

Kelly M. Bonnevie '87
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[SARA D.]

HARRIS: Hi, this is Sara [D.] Harris. Today is Monday, May 14th, 2018, and it is 2 p.m. I'm in the Rauner [Special Collections] Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. Today I am interviewing Kelly [M.] Bonnevie [pronounced BON-uh-vee] for SpeakOut.

So first of all, thank you so much for meeting with me. To start off, I just want to ask some biographical questions. Where and when were you born?

BONNEVIE: Sure. I was born in Portland, Maine, in 1965.

HARRIS: Great. And what were your parents' names, and what did they do?

BONNEVIE: My father was George [J.] Bonnevie [Jr.], and my mother was Margaret Curran Bonnevie. Curran is spelled C-u-r-r-a-n. And my dad was a maintenance worker, who didn't finish high school, and my mother was a nurse, and she was the daughter of Irish immigrants, so it was a, an enormous deal when I was accepted to Dartmouth. I was the first in my extended family to go to college.

HARRIS: Wow. Did you have any siblings?

BONNEVIE: I did. I had a younger sister and a younger brother.

HARRIS: Cool. So what was your childhood like, and how did you end up ending up at Dartmouth?

BONNEVIE: I had a really terrific childhood, very blue collar. Lots of cousins, big Irish Catholic family, and French Canadian on my father's side. And I ended up at Dartmouth simply because a guidance counselor at the time at my public high school said, "I think you should look at this college." I mean, I didn't have any relatives who had gone to college. I

assumed I would go to the University of Maine, and having her encourage me to look at it—she actually drove me and another student to Hanover to see it, and I think that’s how it happened that I applied early decision, got accepted and ended up there.

HARRIS: Wow. What were your impressions of Dartmouth before you came?

BONNEVIE: I thought it was absolutely gorgeous. We were there on a beautiful spring day. I mean, the [Dartmouth] Green just looked beautiful. There are all these healthy-looking students in front of Robinson Hall, getting ready to do [Dartmouth] Outing Club activities, and it just seemed idyllic, and I thought I would apply, and to my surprise, I got in.

HARRIS: Wow. What did your—how did your parents respond when you got in and decided to go?

BONNEVIE: They were very excited. They had to explain to my grandparents why I wasn’t going to a Catholic college [laughs], so there was a little conversation about that, but once my grandparents were assured that this was still a very good college and that I was being offered substantial financial aid, they were all on board, so it was good.

HARRIS: Great. Yeah.

Before we get into your Dartmouth experience, on the topic of sexuality, growing up were you aware of the LGBT community? Did you know any gay people? What was kind of your knowledge about the topic?

BONNEVIE: I did not. No, I had no idea that I might be gay, and I didn’t know any gay people who were out.

HARRIS: So you were really introduced to that once coming to Dartmouth.

BONNEVIE: Once I got into college, yeah, once I was at Dartmouth. Not real—I didn’t come out until my senior year, but, yeah, it was definitely not something that was on my radar before college.

HARRIS: Okay. Got it. So kind of what—moving on to Dartmouth, what years were you at Dartmouth, and I guess freshman year, what was that experience like, coming from Maine and not having family members that had gone to college and then arrive at Dartmouth?

BONNEVIE: Sure. So I arrived in September of 1983, and for the Freshman Trip [Dartmouth Outing Club First-Year Trip], I didn't have any hiking equipment. People—I—[chuckles—I mean, there's a lot of hiking in Maine, obviously, but it was not big in my circle of family members, so I didn't have any hiking equipment, so I had an indoor slumber party sleeping bag from Kmart that my mother bought, and then I had—she had borrowed a 1950s Boy Scout[s of America] external-frame backpack, without a waist band that I used, and so I was really ill prepared.

But the fellow students were really sweet. There was this football player from Ohio, who I saw at night, taking some of the canned goods out of my pack. He could see that I was kind of struggling, and he actually took some of the canned goods out of my pack and put them in his, without saying anything, which is incredibly sweet.

And I survived Freshman Trip and was introduced to student life at Dartmouth. Had a job in the dining hall. And it was—it was definitely culture shock in the fall. I was not prepared academically. I was exposed to students who came from very different socioeconomic backgrounds, who had a lot of disposable income, so it was definitely shocking that first fall. But I did sort of adapt, and as I became more comfortable as a student, the rest of the things fell in place. But the academic adjustment was pretty abrupt—it was pretty severe.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. Did you have certain people that were really supportive during that time? Were you friends with other first-generation students or maybe mentors?

BONNEVIE: There was n- —that was not a formal—there was no formal group. It was not something students talked about. I could sort of suss out, in my dorm, who some of the first-gen kids might be, but I definitely did not have any bonds with

students on that topic because it just wasn't really talked about.

My roommate—I'm sure whoever did residential life thought we would have a lot in common. She was from northern Maine, and I believe she might have been first generation. She also worked in the dining hall. She had a French Canadian last name like I did. But she was a born-again Christian, and we didn't end up having a ton in common. She was very nice, and we got along, but we didn't have a ton in common because of the religion issue. And so I did make friends, but I would not say any of it was based on this bonding around being first generation.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. How did you meet your friends kind of at the beginning of college, and were you involved in certain extracurriculars?

BONNEVIE: So I met my friends through the dorm initially, and then became involved—

HARRIS: Which dorm?

BONNEVIE: I was in the River Cluster, in South Hinman [Hall].

HARRIS: Got it.

BONNEVIE: And so I met friends there. I had a boyfriend at the time and got very involved in political—pretty quickly got involved in what was then the anti-apartheid movement and the Dartmouth Community for Divestment [DCD]. And that really became my friend group. I wrote for the liberal newspaper that was called *Stet*, *S-t-e-t*, and then the Women's Issues League [WIL]. So I would say the Dartmouth Community for Divestment, *Stet* and the Women's Issues League took up the vast majority of my time when I was a student.

HARRIS: Wow. And what did you study?

BONNEVIE: I was a government major, and I had a certificate in women's studies.

HARRIS: Got it. So what do you think initially made you interested in activism and getting involved in these communities?

