

David Aylward ('71)
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Karen Navarro

PASSOT: Hello, my name is Jean Paul Passot ['21], and it is Friday, May 29th, 2020. I am recording this interview for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project from Mill Valley, California. I have here with me David Aylward, who's calling from Washington, DC. Thank you for being here, David.

AYLWARD: You're welcome. Thank you for doing this.

PASSOT: So I thought I would start just with your childhood and just ask you first where were you born?

AYLWARD: I was born in Beijing, China, in February of 1950. I was the son of a Foreign Service Officer and his wife who were posted there on their first foreign posting to complete their Chinese language studies before taking an active position in the Foreign Service.

PASSOT: And what was it like growing up in Beijing?

AYLWARD: Well, I didn't last but four weeks there. The United States Government and the new People's Republic of China weren't getting along, and they were breaking off - on their way to breaking off relations - and so we were evacuated four weeks after I was born, to Japan. And then, I grew up in postings in the Far East, with the exception of one in DC. So, we were in Japan for a year-and-a-half, and then Burma for two years, and then Hong Kong for two years, and then back to the US for four years in DC for first grade to fourth grade, and then back to Hong Kong for another four years from 1960 to '64, and then, which was then a British colony. So that was a really interesting, really interesting posting. And then we had one year in Taiwan, which was then a heavy US military presence, so I went to Taipei American School. But I went from King George V School in Hong Kong, where I was learning about the British kings and queens, to Taiwan, where I was in a little piece of America plopped down in a Chinese city. And we returned here when I was 15, back to the United States where I completed my last two years of high school.

PASSOT: And do you think that all this traveling kind of made you more aware of world events going on? Or was it more of like an isolated thing and you just kind of were moving around not really aware of...

AYLWARD: No, we were talking world events at the table all the time. My parents were very focused outward. I mean, that was the job is being a diplomat. Kind of the first time I became aware of what my father really did was the second posting in Hong Kong in 1960. I was 10 when we got there, and he was in charge of the US refugee program for Hong Kong and Nepal. So that would be the Chinese fleeing the People's Republic due to the various famines and repressions, and then the Tibetans fleeing from Tibet from the repression from China with the Dalai Lama and so on. And so, I learned a lot about poverty and our responsibility as government and citizens to help people in need, and all around me was the terrible poverty. Hong Kong at the time was not what it is today. It was not a... I mean, it was just full of people living in shacks up and down hills. And, I mean, there was welfare, but there was also abject poverty.

But I think the thing that was most impactful growing up was that my—was Eleanor Roosevelt, who was talked about a lot in our family, revered in our family. She had been—she was at the time and had been for decades close friends with my grandmother. And they met—my mother grew up in Albany, [NY] in the country east of Albany, and her dad had worked for the Roosevelt Administration. They campaigned for the Roosevelts. And so, when they came to Washington—when the Roosevelts came to Washington, my grandmother would visit, and during the war my mother stayed at the White House. So it was an awful lot of Eleanor Roosevelt in our family. And at the time, she had... after World War II she became kind of very internationally focused and did a lot of travel. She helped found the UN, she was an ambassador to the UN, she got the Human Rights Convention. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is one of the great documents of all time, and she really was more responsible for that than anybody else.

But she visited us on several occasions. In Burma there are pictures of me at the airport with her when I was three, pictures of me at the airport with her when I was six in Hong Kong, then again in Hong Kong. And so, we—this whole

idea of America having a real responsibility in the world to improve things, and that we as individuals had a responsibility was... it was the pond I grew up in, and talking about it at the dinner table, I remember friends of mine being surprised that we discussed policy issues at the table when I was 11 or 12, which was not their experience at home. I should add one other thing that was hammered into us, that other cultures were to be respected, that ours was not the only way of doing things, and that the behavior of American tourists, kind of ugly – it used to be called “the Ugly American” – was a common phrase in the ‘50s and ‘60s of the obnoxious Americans who disrespected locals. I was raised very much understanding that that was not how you behaved, which served me very well later.

PASSOT: And, I mean, you talked about Eleanor Roosevelt. But, what about just as far as feeling more American, because I feel like moving around a lot sort of distances your identity from America itself, but like did you have a sense of pride for the country, or was it always with a sort of a silver lining of like criticism based on what you saw around the world?

AYLWARD: Well, no. That’s a really interesting question, because we had a very idealized view of the United States because we didn’t live in the United States, and we were representing the United States, and we were on our best behavior. You know, whether it was my father or mother cutting the ribbon at some refugee camp where they were building a new something with US money, or giving away American food from the Food for Peace program, you know, this was America at its best, helping people in need. And we didn’t—you know, I didn’t, when I lived in DC in the ‘50s, we were in this little island of northwest Washington, and I didn’t know it was completely white. I didn’t know that Black people could not buy a house in that neighborhood when I lived there. There weren’t any. But there was a Japanese family next door, and an Armenian immigrant family the door down from there. So, you know, I didn’t go to the poor parts of Washington. I didn’t see the segregation.

