasn't all about the academics, it was—it was also about enriching your whole life and everything around you, including the world around you. And we kind of—it was, I guess, a isolated world in some ways, but we were very globally aware, and we tried to move what we learned at Dartmouth into the picture of the bigger world. And I think that's—I think that's important for people to do.

MAC NEILL: Yeah. I think that's—I think those are great closing words.

[End of interview.]