BONNEVIE: I do think part of it was my own socioeconomic background and really realizing that while I have been given this incredible opportunity,—I took an education class with Janaki [N.] Tshannerl, who was a visiting professor at the time, and we talked a lot about the public school system in the U.S. and how it really—the resources are not evenly divided, and how there were students I had grown up with who could have done well at a place like Dartmouth, but it was not on their radar at all. And had I not been one of the lucky ones, plucked out by my guidance counselor, I might not have had those opportunities.

HARRIS: Yeah. Wow. Did your other—

BONNEVIE: And I think—

HARRIS: Go ahead.

BONNEVIE: I was just going to say so I think a large part of it was coming to this place and realizing, *My goodness, this is this whole other world, where people have started off at third base, where I'm just—*[Chuckles.]

HARRIS: Yeah.

BONNEVIE: And let me be clear: I mean, I—I had, you know, a very supportive family. My father had a union job. I mean, it's not like I was—I was blue collar, but I was not one of the kids who really—there were kids who were actually poor who, during break, you know, were really in a tough spot, didn't really even have enough to eat. Not a lot of them at Dartmouth, but they were there even then. And so I think realizing some of the inequities got me sort of involved in student activism.

And then, of course, if you were a student at Dartmouth in the 1980s, *The Dartmouth Review* was an enormously large presence on campus, and just watching how *The Dartmouth Review* influenced student life and the destructive impact they had with some of the stories that they printed, and—and that really, I think, made me an activist. I had to think about things in a way I don't think I would have had I gone to a college that did not have a *Dartmouth Review*.

- HARRIS: Hmm. Would you say growing up, was the majority of people in your community conservative, liberal? Would you—
- BONNEVIE: They were blue-collar Democrats. I would say that they were—
- HARRIS: And were you exposed to those ideas?
- BONNEVIE: Yeah, I would say that they were probably mostly blue-collar Democrats, but it's Maine, so they were definitely probably evenly split, Republicans, blue-collar Democrats, in my community. And pretty conservative on social issues.
- HARRIS: Mm-hm. Did your—did a lot of your high school friends end up going to the University of Maine? Did you kind of see the different, like, life trajectories you were taking?
- BONNEVIE: Our school at the time had, like, a 20 percent dropout rate, so a lot of kids didn't finish high school. A lot of kids, if they did go to college, went to community college or the University of Maine, and there were a handful of us who went to private colleges.
- HARRIS: Got it. So talking about *The Dartmouth Review*, what—can you remember specific incidents where they were maybe at their most controversial or certain stances that they took that you felt really passionately against?
- BONNEVIE: There was—there were several articles my freshman and sophomore year that were overtly anti-Semitic. There was the most—I would say the most compelling incident happened my freshman spring, when Teresa Polenz [Delany, Class of 1987], who was a writer for *The Dartmouth Review*, went to a GSA [Gay Students Association] meeting with a tape recorder, and that was under the direction of Laura [A.] Ingraham [Class of 1985], who now has the national talk show. And that really divided people, and that was seen really as a breach of expected culture and—and how one would respect the—the confines of a GSA meeting.
- HARRIS: Could you just define, for the interview, what GSA stands for and kind of what your perception of that group was?

BONNEVIE: Certainly, yeah. So the GSA stands for the Gay Students Association, and that was a group at Dartmouth that was formed to help kids who may be out or struggling to come out or questioning, and it provided a safe place for them to meet. They planned some social events. I guess what I would say about it at Dartmouth is that the students who were part of the GSA, I remember hearing from some of them that they got hate mail in their Hinman mailboxes on campus, that they were really targeted by *The Dartmouth Review*. The students who were out at the time really were public and extraordinarily brave. And Sean [P.] O’Hearn, who was an ’86, comes to mind. Michael [R.] Williams, another ’86, African-American man who’s now head of the Rhode Island Commission on [sic; for] Human Rights. Goes by Michael Évora [pronounced eh-VORE-uh], É-v-o-r-a. And some of the women: Laurie [E.] Marin [Class of 1986], Molly [L.] Amick, another ’86. Stephen [A.] Carter, another ’86. The Class of ’86 actually comes to mind the most of having an enormously large number of students who were very vocal and active in the GSA.

HARRIS: So this happened, you said, your freshman spring, so that spring of 1984.

BONNEVIE: Correct.

HARRIS: And what was your kind of connection to that community, if at all, at that time?

BONNEVIE: So I was not a member of the GSA. At that point, I was still involved with my college boyfriend, and—but that was really a galvanizing moment because I think many students who really would say that they were not political or they weren’t really—there were a lot of students who really didn’t want to have to take sides between *The Dartmouth Review* and the more progressive categories of students at Dartmouth. That incident really did galvanize a lot of people to say, “Wait a minute. That’s not okay. You’ve really crossed the line.” And I do think there were students who might have been maybe apathetic to *The Review* but who then felt like, “Wait a minute. You’re now targeting groups of people who are already sort of at risk at Dartmouth. This needs to stop.”

HARRIS: Yeah. So once they published—so what did they publish, that you recall, in an article after sending in someone with a tape recorder?

BONNEVIE: Yeah. So they published—I believe they published—and this is from memory, because I haven't seen the actual article in however many years, but my memory is that they published the names of the officers of the group. I don't think they necessarily published—my memory may be false in this—I don't think they published the names of the students in attendance there. But students definitely felt exposed and at risk, and there were a lot of students—there's a lot of talk quietly about students who were not out to their families, who were very, very concerned that this was going to be—this was going to get out. There were students on financial aid, who were afraid that they were somehow at risk. I mean, it just led to a lot of people being afraid.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. And at the time, what was your—you talked about kind of like the bravery of out students at the time. Kind of what was your perception of being gay at Dartmouth?

BONNEVIE: It—I—I was not out at that point.

HARRIS: Right.

BONNEVIE: And I just remember seeing these students and thinking, *My gosh, that is—you know, they're really brave. It's so clear that this is not accepted here in the mainstream.* It took a certain person to be able to be out and be comfortable with that. And I did really feel that those students were targeted by *The Review*. I mean, they did get hate mail. They felt unsafe on campus.