And I just remember—more recently the memory came back of, there was an amusement—there is an amusement park, the big amusement park for DC back in the ‘50s was a place called Glen Echo Amusement Park, and everybody went there. There was a roller coaster and, you know, all the normal things, and I remembered going there when I was

seven to some kid's birthday party. And then my parents forbade us from going there again because it was segregated. So, kind of that's the only story I remember from that time. But no, we were abroad and we didn't have the problems at home.

Now, we read in the paper a bit about the civil rights struggle in the '60s, but I didn't feel it. I knew it was going on. We talked about it. But, you know, we didn't go to the march because we weren't around. We didn't have—my dad's deputy in the '60s was Walter Washington, who was a Black man. And they were friends, and they came and had dinner with us, and we didn't think anything of it. And so, so I was proud to be an American, absolutely, but it was a very idealized view of what America was.

PASSOT: Right. When do you think, or if at all, that that view started to change?

AYLWARD: My first sense of criticism came with regard to our dealings with the People's Republic of China. Through the '60s, there were really strict rules about, you know, you couldn't buy anything from China. If you bought an artifact, you know, a Chinese handicraft made in Hong Kong by Chinese people, that was okay, but you had to have—you couldn't take it back to the United States unless you had an official "certificate of origin" saying it was made in Hong Kong, because you weren't allowed to buy anything out of China. Well, here we are living in a house and then an apartment full of Chinese furniture and rugs that my parents had bought pre... when we were at Beijing, and there's this other worldly treatment that anybody in the Foreign Service who was an expert on China thought that pretending China didn't exist was nuts, and excluding them from the United Nations, which we did. Our policy for years was that Taiwan represented China in the United Nations, and that was true until [President Richard M.] Nixon and [Henry] Kissinger established relations.

But I remember writing a paper in sophomore year in high school arguing for the admission of China to the United Nations, which at the time I was in Taipei American School in Taiwan, and that was a pretty offensive thing to do to the local powers that be. My professor wrote on the paper "I admire your gall." But that was the first time I remember criticizing US policy at all. And a lot of that

came from discussions at home about what... because Taiwan at the time was being run by Chiang Kai-Shek, who was a dictator. It was not the democracy it is today. And so, it was a real critique going on of oppression of the people there. We thought it was funny to shout out the windows at a policeman, "Taiwan for the Taiwanese," as opposed to the Nationalist Chinese who had come from the Mainland to take it over. So there was a sense of conflict going on.

But, I was reflecting on this the other day: every one of my friends' fathers was in the military, with one or two exceptions: Army, Air Force, Navy. There was a huge American military establishment there. And both in Hong Kong from 1960 to '64 and Taiwan from '64 to '65, I was as close to Vietnam as you could get. And I don't remember anybody talking about Vietnam. I'm sure the military people in Taiwan, the adults were talking about amongst themselves, because within a year most of them were there, or they were going there, or they, you know... The military were originally in Taiwan to defend Taiwan against the Chinese invasion. But, Okinawa and Taiwan were like American military aircraft carriers. So, it ended up that a lot of those parents of my friends did serve in Vietnam. But I don't remember—there was certainly no discussion of Vietnam in the schools. I remember getting back to the US in the fall of '65, and sometime between then and the spring of '66, sometime in my junior year, *boom*, Vietnam was all we talked about. But not at all when I lived close by.

PASSOT: I just want to sort of fast forward now to like junior and senior year of high school, and ask sort of about the process of applying to colleges and what made you eventually land on Dartmouth?

AYLWARD: [laughter] That's actually a funny story in the family, and was worth at least 10 years of therapy, when I discovered how controlling my parents were. I got my dad to dictate his memoirs, which was a good thing to do and quite fascinating, and I intend to do it myself, and this project will help me do it. But, in the process we found my parents' letters from World War II to each other. My dad had gone off in early 1942 to be an aircraft mechanic, a bomber mechanic in the Army Air Corps, and at the end of '42, after being trained all over the United States, was shipped off on a boat around the Horn of Africa to Karachi—no, no, to Calcutta, now Kolkata, and to an air base north of there from

whence that bomber squad, the 22nd Bomber Squadron [22nd Bomb Squadron], bombed the Japanese in Burma, where we ended up living in a few years after that. And then, flew over the Hump [Himalayas] to a base in Western China from which they bombed Japanese in North Vietnam, which ironically less than 20 years later, or 20 years later, I would be demonstrating against US bombers bombing North Vietnam, right?

But, in the process, Dad fell in love with China, which is how he ended up in the Foreign Service. So here we are writing his memoirs and we find this letter that he's written to my mom from '43 or '44. They're engaged, but not married.