I remember walking by Stephen Carter, who was a Class of '86, and he sort of wore at the time sort of this goth, kind of punk look. He'd have his hair all spiked up, and he wore a lot of black. He had a very distinctive look at the time. Most students at that time were not walking around in goth. You know, so he really stood out. And I remember—and he was kind of small. And I remember walking by him and thinking, *Oh, my gosh, I hope he's physically safe.* Like, I just felt so worried about him, watching students walk by him and seeing sort of the looks that he got.

- HARRIS: Wow. Do you remember any other specific homophobic incidents during your time there?
- BONNEVIE: The other event that really galvanized students was the sorority that held the party—oh, you know, and I can't remember the flier now, but it made reference to Rock Hudson, who was dying of AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome], who had just come out publicly about having AIDS. And the flier—I don't remember the specifics, but it was a homophobic flier that made reference to AIDS. And there was a group of students who—GSA students and others, who protested in front of the sorority.
- HARRIS: Was this Alpha Chi Omega [now Xi Kappa Chi]?
- BONNEVIE: Yeah.
- HARRIS: Do you remember?
- BONNEVIE: Yeah.
- HARRIS: Yeah. I think it was—
- BONNEVIE: Do you know the date of that?
- HARRIS: Summer of 1985, maybe?
- BONNEVIE: Yes. I think—okay. Yeah, I was not on campus, I don't believe. I have to go back and think. Where was I? I can't even remember now. But there were students who protested that, and I remember hearing about that and thinking, *Oh, my gosh*. It just—you know, this was a time when people were already so fearful that having sex was going to lead to death, and then to have that be the theme of a party and trivialized in that way was really offensive and very—it was deeply upsetting to people at that time.
- HARRIS: Mm-hm. Do you remember how the sorority responded to the protesters?
- BONNEVIE: I remember that there was—I don't remember the specifics. I just remember Michael Évora was involved in part of the

protest, and—I don't remember the specifics in terms of what happened afterwards.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. Um. You said that these incidents kind of galvanized students. What was kind of the response after these events would happen?

BONNEVIE: I think that these events would happen, and *The Dartmouth* would write about them, and students who may have not spoken up about them would write letters to the editor and would—I think there was more conversation among students, or students who might have been apathetic before were more willing to—to—to speak and say, “No, this really isn't okay. This is not how we want our community to behave.” And I think that those events really led up to—I think they're linked to what happened with the Dartmouth Community for Divestment protests and what happened when the shanties were destroyed in January of 1986, that you had some real overlap between students who were involved in the GSA and students involved in the DCD, and that really led a lot of people who might not have known too much about apartheid to be involved in—in some of those protests and the sit-in at Parkhurst [Hall] that occurred after the shanties were destroyed.

But I also think—I do think there was some nice overlap where students in the African-American Society [now Afro-American Society]—it was called the Afro-Am at the time—were more sympathetic to students in the GSA because they saw the GSA students involved in the DCD. So I think the one silver lining is I really did think there was some serious bridge building among various groups.

HARRIS: Hmm. So could you define the DCD and then kind of explain your experience with the January 1986 shanty event?

BONNEVIE: Sure. So DCD stands for Dartmouth Community for Divestment. It was a student group that started in the early '80s to protest the college's investments in businesses in South Africa, where apartheid was still official government law. So the group was trying to encourage Dartmouth to divest its holdings from those companies. And the group held educational forums and wrote about their movement in the liberal newspaper and in *The Dartmouth*, and they

erected shanties on the Green in the fall of 1985. And on Martin Luther King night in January of 1986, twelve students with sledge hammers came and destroyed them while there were two students sleeping in them, and ten of those students wrote for *The Dartmouth Review*.

And it really polarized the campus. There was a sit-in at Parkhurst the following day. Classes were cancelled. There was a moratorium. And it led to other, related arrests later on, but it really—I really see that moment and my involvement in the DCD and the shanty destruction as—as really *the* defining marker of my time at Dartmouth.

HARRIS: Wow. What was your personal involvement in those events? Did you help build them?

BONNEVIE: I was a very—yeah. I was in London. I was doing a Foreign Study Program in London when they were built, but I had good friends who were reporting to us about the fact that they were being built, and I was very excited to come back for winter term after Christmas and see them. And, you know, we had meetings there. We took turns staffing the shanties, and I was very, very involved in that group at the time.

HARRIS: Before the destruction of them, how did the campus respond to your group building them?

BONNEVIE: There were mixed feelings. There were many students who thought that they were “ugly,” quote unquote, and that they didn’t belong there, or they would say, “Well, I am sympathetic to your cause, but this isn’t the right way to do it, and you’re making the campus look not attractive, and they really should come down.” And then in mid-January, we were asked to move them because they needed them moved for Winter Carnival, and there was a lot of back and forth.

But there was a weekend in January—and I have pictures of it. I was involved in it where our group, the DCD, and the Outing Club, which oversaw Winter Carnival, got together and moved the shanties farther down the Green towards—I can’t remember what that street is; it’s not Main Street [in Hanover, New Hampshire] but the street in front of the

Hanover Inn. So we moved the shanties closer to that part of the Green—

HARRIS: West Wheelock [Street]?

BONNEVIE: So that the center of the Green—Yeah. Yes, exactly. So the center of the Green would be free to build the snow sculptures.

HARRIS: And how—

BONNEVIE: And so, you know, we recognized—we really recognized that it *was* divisive, that there were students who supported it, and there were many, many students—I would probably say the majority of students felt the shanties didn't belong there and didn't like them, and didn't like what they represented. And then I would say there was a really vocal minority who didn't think they belonged there and didn't like them being there because they weren't interested in having the conversation about Dartmouth divesting, so—

HARRIS: So what happened after—you mentioned the sit-in in Parkhurst. Could you go into detail a little more about that? And were you there?

BONNEVIE: So there was a—yes, I was there. There was a sit-in at Parkhurst. The campus police came in and took everybody's name. I actually have somewhere a copy of the complaint, where they had—there was a formal complaint that was going to go to the Committee on Standards, and they were going to decide what the punishment was. I think they eventually decided that we would have a letter of reprimand, or there was some other decision.

But at the time, we students engaged in a sit-in in the president's office. It was President [David T.] McLaughlin [Class of 1954; Tuck 1955] at the time. And Dean of Students Edward [J. "Ed"] Shanahan. And we sat in in those two offices, and there were so many students covering the hallway and the stairs in both of those offices. And we wouldn't leave the offices, and eventually the administration agreed to have a moratorium on classes and a day of learning, where students would come together and talk about what had happened and try to find a way forward.

HARRIS: And so just to clarify, this was January of 1986, so was this your junior year?

BONNEVIE: It was.

HARRIS: Okay. And were you worried about getting expelled or any serious punishment?

BONNEVIE: [Chuckles.] Yes. There was a rumor—during the sit-in, a rumor circulated that anyone on financial aid was going to have their financial aid revoked if they remained in the building, so I did eventually—I and a group of other students did leave. In fact, it was funny: One of my wealthier classmates—I recall him saying, “We’ve got this. We need to get out. I don’t want you getting in trouble.” [Chuckles.] So a group of us did leave. But, yeah, that was—that was definitely a concern.

HARRIS: And socially, after this incident, did it feel very divided? Like, did you have—were most of your close friends in activist communities? Did you have any, like, personal, tense interactions with maybe people on the other side of this debate?

BONNEVIE: Most of my friends—my junior year, most of my friends really were student activists, and it was around this time, too, that I started to get really involved in the Women’s Issues League. And those issues had to do with fraternities and sexism towards women and sexual assault on campus and trying to change the official Dartmouth song, which was called “Men of Dartmouth” [now “Alma Mater”]. So my social group really was students involved in the DCD and students involved in the Women’s Issues League, which was called WIL.

And I did have interactions, obviously, with students who weren’t involved in those things, and we had interesting conversations, where there were students who’d say, “Well, I’m not an activist, but I—I do support what you all are trying to do. I just don’t think you’re doing it the right way.” And then there were students who really—were really much more conservative, who were completely unsupportive of what was going on and what the activist groups were trying to do.

And I think that ended up making me gravitate more and more towards my activist friends, and then it was my senior year that I—that I got involved with a woman and came out.

HARRIS: So what were some of the main events that the Women's Issue [sic] League was involved in?

BONNEVIE: The Women's Issues League did a lot of activism, led by Margaret [A.] Pappano, who was an '86. Really did a lot of work around the fraternity system and trying to deal with some of the—I mean, there was sexual assault that was going on, and people felt was both under-reported and when it was reported, wasn't being addressed adequately. There was—there was a very large Take Back the Night march my junior year. There was a lot of work on trying to change the "Men of Dartmouth" song.

And one of the things we did was—it was a coalition of groups, but it was the Women's Issues League and the DCD and the Afro-Am. We held an alternative commencement at the Afro-Am in June of '87. And we had June [M.] Jordan, a poet, come speak, and we actually recognized the student activists. And that was really cool.

HARRIS: Wow. So the year you graduated, there was an alternative commencement.

BONNEVIE: There was. It was really neat.

HARRIS: What was the ultimate goal of that, or kind of what was the mission?

BONNEVIE: The ultimate goal was this group of students—actually, a lot of international students and students from the Native Americans at Dartmouth (NAD), so it was a lot of NAD, IAG (International Students Group) and Cutler [sic; Cutter] Hall, where the Afro-Am was. A lot of students didn't feel that there had been adequate steps taken to deal with the students who destroyed the shanties. There was a whole legal suit, and people felt that the college had given them a pass, to a certain extent. And that, combined with the song being "Men of Dartmouth" and people feeling that President McLaughlin had really not been effective in leading the way on some of the issues around dealing with *The Dartmouth*

Review—that led to a group of us deciding to do this alternative commencement for student activists.

And it was really meant to be kind of a celebration of the causes we cared about. And professors came who were sympathetic to our groups, and we sang African-American national anthem and had music and June Jordan speak, and it was really—it was actually a really fun event.

HARRIS: Wow. So was that the weekend of graduation?

BONNEVIE: I think it was. I think it was. Yes, it had to have been the same weekend. It did not conflict with the actual graduation. I definitely went to the actual graduation with my family, and then we did the alternative commencement I think later that day.

HARRIS: Wow. So June 1987.

BONNEVIE: Correct.

HARRIS: So you mentioned the dance in connection to Rock Hudson at Alpha Chi Omega. I was curious about your perception of the AIDS crisis or kind of larger political LGBT movements at the time or if people on campus were talking about them.

BONNEVIE: Yeah. I would say it felt like a really—it felt like a really scary time to be a young adult, to feel that there was this disease related to sex that could kill people. I really worried about my male gay friends and worried about them a lot, really to the point where some of them, who I had lost touch with after graduation—and just being incredibly happy that they were well, and alive. [laughs.]

So it was a really scary time, and I think there was a lot still—and this was a time when dentists were refusing to treat HIV-positive patients. There was a lot of fear and a lot of unknown and ignorance, and having that occur on campus was—was really upsetting to people. But I think—and it was scary. It scared people.

HARRIS: Mmm. And so you said that you didn't know any gay people before Dartmouth, and then you came out your senior year.

So what was kind of the trajectory of your awareness of your sexuality?

BONNEVIE: I think for me, you know, it was—like I said, I was not somebody who was very involved in the GSA. I had a lot of friends who were in it, but that wasn't my path. My path was really student activism and getting very involved in politics, leading to being very involved in WIL, being one of the leaders of WIL my senior year and becoming involved with a female student, and after having dated men in college, so it was really—that was my story. You know, I was not one of these people who knew at a young age I was gay. That was not my story.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. What was your—so did you come out the beginning or what time during senior year, and kind of how did your experience change after that?