They got engaged, as many did, just before he left for war. And the letter says, "If we get married and I hope we do, and if we have children and I hope we do, and if we have a son and I hope we do, by the time he's six there'll be no question where he's going to college, because he will know all of the Dartmouth songs and all of the Dartmouth lore. And he'll just apply, and that'll be it." I didn't find out about this letter until I was 65. [laughter] But anyway, so I had climbed Mount Moosilauke by the time—when I was seven years old for the first time, and went to my first reunion that summer of '57. So, my dad was Class of '37. So, that's how I ended up at Dartmouth, early decision.

PASSOT: So you were always sort of predestined to end up there.

AYLWARD: Fully controlled, fully inoculated, fully indoctrinated into the whatever the secret sauce is.

PASSOT: I want to just touch back just real quick on your time in Burma, because I found that to be kind of interesting. What was it like living there for however long you were there?

AYLWARD: We were there for two years. We lived in a diplomatic compound, which is I think on the same lake where [Aung] San Suu Kyi, the current effective prime minister lived when she was under house arrest. But it was all diplomats of different countries in this special compound, and as we did everywhere, we were surrounded by servants who did everything for us. And as a kid, I had—there was always somebody who was paid whose job was to watch me all the time and care for me. And I'll never forget about oh, 15 years ago, suddenly seeing a picture of the woman who cared for me when I was two-and-a-half to four in Burma, and I hadn't

thought of her, or—and suddenly I said, “Dueno,” which was her name. It just came to me. You know, if you had asked me what was the name of my maid, you know, I wouldn’t remember, but it just came to me.

So, it was this rarified existence that we had of even when we lived in an apartment in Hong Kong from ’60 to ’64, there was a family who lived out back in our apartment, same, you know, walk through the kitchen, there’s a little kind of outside porch, and then they had their little rooms in the back, a family where the father was the cook and the wife was the amah [maid]. And then, when we were younger, there was another one who took care of us as little... So, we had this idyllic existence of... all the other kids had their caretakers, their amahs, their maids, and we’d all kind of go play together supervised by two or three or four Burmese women. But, they were incredibly gentle, sweet people. My parents loved the people there. I mean, I just remember this one woman.

But, you know, it’s just so sad that... and then, this woman¹ that we all revered turns out to be a racist ethnic cleanser as well, so...

PASSOT: Yeah. Have you been back since?

AYLWARD: No. No, unfortunately not. And I was excited... Some neighbors of ours when we lived on Capitol Hill worked for a development NGO and were posted over there in the time when there was great hope and the [Barack] Obama Administration was opening up the relations with them, and we thought there was going to be a real democracy. They went over there and I was excited and I thought *gee, this will be the opportunity to go back and see*, because it was like they went into the Dark Ages with the generals running the place. And then, well, you know what’s going on there, so I have no interest in going now.

PASSOT: All right, let’s go back to Dartmouth. What was it like when you first got on campus, and what was...

AYLWARD: Actually, let me fill in a quick piece.

PASSOT: Yeah, go for it.

AYLWARD: Sometime in my junior year in high school, I remember going

¹ This refers to Aung Sang Suu Kyi of Myanmar (information added by the narrator).

through an absolutely intense period of debate about the war in Vietnam. And with two of my classmates being the anti-Vietnam War people who knew a lot, and one or two other friends being the kind of “America right or wrong” people who had that other side, and then my dad and some of his friends who were all still working in the State Department being the other side. And I ping-ponged back and forth with factoids and arguments of “well, what do you say about the 1954 elections that were supposed to have been had? After the '54 agreement we were supposed to have a vote in '56, and why didn't it happen?” And you know, just back and forth and back and forth and back and forth, trying to find the truth, trying to develop my own view, because it was like I suddenly, these two guys that were my best friends were telling me that we were engaged in this horrendous... bad war, and it was like, you know, somebody said that my dad was abusing little girls, you know. And so, I was just ping-ponging back and forth and back and forth with arguments and data, and then reading, and so there was this intense inquiry that went on two, three, four months.

But, by the summer of '66, yeah, because it would have been the end of my—between junior and senior years, I was absolutely confirmed this was a terrible thing we were doing and it should end. So, and there wasn't much... and then in our senior year there was some activism related to the administration and dress code, and so we organized kind of a strike and demonstrations about—they'd censored the school newspaper. My best friend was the editor of the school newspaper and he wrote an editorial calling for people living in DC to be able to vote. What a strange idea, you know? [laughter] This is America. And that was censored. And so, so we created a group called Students for Administrative Reform, which was my first involvement with organized protest. And looking back on it, it was pretty tame. I mean, you know, it was like *be able to write whatever editorials you want*, but also *be able to wear blue jeans to school and girls to wear shorts*. But, it was training in activism. And I was emailing with the other friend a while ago, humorously saying “you taught me to be a Commie.” But, that was my first brush with...