BONNEVIE: I would say midway through senior year, and I would not say I was out across the board. My friends knew that I was involved with a woman, but I would not describe myself as being out across the board, by any stretch.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. And did you—were you—you talked about the frats and the Women's Issues League, so, you know, how was the frat environment, knowing that you were gay, or what was kind of your experiences socially?

BONNEVIE: We definitely didn't go to frat parties. [Laughs.] That was not where we socialized. I mean, with the ex- —unless you can call Phi Psi [Phi Kappa Psi, now Panarchy] or the Tabard frats. I mean, I guess they are, technically. Or I don't even know if they still are there. But at the time, there were two co-ed frats: the Tabard—there were more, but the ones I'm thinking of were the Tabard and Phi Psi, and those were sort of these lefty, progressive frats that were co-ed. And people did go parties there, but other than that, student activists really—for the most part, we would hang out at the Native Americans [sic: American] House or at Foley House or we—there was an apartment on School Street [in Hanover, New Hampshire] that a bunch of students rented, but we were not hanging out at the fraternities, as a general rule. It was just not deemed a safe place. It was certainly not a place that was welcoming of openly gay students, at that time.

- HARRIS: Mm-hm. So you never considered rushing.
- BONNEVIE: I did not, no. Not for a second, actually. Part of it was the expense. I heard that there were dues, and I was, like, *Oh, I can't add another expense* [chuckles], so freshman year I never even gave it any other thought.
- HARRIS: Got it. And did you feel, like, kind of—how did you feel about this, like, alternative social community? Did you feel really content with it, or did you feel more isolated and kind of bitter about maybe the dominance of the Greek system?
- BONNEVIE: Yeah. I think—I think that what for me—and this is not true of other students—I think I have friends who really suffered, and their experience at Dartmouth was really traumatic. I would not describe it that way for me at all. I would say my relationship to Dartmouth is complicated. I had enormous opportunities there. I went on two Foreign Studies Programs. I—I traveled in ways that I had never traveled growing up. I had fantastic mentors in professors that were amazing, male and female. And I met amazing classmates, who I'm friends with to this day. And I think that my—my view of the world and my politics were challenged in a way that they would not have been had I gone to a more liberal college. So I'm grateful for all of that. But there's also a tiny piece where I feel like it could have been a more hospitable place, and things could have been easier had the culture been different at that time.
- HARRIS: Mm-hm. So did you feel like the mainstream was conservative?
- BONNEVIE: I did. Or apathetic.
- HARRIS: Mm-hm.
- BONNEVIE: I definitely felt like I found my people among the progressive student activists, and we definitely did not feel that we were the majority view on campus.
- HARRIS: Hmm. What did your family—did you—how much did you talk about your activism, or when did you come out to your family? How did that relationship change?

BONNEVIE: I—my parents knew about my activism, which they worried about, and—and they worried about how it was going to affect my future professional plans and whether I—you know, if this was a good idea for me to be doing. I did not come out to them until I was twenty- —now, wait, 1997, so I was thirty-two.

HARRIS: And was that—

BONNEVIE: They were very Catholic, and I felt that I didn't want to disappoint them or worry them. And at that point, I was in a committed relationship and had actually bought a house [chuckles] with my partner. They knew we lived together, but it was sort of a don't ask, don't tell.

HARRIS: Got it. Just before moving on from your Dartmouth experience, what—looking at little bit more at your academic experience, what were some of your favorite experiences? What Foreign Study Programs did you go on? What specific professors do you still think about?

BONNEVIE: Yeah. So I went on [a] Foreign Study Program in Germany, which was in Berlin, which was incredible. It's a beautiful city, with terrific German instruction, and that was amazing. And then—that was my sophomore winter. And then junior fall, I did the Foreign Study Program in London, at the London School of Economics. It was the government program. And that was also incredible. I did a lot of traveling in Europe before and after that trip, and it was really an amazing experience.

In terms of professors, I had fantastic guidance from Ivy [T.] Schweitzer; Carla [A.] Freccero, who was there at the time; Lynn [A.] Higgins, who taught women's studies, who gave me a citation for a comparative literature class, which really was—came at a time where it was incredibly encouraging to me in terms of my academic performance; and Bruce [J.] Nelson and Leo Spitzer, who were both in the history department. Were huge mentors for me.

HARRIS: So you said freshman year you kind of struggled academically. When did you start to realize what you enjoyed the most in kind of thinking about your career?

BONNEVIE: As I said, freshman fall was really—I felt like I had been dropped on another planet, both academically and socially, and I was really struggling to figure out this strange new culture. And I think I probably started to get more comfortable with it by freshman spring. By sophomore fall, I think I had started to know how to do college, so to speak, what I wanted to get out of it, that I was really going to take advantage of the travel opportunities, and I'd become very interested in political science, and I chose to major in government.

HARRIS: Hmm. And after realizing you were gay your senior year, kind of what was your perception? If you had to put yourself back in your shoes, what did you kind of see for your future life? Were you worried about your future as a gay woman?

BONNEVIE: Right. I—I really didn't think I saw a future where I could be open about my relationship. I didn't think I'd be able to have kids. I didn't really see how that was going to work. At that point, for example, in Massachusetts, where I knew I was moving, to Boston, gay foster parents weren't allowed, so I really didn't envision a world where I'd have a family or children.

I also didn't envision a scenario where my parents would know, so it was really—it felt like it was a narrowing of my life. Even though I was very happy with this new relationship, it definitely felt that I was giving up things by deciding to live that way.

HARRIS: Was there a point where you were—kind of considered rejecting that side of yourself, or did it always kind of feel inevitable?

BONNEVIE: Yeah. I mean, I think I thought about it a lot senior year as I really figured—as I was trying to figure out what was next, and I think—I finally decided that I wanted to be happy, and if this was who I was, I wanted to live that life and I would deal with the consequences. But it definitely felt like I was resigning myself to having a more narrow life.

HARRIS: Mm-hm.

- BONNEVIE: And it didn't turn out that way, so—[laughs]. Spoiler alert: It didn't turn out that way. I didn't narrow my life, so it all worked out.
- HARRIS: Happy ending. [Chuckles.]
- BONNEVIE: Happy ending, absolutely.
- HARRIS: Um so—so as you were leaving Dartmouth, how did you decide your next step, and kind of where did you go after graduating?
- BONNEVIE: I really didn't know what I wanted to do after Dartmouth. I applied for a Robinson Fellowship, which was funding to do something after graduation, and I got it, and I ended up spending six months in India doing work with the Overseas Development Network on women's economic projects. And, again, I loved traveling. I really enjoyed that. I did that for six months, came back to Boston and kind of had to figure out what was next.
- A fellow Dartmouth student, a fellow alumna got me a job working as a paralegal at a law firm that did plaintiff side litigation for workers who had been poisoned by asbestos, and I got very involved in that and ended up going to law school.
- HARRIS: Wow. So what year did you decide you wanted to go to law school?
- BONNEVIE: And the Dartmouth connection—yeah. so I graduated in '87, went to India for six months, came back and worked in Boston for a year and a half and started law school at Northeastern University School of Law in the fall of '89. And the job that I got in the law firm—it was owned by a Dartmouth grad, and there were Dartmouth grads working there, and that was my connection to that job.
- HARRIS: Oh. So when you decided to go to law school, was that a big decision? Were you worried about the financial, like, long-term investment?
- BONNEVIE: I was worried about the cost, and I was worried about the student loans, and I agonized over whether to go to the

University of Maine and live at home, where I could do it rather inexpensively, but I didn't think I could live at home at that point and not be out, and that felt stifling, so I rejected that idea and stayed in Boston and went to Northeastern with the higher loan debt, which was absolutely the right choice.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. And did you continue to date your girlfriend from Dartmouth?

BONNEVIE: I didn't. No, we split up, and I met somebody else my third year of law school, who I'm now married to, who—who coincidentally went to Dartmouth and was in the Class of '86, a year ahead of me, but I didn't know her then. We moved in different circles. She was in—she was an athlete, and she had a boyfriend at the time, too, and moved in totally different circles, so we didn't meet until after graduation.

HARRIS: Wow. So how did you meet after graduation?

BONNEVIE: We were introduced by mutual friends. She was a social worker, and she was friends with this guy I knew, who I knew through another friend, and we really hit it off, and we got together my third year of law school, and we've been together ever since.

HARRIS: Wow. So what year was that?

BONNEVIE: We met in 1991.

HARRIS: Okay. And kind of what was your trajectory following law school and this relationship?

BONNEVIE: Yeah. So we stayed toge- —so I finished law school in '92, and she finished social work school, and we bought a house together and eventually got married once—once it was allowed in Massachusetts in 2005.

HARRIS: What was your perception of kind of the rising movement for gay marriage during that time, and were you involved?

BONNEVIE: Yeah, as a lawyer I was very aware of it and very involved. My law firm—it's a women-owned law firm, and we were very involved in doing pro bono work for GLAD [Gay &

Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, now GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders], G-L-A-D, here in Boston, which was a legal advocacy group, and we were very close to Mary [L.] Bonauto and the other architects of the equal marriage fight.

And we did—for example, we represented one of the plaintiff couples who moved to get the three-day waiver—there’s a requirement in Massachusetts that when you get married, you have to apply for the marriage license and then wait three days, but we applied for the waiver so that these couples could get married right away, as soon as it was legal, without having to wait for three days.

So we were very involved and very aware of it and had many clients, including ourselves, who it was going to positively affect, so we were absolutely thrilled when it became the law in Massachusetts.

HARRIS: Mmm. How did your—

BONNEVIE: And we were also very aware of what was going on in Vermont with Beth Robinson [Class of 1986], who’s a Dartmouth grad. We were very aware of her work in Vermont and were thrilled that they were really laying the groundwork for this fight.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. How did your gender identity and sexual identity kind of affect your professional life, and was it—were you out during law school and in the work sphere?

BONNEVIE: So I think not coincidentally I ended up choosing an extraordinarily progressive law school program in an urban setting. It was very diff- —Northeastern was very different than Dartmouth; it was the leader in public interest work among law schools. It’s still rated very highly on that, but at the time, it was doing incredibly cutting-edge experiential learning and had more women than men in their classes, which was unusual at the time. It had a very high percentage of LGBT students. So all of these reasons made Northeastern a very exciting fit for me.

I was out throughout law school. I was out in many of my co-op jobs, not all of them. It wasn’t always—I mean, I

worked—did work for a large firm, and it wasn't really a place where in twelve weeks I had an opportunity to come out per se. But I definitely was out, so to speak, for the majority of my work.

HARRIS: Mm-hm.

BONNEVIE: As a student. We're talking about law school.

HARRIS: Yeah. And then kind of following Dartmouth in general, did you ever have specific instances of homophobia?

BONNEVIE: I lived in a remarkable bubble, where I experienced very little of that. I have to say I've been really lucky, and I think—I say "lucky," but I think a lot of it was conscious choice in terms of where I chose to live and what I chose to do. I chose Northeastern because I knew it was progressive. I clerked for a year with a very progressive judge, where I was out to him. I then worked for a women-owned law firm that had a lesbian as one of the partners. And I then started my own law firm with two other women.

So I really did not have the typical law firm experience, and I've had classmates and coworkers who've had homophobic experiences, but I have had very few. I've had two clients—I'm out on my website, and I've had two clients say they weren't going to hire me because I'm gay. But that's—and I'm sure there are other clients who didn't hire me because of that, but I just don't know about it. But the vast majority of my professional life has been spent not fighting overt homophobia in terms of my own professional life. I've fought it on behalf of my clients. I did employment discrimination for a long time, that work, but I, myself, was insulated for the most part.

HARRIS: That's great. What was the name of the judge and then the law firms you worked at and then started?