But by the time I arrived at Dartmouth, that was very—the war was very high on my list of things that needed to not happen. And I had also spent the summer of '66 working in what was called “the ghetto” for a very liberal Episcopal Church summer program. So I was—you know, you asked me what I thought of the United States, and, you know,

before and I had this idealized view, well, here I was spending two-and-a-half months right in one of the poorest nastiest parts of the city, of DC, working with 15 six- and seven-year-old boys every day as their summer camp counselor, and being exposed to street organized, civil rights street organizing, and singing “We Shall Overcome” and rallies and that. So, I got a taste of the civil rights movement kind of on the back end, well, not the back end, but '66. And so, that was another kind of really formative experience for me of being dropped into real racial conflict and being one of the few white people around in that community. And I ended up the next summer going back into the same community, the summer after I graduated from high school, and ran a swimming pool in exactly that neighborhood, and then went back the next year after my freshman year in college and ran the same swimming pool. So, I spent three summers in what was then one of the two highest crime, poorest parts of Washington, right up close to the evils and failings of our society.

PASSOT: Right. I feel like I have to ask, because I'm just curious, what role did you see Johnson playing in sort of changing the Vietnam War, our involvement within it, or even just on American society at all?

AYLWARD: [President] Lyndon Johnson?

PASSOT: Uh-huh.

AYLWARD: Well, you know, at first I had this real sense of the Great Society, because that summer of '66 I remember working in this summer program. My daily reality was government spending money to hire poor kids to be summer counselors, giving them jobs, getting them in free lunch programs, sandwiches being... and then buses that we would take them to do stuff, and me organizing the re-enactment of the Battle of Lexington and Concord with all of these—you know, I was the only white guy of a hundred people involved in this re-enactment, and all these little kids running around being British and American patriots. So I didn't have this presence of Johnson as this kind of evil force at all. I don't remember that. The war was this bad thing going on. And at some point it must have become really intense and overwhelming. But, the domestic issues of civil rights and poverty were much closer to home until I got to Hanover, I guess. At least I was—no, that's not... At some point the war became predominant in my thinking. And Johnson, who initially was—I mean, I remember re-enacting the '64 election at

Taipei American School, and there was like one guy, Bruce Bickle, who was defending Goldwater, and everybody, even all these military kids, thought that Goldwater was a whack job, who wanted to start wars and all that stuff, and Johnson was the peace candidate, right? He's the guy who said he wasn't going to send American boys to fight in Vietnam. And so, the lying of the government wasn't brutally apparent, at least to me, until '67, '68, and then of course, with Nixon into '69. So, but by the time I arrived in Hanover, Lyndon Johnson was the face of the war.

PASSOT: And what was it like arriving in Hanover? What were those first...

AYLWARD: Terrifying. Absolutely terrifying. You know, I think there ought to be a requirement that everybody in their first week speak honestly about how scared they are of failing. You know, everybody there was a hotshot in some way or they wouldn't have gotten there, and then suddenly you're dropped in with all these people who you are sure are much hotter shots than you are. And I got a roommate who's been in prep school for three years, boarding school, and so he knows... this is old hat to him, right? And he seems very sophisticated and I'm not. And I'm terribly insecure about life and whether I'm going to succeed or not. I had a wonderful time on freshman trip. I mean, it was just astounding, to climb Mount Lincoln and Mount Lafayette. Moosilauke Ravine Lodge [Warren, NH] again.

And I was really isolated. You know, I isolated myself that first fall term in a way because I was very outspoken about the war, and that tagged me as one of two or three people in South Fayerweather, where I was, who were that way. That was very much, to be outspoken about it, was a very minority position at the time. And, so I remember going to anti-war meetings, SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] meetings that fall term, where the other 30 people, 40 people on campus were, and being surrounded by like-minded people. And then you go back to your dorm and you're not. I also remember there was the first big anti-war demonstration, or the second—I think the first one in DC was '65 or '66, but there was a big one in the fall of '68—'67, I'm sorry, fall term freshman year [1967], and my parents... I wanted to go. It was October of '67, I think. I think that's when Abbie Hoffman

was going to levitate the Pentagon. I think that's the one where there's this famous picture of the long-haired kid putting a flower in the barrel of a gun of a soldier at the Pentagon.

PASSOT: Right.

AYLWARD: And I'm sure that's when that was. But my parents were terrified there was going to be violence, and forbade me from going, which was the last time my parents ever told me I couldn't do anything, or at least that I listened, I listened to them when they told me I couldn't do something. But by that point, because I really wanted to go to that demonstration, it was really becoming a big deal. And I think the other thing to remember is that when you turned 18 you had to register for the draft. Most of my classmates were already 18 when they got there. I had skipped a grade when we went from Washington DC to Hong Kong in 1960. I skipped 5th grade so I could be back with people my own age in the British school system because they start a year earlier. And so I was younger. I didn't turn 18 until 1968, so I hadn't registered for the draft.

But one of the things that was happening as I'm starting through my freshman year at Dartmouth is the draft is coming at me. And it's just really hard to convey to anybody who wasn't there how a public policy of war feels when it's not an issue of a citizen only, as the war in Iraq was. There I marched against invading Iraq. But, in Vietnam they wanted me to go over there and fight, and all my friends. And so, all the way through, as you kind of understand this history that you're picking up on, you have these two drivers. One is a sense of public policy and what's right and wrong for the country and the other one is a very personal combination of anger and fear caused by the draft.

PASSOT: Were there student-led demonstrations on campus your freshman year, or did that not develop until later?

AYLWARD: Yes. In fact, the history of that is really striking when you look at—we had a Zoom reunion of the Parkhurst [Hall takeover] crew about three weeks ago. Yeah, the beginning of May was on the anniversary. And I noted that the arc of development from the first demonstration, the peace line that started in '66, I think, of every Friday at noon there was a sign that said "Peace," about four or five feet long and about

three feet high with two posts on it. And people lined up at the flagpole right across the street from Robinson Hall, across the Green towards Dartmouth Hall, and demonstrated, just stood there in a silent vigil protesting the war in Vietnam. And initially there were very few people.

And then, sometime in the spring of '67 before I got there, there was this event that a group of pro-war students said they were going to have a counterdemonstration, and basically say, you know, "Yeah, there's this tiny minority that hates America, and we're the real patriots. We're gonna come out and we're gonna stand on the Green and show." And what happened was in response to that, a huge outpouring—there was a huge outpouring of people who came out to protest the war. So, the fact of this counterdemonstration produced a much larger demonstration which was very... a couple of the people who were in the weekly thing just said they were amazed at, like there was a thousand people or something. Anyway, people have—I've read stories about that in some of the other oral interviews that are part of this project.

But anyway, that started—I remember participating in that freshman year, and there were lots of teach-ins and sit-ins, there were regular SDS meetings. I mean, SDS was the—I used to joke and say the SDS at Dartmouth was like the Young Democrats at Columbia [University], because it had some really radical Communists, People's Labor Party, adherence in it, and then it had people like me who didn't have a Marxist analysis of the American economy. But, you know, it was a pretty diverse group of people, but it was the anti-war organizing group on campus. And by that point, the target had been established of, you know, the war at Dartmouth was ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] and recruiting, and those were the issues, and they were the issues—I'm pretty sure they were already the issues when I got there. And, so we'd talk about how those would happen. But, I don't recall anything specific through freshman year, other than multiple agonized conversations about what to do, what to do personally, what to do tactically as an organization, how to build support, how to get other people to care, real frustrations with lack of caring by colleagues, you know, other students, a rising level of fear. So I would have turned 18 in February and gotten my draft card, which I subsequently burned.

And then I remember a wonderful thing which was that somebody came up with this brilliant idea of, in the spring term, of having a hunger strike against the war. And, so we did. And sometime in the middle of spring term, we launched a hunger strike, on a Sunday I think. But we announced it and made a big deal out of it. And every day at noon, the hunger strikers would get in the line across the Green, and the line got longer and longer and longer. And somebody decided that there would be a ceremony of drinking a Dixie cup of orange juice and a multivitamin. Now, I do health for full-time now, and I know that, you know, you get the sugar from the orange juice, but it's pretty ineffectual. But anyway, we did that. And this was a, you could drink water in this fast, but you didn't eat food.

And what happened was that it had an incredible impact, that people in my dorm, and we had this same impact across the rest of the campus—my colleagues found this to be—is the people who made fun of us and who dismissed the anti-war movement really paid attention, and we had intense... you know, I mean, people would come to my room and want to talk about it, because the actual sacrifice of not eating. And, you know, there's a lot of power in non-violent protest. And when you contrast that with the tactic used the next year at exactly the same time, the taking over the building, the administration building, with the fast, I think at least in my mind the first was a really effective way of getting people to take this seriously. And it just sparked a huge amount of discussion. And it felt really good. I mean, it was really hard to do, and I think we went for a week, because yeah, we went for a week and called it off on a Friday night. And I remember eating some—I was told that, or we voted—I can't remember how it came about that it was ended, but I was in South Fayerweather and there was a jar of peanut butter in the room, and I asked this guy whose room I was in if I could eat his peanut butter and he said "sure." So, I ate like a third of a jar of peanut butter with a knife. And if you ever fast for a week, don't break it by eating a third of a jar of peanut bar. [laughter] It doesn't go well.

PASSOT: And so, did all this awareness of the war and activism help in your decision to join *The Dartmouth*?