BONNEVIE: Yup. So I—after Northeastern, I clerked for the Massachusetts Superior Court with Judge John [R.] Cratsley, C-r-a-t-s-l-e-y, a terrific guy, very progressive. And then I worked for Lill & Herr [P.C.], L-i-l-l- & Herr, H-e-r-r-, in Cambridge for three years. And then I started my own firm,

Wilson, Marino & Bonnevie [P.C.], which is the firm where I currently work. And we started our firm in 1996.

HARRIS: What inspired you to start your own firm, and what do you specialize in now?

BONNEVIE: We were inspired to start our own firm because we liked—the three of us liked working together, and we thought we wanted an environment where we could have more control over the clients we selected and the kind of work we did and how we—how we worked and how we got paid, and how the firm was operated. So we got together and decided to start our own firm, and we've really never looked back. It's been terrific.

I started off doing employment discrimination work, as plaintiff side employment discrimination work, and I did that for any years. I had a case that changed the law in Massachusetts on how claims against government employers did not accrue interest, and that made it very hard for plaintiffs to get an employer to settle, because there was no interest accruing on their judgment, so the government entity would just appeal, appeal, appeal, and the clock would tick and there was no reason for them to try to settle it. And we got that law changed so that interest *would* accrue, and it made it easier for these plaintiffs to try to get their employers to settle their cases with them. So I'm very proud of that case. I represented four African-American female social workers.

Um, so I did that for a number of years, and then I got cancer and decided this was going to be one—one result of that was that I was going to slow down and do something more transactional, and so I stopped—I left litigation and do real estate work now, which is more problem solving, and it's a more manageable and better work-life balance.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. Wow. Besides that case, are there any other specific cases that are really—stand out in your mind as meaningful to you?

BONNEVIE: That case was really meaningful. The other case that was really meaningful for me is the work that I did with transgender clients, when we—this was before we had

anything in the law to help us. I got calls constantly from people who were nonconforming in their gender identity and expression and were getting fired, were losing their apartments—I mean, just horrible stories. And we—the law absolutely gave us no tools to try to right these wrongs.

And when the law changed in Massachusetts, where it was ruled that there *was* protection for transgender employees, I was able to get a significant settlement for a school teacher who had been fired. And she made a sculpture of a dragonfly and brought it in for me. She's a really talented artist in glass, on the side, as a hobby, and made me this sculpture and said it really represented the fragility of her transition and how supportive I was during such a difficult time in her life.

I also remember early in my career getting many, many calls from partners, men who were gay, whose partners died of AIDS, and the families were coming in, where there was no will, and taking them out of the apartments, taking their belongings, and if there was no will at that time, we had absolutely no tools to help them. And it's heartbreaking, absolutely heartbreaking stories of same-sex couples who, if they didn't make contracts to protect themselves, the surviving partner had absolutely no standing to object to this.

HARRIS: Wow. And so what year did you get married, and what was that experience like, and what's your relationship with your family about that?

BONNEVIE: Sure. So we got married the first day that we could, in 2005, so that we could get on the same health insurance plan, because at that point we had two little kids. So we went down to the Brookline Town Hall, and there were all these adorable grandmothers with PFLAG, (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) [now Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays], handing out flowers, giving out wedding cake. And we got married at the town clerk's office in Brookline, Mass., the minute we could. And that was really great.

And both of our families came around, Karen's family—my partner's name is Karen [D.] Kaufman, K-a-u-f-m-an. She's Class of 1986. Her mother went from telling her she was

disowned and that I was not allowed in their house—(both of our parents said that, actually)—to, I would say, probably being one of my biggest fans and biggest supporters. And they adored the grandchildren. They really came full circle, which was really a blessing before their deaths. And my own parents definitely were initially nervous and apprehensive but definitely have been supportive.

And now Karen and I have our two kids, but we're also raising my niece, and so we have three teenagers keeping us busy.

HARRIS: Oh, wow. So what was your experience deciding to have kids, and when did that—what years did that happen?

BONNEVIE: So we—once we were seeing other examples of lesbians and gay people having kids, we knew this was something that we wanted. We really waited a long time and kind of agonized over how best to do it. Karen was a social worker, and she really saw a lot of kids who really struggled with not knowing their biological birth parents. And so using a sperm donor was something that we really thought a lot about and were concerned about doing and had really thought a lot about the pros and cons. And what we eventually ended up doing is having a male friend of ours, who is gay, serve as the sperm donor, and he was the sperm donor for both of our kids. Karen gave birth to our son, Matthew [Kaufman], who's the oldest, and I gave birth to Abigail [Kaufman].

And our friend, David Brown, was the sperm donor for both kids and became very involved, and the kids call him Daddy. He ended up buying the house next door to us, and he's married to somebody who came into the picture afterwards, so my kids joke that they have four parents, no freedom.

HARRIS: [Chuckles.]

BONNEVIE: But that's—that's our setup. So we—Karen and I live in one house, and David and his husband, [Benjamin D.] "Ben" [Perkins] live next door.

HARRIS: Wow. So what years were your kids born?

BONNEVIE: Matt was born in 2000, and Abigail was born in 2003.

- HARRIS: And then what's the name of your third—your niece?
- BONNEVIE: Yeah, my niece is Caroline Bonnevie, and we—she came to live with us when she was eleven, because my sister has psychiatric and addiction issues and can't raise her, so Caroline is our third kid.
- HARRIS: Great. And what's been your experience being a lesbian couple, being lesbian parents? How have your kids kind of learned to normalize that?
- BONNEVIE: Yeah. So we—again, we—we have made a conscious effort to make sure that they saw families that may not have been identical to theirs because a lot of their friends, a lot of the two-mom families we know or two-dad families we know don't necessarily have a known opposite-sex parent. But we did make—definitely spent time with a lot of GLBT-headed households, so our kids saw families that did resemble theirs. And they grew up in Boston, and they definitely knew other families like theirs. They were not the only ones at their school. So while they were certainly in the minority, they weren't the only ones, and that made all the difference, I think.
- HARRIS: Mm-hm. And in your life after Dartmouth, have you had a lot of gay friends? Do you feel like you have a supportive LGBT community?
- BONNEVIE: Absolutely. Yeah, I really do. I have a lot of friends, including many gay and lesbian friends.
- HARRIS: Mm-hm. Were those from Dartmouth, or how did you meet them?
- BONNEVIE: My friends—most of our friends now are probably friends we've met through the kids and through school, like most families, actually. I think that's probably our closest friends. But I have stayed in touch with Dartmouth friends. I don't necessarily see them all the time, but we had a mini-reunion last November of a lot of DCD and WIL students, and we got together, and it was really great. So I definitely feel like I have those connections, even if I'm not seeing them day to day. And I love staying in touch with DGALA [Dartmouth

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni/ae Association] through the social media stuff. That's been really fun.