AYLWARD: You know, I think that was independent. I think I went and signed up freshman year, because I wrote some articles. I was clearly reporting freshman year. And I think that came,

I'm pretty sure that came out of when I arrived in high school at the beginning of junior year I didn't know anybody, and it was a big urban high school where people knew each other, had known each other forever and there were cliques, and I came to admire and wanted to be friends with the crew that was around the newspaper. But, since I had showed up junior year, I was too late to get on that track and get in that homeroom and be part of it, so I just became friends with them. But I liked that. I saw the power of journalism and I was interested in being a journalist.

And so, freshman year of fall term I got involved in that and started writing for it. But I didn't see that really as political so much as... I hadn't connected those two yet, I don't think. The other thing that's really important about freshman year is that you have a campaign going on for President, and [Senator Eugene] McCarthy is launching his campaign. For reasons that I have never understood, but I can't remember why—I'm sure I understood at the time—I didn't get involved at all in that campaign. I saw it. You know, there were booths at Thayer [Hall], the dining hall, to sign up, and plenty of my people who became friends, mostly people who were older in classes before us got involved in that campaign. And four years later I was running the 2nd Congressional District for [Senator] George McGovern's Presidential campaign, and the 2nd is the western half of New Hampshire. So, you know, my first job out of college was working in a Presidential campaign.

But in '68 I wasn't involved at all. But a lot of people were. And so, in the winter you had a lot of politicking centered on the war in Vietnam. So, so leading up to that fast that I mentioned, it's a mistake not to recognize the power of that, and how that personalized the Johnson role. You know, *if you're for the war, you're for Johnson. If you're for peace, you're for McCarthy.* That's it. It's binary, black and white. And so, I'll never forget watching spring term—no, no, no, the end of spring break, heading back up to Hanover for spring term, I spent the night—my girlfriend was at UPenn [University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA]—I spent the night with her on the way up. And turned on the television and there was Johnson announcing that he wasn't going to run again. And just being blown away, because he stopped the bombing and he announced. And just being overjoyed that there was this opportunity that the war would end, because Johnson committed himself to ending the war. And

in fact, in retrospect, we know that he might have pulled it off if Nixon hadn't engaged in treason, his back door telling the South Vietnamese not to agree to the deal. But anyway, that was this other major thing going on that really ginned people up. And when I came back to DC for the summer and was running the swimming pool back in this neighborhood, there was a McCarthy headquarters on the street nearby, and I remember going by and signing up and volunteering, and knocking on doors to raise money for McCarthy in that spring, or in June, I guess June and July before the Convention.

1968 is, was the worst year ever. And I've touched on it in several ways in this conversation, but it really just from the first day to the end was about as bad a year as you can get. In my case, I'm raised by somebody who represents the United States Government abroad, and I'm raised to believe in my government and raised to believe that we're out there doing good. And if there's a year that defines all of that coming unglued, that everything I was taught turns out to be false, it's 1968. Certainly there's glimmers of that in my life leading up to that point, but '68 just blows it away. And it starts with sitting in my chair... we used to have these standard issued chairs in the dorms that you could put a board across the arm rests, a study board, and I remember studying in my room in South Fayerweather, 303 South Fayerweather, and listening to the radio report on this explosion of warfare in the Tet Offensive in Vietnam.

So, January starts with the complete lie being put to this "there's a light at the end of the tunnel, we're making progress," and so it just blows apart with the Vietnamese—the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese invading everywhere, and the nightly television coverage of the battle in Hue, with the Marines dying, and you just see every night on television these stories that we have half a million men fighting in Vietnam, and we're clearly not winning. And Walter Cronkite goes over there and comes back and says we're not winning. And in a time of news coverage that you're living through now which is so fractured, it's hard to explain how back then there were really three sources of news: three networks, and a couple of big papers, and they were all kind of center-right is probably the best way to describe it. And the mainstream—there was a thing called the mainstream media, and it was mainstream.

And Walter Cronkite was kind of a step up from the rest of it. And when he came back from his trip to Vietnam and said *it's a quagmire*, you know, *and we're going to have to negotiate our way out*, that just shook foundations. But for me, you know, I was already there. I didn't need Walter Cronkite to help me with that move to... But, you start with Tet, and then you have Johnson and McCarthy, and Johnson's quitting, and then Martin Luther King [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.] is killed and my city is burning. I mean, there are troops in Jeeps with machine guns patrolling up and down a block over from the swimming pool I run. The whole neighborhood a block away from the swimming pool I run, six blocks north, six blocks south, is entirely burned. You know, and then Bobby Kennedy [Senator Robert F. Kennedy]. I was sitting in the same damned chair with the same study board at the end of spring term and Bobby Kennedy gets killed.

And then, I'm home for the summer and I'm running this pool, and the convention's coming up. And I was going to go out and join the demonstrations because it's clear that the bad guys are gonna—after Bobby's killed, that's it, and the bad guys in the form of [Vice-President] Hubert [H.] Humphrey are going to win the nomination. And so, I'm on my way to Chicago to be part of the demonstrations against it. And I took a bunch of kids from the pool camping, and got in a bad car accident, totaled my parents' car and got banged up and cut up, and my brother got hurt, and nobody permanently, but I wasn't going to Chicago. And so, watched the convention and the riots on television and, you know, there's just this, it's just hard to describe. It's just getting worse and worse and worse.

And we get to the fall and Humphrey won't break with Johnson on the war. But, if he had he would have won, if he'd broken just a little bit, you know, a week or 10 days earlier. But, by then I was completely soured on politics, and the line was "vote with your feet" and "don't vote, but just demonstrate." That was the kind of leftist position on that election. But, I learned the lesson is never to take that position again. But, you know, it was just a horrible, horrible... And then Nixon gets elected. And I was just like *where is there any hope at all?* And now I'm in the draft. And then that continues unabated, because what Nixon does is ratchets up the war through '69.

And then in '69—I sent you my story of the draft lottery, and kind of there's this—in retrospect it's almost like there was no letup. In my life there was, there was a letup. Just now as I'm telling you the story I'm seeing this unremitting pressure. But in my case, I checked out for six months. I remember intense organizing. We're back sophomore year, and earlier in the conversation I said that there were two themes. One was ROTC and the other one was recruiting. And in the fall of I think October of '68, about 30 of us blocked the Army recruiter. There was next to Thayer Hall behind South Mass was a white building. I don't know if it's still there, an old white clapboard building which was the recruiting office. It had a big porch on it, and 30 of us just occupied the front porch to block an Army recruiter from coming in, for which that was frowned on by the authorities. And we all got a letter just before Thanksgiving saying on our return we would be called up before the Committee on Student Conduct, Rules Conduct, CCSC, I think [Committee on Standing and Conduct], which was the campus judiciary. It had some professors and students on it.

And I remembered going off to Thanksgiving and being terrified that I was going to get kicked out of college for doing this thing. And I remember sitting with my dad's best friend at Dartmouth, a guy named Bill Rotch (R-o-t-c-h), who was the editor of the *Milford Cabinet*, Milford, New Hampshire *Cabinet*. He was the old kind of Republican who believed in civil rights and patriotism, and just a really good guy. And I remember sitting and talking to him about the war and how I felt and why I'd done what I did, and how wonderful he was not to... you know, he just listened to me. And then I went back up to Hanover for the rest of the Thanksgiving weekend with this lovely woman from Radcliffe [College, Cambridge, MA] who I was with at the time, and just wandering around an empty campus being terrified. And then the next week, I think they just gave us a warning. I think they said, you know, "Don't do that again," and that was it. But that was the first kind of break the rules that my group of friends were involved in, or kind of our cohort was involved in.

And then we went into '69 with a lot of still kind of intense meetings. We'd meet in College Hall, in the front meeting—I think it's called Collis [Center] now. Yeah, it's the one on the corner right across from the Hanover Inn and C&G [Casque and Gauntlet]. But we'd meet in the front room there. My colleagues are convinced that there were microphones in

there that were piping our meetings to the authorities, and given the time, we were sure that there were FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] plants in those meetings. So, one of the things that is worthy of mention that adds to the paranoia of, you know, you hate the war, they're coming for you, you're going to be drafted and forced to fight this, and there are government spies watching you. So you can't go to a demonstration without there being people with long lens cameras taking pictures of everybody. And the word's out that files are being created on people. And we didn't know the full extent of the COINTELPRO [Counter Intelligence Program] program that the FBI was running, but in retrospect it was almost worse than what we thought was going on. But, you know, people would kind of drop in into these meetings. You didn't really know who they were. But, anyway, so that's kind of going on.

And then, I remember really getting to be close friends with a guy named David [H.] Green ['71], because he and I were both classmates and anti-war activists, and we met sometime freshman year in these peace lines and the meetings, and we became very close friends. He also was reporting for *The D*, I think, in freshman year. And we agreed to be roommates junior year, and signed up for—we got a triple in the top floor of South Fayerweather, great room with my current roommate, a wonderful guy named David Lindsay ['71], who was supportive of me but not an activist. And, so we were going to have a triple in the fall of '69 with three Davids, which would have been kind of amusing, but...