HARRIS: Yeah. So what has your general kind of involvement been with Dartmouth since graduating?

BONNEVIE: I've gone to a couple of reunions. I have only recently started attending the Women of Dartmouth alumni events in Boston, which have actually been great professionally. It's not necessarily a place where I necessarily find a lot of LGBT Dartmouth alumni, but it's been a lot of female alumnae and a lot of good professional connections, so that's been really useful.

I have not—because I have been so busy with the kids and my elderly parents, I have to say I have not done the kind of DGALA stuff I might like to if I had more free time.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. Have you been involved with any other LGBT groups since graduating?

BONNEVIE: Yes, I've been on the board of directors for the Mass[achusetts] LGBTQ Bar Association, which is a lawyers professional group. I've done pro bono work for GLAD in Boston. I've taught a class to LGBT seniors called "Rainbow courses," where you go in and talk about something of particular interest, and its LGBT elders, and that was really fun. I enjoyed that a lot. Those are probably the main professional LGBT-oriented groups that I've been involved with.

HARRIS: Awesome. And how old are your kids now?

BONNEVIE: Matt is 18, Caroline is 16 and Abby is 15.

HARRIS: So I'm curious how you feel about—kind of your perception of Dartmouth now, if you would ever encourage them to go.

BONNEVIE: Oh, that's a great question, and we talk about that a lot because my son is going to be heading to NYU Tisch [New York University Tisch School of the Arts] this fall for filmmaking, but Caroline I actually think would be a phenomenal fit for Dartmouth, and she's going to look at it

this summer. And I said—you know, she knows about my experiences, but I've also been keeping up with what's going on now, and I told her, "It's a different place. You should look at it for yourself and see what you think. It has—you know, it—it's like many places: It's not perfect, but I think what I expect would happen there if you were lucky enough to get in and go there is that you would find like-minded people, who you develop strong friendships with, the way I did."

HARRIS: Mm-hm. How is your experience at Dartmouth or perception of Dartmouth different from your wife's?

BONNEVIE: We joke that I was busy, you know, writing earnest articles for the newspapers while she was out having fun. [Laughs.] I mean, she hung out with a very different crowd of people. She did sports. She hung out with Outing Club students. She really—you know, she jokes about tying rafts together and going down the Connecticut River sophomore summer while I was in some un-air-conditioned *Stet* office, trying to write these articles before deadline. I mean, we did have very different Dartmouth experiences, although we both were at the moratorium after the shanties were attacked, you know. And I think that's a great example of where students who might not have been politically involved, that was a galvanizing event that brought people together who might have been less politically involved.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. How do you think your experiences at Dartmouth, activism with, you know, a conservative campus, shaped your life? Just the trajectory of your life.

BONNEVIE: I think that it, we, I was just talking about this with the kids yesterday, actually, at Mother's Day brunch. They were complaining about their—not complaining, but they were joking that their very liberal high school that they go to—it's a private high school—that a lot of the students are progressive or liberal without necessarily having given rigorous thought to how they've gotten to those beliefs. And my son was saying that it's actually nice sometimes to be challenged on why you believe certain things and have to really think out and explain why you hold that viewpoint.

And I was saying that that is one of the things I hold dear from my four years at Dartmouth, is that I really was

challenged to be able to explain and—and talk logically about my political beliefs and my activism and the things I care about. And I made incredibly strong friendships that I'm not sure would be exactly the same had I gone elsewhere.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. That's great to hear.

That's really mainly all the questions I have. Just any final reflections, kind of, on how, I guess, your—I guess you touched on this, but just kind of how your gay identity has affected your, like, perception of Dartmouth.

BONNEVIE: Yeah. I mean, I would say that I'm indebted to the students who were more—I mean, I was not a GSA leader, but there were students who were. I was not out until senior year, the end of senior year, but there were students who were in a climate that—that was not easy. And I feel really in awe of the courage they showed in being able to do that. They really paved a way for people who came afterwards, including me, even though I was only a year or two after some of them. They—they paved the way.

HARRIS: Mm-hm. Do you feel like life has just really—like, LGBT life has really transformed since—just general political developments in the U.S.?

BONNEVIE: Oh, it's—I mean, if you—if you had asked my—my, you know, nineteen-year-old self or, let's say, twenty-one by the time it was senior year—if you asked my twenty-one-year-old self if I thought I'd be sitting in a law firm that I founded, that has lesbian partners and I'd be married with two kids who are—I'm legally the parent of, the recognized parent of—I wouldn't have believed it. I mean, I really wouldn't—I would not have believed it. It's stunning to me how quick that transformation has occurred.

HARRIS: Wow. Yeah. It's inspiring. [Chuckles.]

BONNEVIE: It's—it's amazing. And, you know, I really hope—I'm so glad you guys are doing this project, and I really hope that someone gets Michael Évora to be interviewed, and Sean O'Hearn, and Carol Cosenza, who's an '86. I mean, I don't know who's all signed up for it, but I'd really encourage those

students in particular to do it because they have—they really were GSA leaders who can fill in a lot of the gaps.

HARRIS: Yeah, definitely. Well, thank you so much for agreeing to do this.

BONNEVIE: Thank you, Sara. I really appreciate it.

HARRIS: It's really great.

BONNEVIE: Thanks so much for your hard work on it. It's great. I can't wait—

HARRIS: Definitely.

BONNEVIE: —I can't wait to see it when it's all done. All right, take care.

HARRIS: Thanks.

[End of interview.]