So along comes March of '69, and I go off to foreign study in Strasbourg, France, and have an amazing experience, still political because I'm a government major by now, and the paper I write for my government seminar is about the '68 French student revolution. The thing about 1968, it wasn't a United States issue; it was a global issue. I mean, the fires were going everywhere. And in France, it really, it got... knocked over [President Charles] de Gaulle, and but it was a really big deal in France, and I got to interview a bunch of the people involved and wrote this paper about it. The most famous student revolutionary was a guy named Danny, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who was known as "Danny the Red." And I just somehow ended up in an apartment with him in Frankfurt, Germany, in May of '69, smoking weed and him telling me war stories about the year before in Paris, shutting down Paris. It was pretty fascinating.

But then, my folks had told me that for one summer I didn't need to earn my expense money at Dartmouth, I could and should take the summer off and travel Europe. And so I did. And I had, I mean, those six months were life altering. One of the best things about Dartmouth is foreign study, and they made a bigger deal out of it with the Dartmouth Plan that came about after my time. But I had a wonderful three months in Strasbourg, and then a wonderful three months driving a car around, a cheap Renault Dauphine that I had bought. I painted one of the symbols back then was the Omega sign, which is a symbol of resistance, and so I had painted an Omega in white on the side of my red car on the driver's door, as I drove around Europe letting people know how I felt about the war.

PASSOT: Were you in France during the shift from de Gaulle to [Georges] Pompidou?

AYLWARD: That was the year before.

PASSOT: Okay.

AYLWARD: But, so Pompidou was in charge when I was there. But I got student demonstration posters from '68. You know, a year later people were saying, "We thought we won the revolution and we didn't," that there was kind of this backslide. But then I was hearing what had happened in Hanover, where had I been in Hanover I would have been in Parkhurst and I would have been arrested and I would have gone to jail and my life would have been different.

PASSOT: Right. And, do you remember talking to David Green at all about the Parkhurst takeover, or even before you went to France?

AYLWARD: No.

PASSOT: Or it was just something that you heard after?

AYLWARD: No, I heard it after. I don't remember any discussions of building takeovers, other than it had happened at Columbia the year before, and a few other places. So I'm sure there were some discussions of it, but I wouldn't have been in favor of that. You know, I remember arguing with people about the value of the fast versus the confrontational stuff

that happened with the building takeover, and by that point, to some degree I'd become really conscious that the point of politics is to convince people, not to confront people. And I was getting a little disillusioned in the winter of '68-'69 with some of the people in SDS. I'll never forget one of them saying—somebody said something in a meeting, and somebody who was really a Marxist, a People's Labor Party adherent, said, "That's incorrect thinking. You should not have said what you just said. That's just wrong." And I remember exploding at him and saying, "Fuck you. He's entitled to his opinion and just because he doesn't agree with your view of the world, you know, get the..." So, the kind of—but the... and what was interesting is how the takeover and the jailing of that crew took them off the table.

PASSOT: Really?

AYLWARD: I didn't really know. I was invited to come to the 50th anniversary of the Parkhurst takeover, the reunion of the people who did it, who led it and went to jail, because I was an honorary member of that group according to David Green. And so I did. And what I was struck by is how few of them I knew. And a lot of them had not been major activists before. Some of them had been, certainly, but a lot of them hadn't. A lot of them were people who didn't regard their responsibility of showing up at an SDS meeting every week on Tuesday nights, you know? Or engaging in different kinds of activities. But what was even more striking was how few of them were involved in anti-war activities afterwards. An awful lot of them moved into the kind of *live honestly and don't harm others* movement. A lot of them were involved in communes, and really lovely, gentle people, but not activists. And so, because I wasn't part of that at all, and by the time I came back from France for fall term junior year, it was pretty clear I was going to be the editor of the newspaper, and so I was more and more and more pulled into the newspaper, and so I wasn't spending time out in communes on the weekends and things like that. So...

PASSOT: What about after? Did you talk to David Green about his eventual expulsion from the school?

AYLWARD: No. I didn't for some reason. I was really upset he had been kicked out of school. But he was gone. He took off, and I did not speak to him again until the lead-up to my 35th reunion, which was the first reunion I ever went to. And I

tracked him down and said, "I'm coming up for this reunion." And he was living in Lexington, still does, Lexington, Massachusetts, and I said, "I hope you're coming to the reunion. I'd love to see you." And he said, "I'm not interested in having anything to do with a reunion, but I'll come up to see you." And so, he and I spent an entire afternoon at some restaurant on Main Street out back in a table, just catching up. And we've been in pretty close touch ever since. He spent the night here a couple of months ago, was down in town, and then we were together for the reunion of the takeover last year, and so I'm seeing a lot of him.

But no, for some reason or other, we never kind of... He went off and had a whole other life, University of Maryland. And he went off to Cuba to help with the sugar cane harvest; to help the revolution was a very common thing to do at the time. Great guy. Really great guy, who in retrospect, one of the things he's proudest of is of re-establishing, or establishing a respectful and friendly relationship with Thaddeus Seymour, who was the Dean of the College who he physically removed from Parkhurst. He, David, with another friend of mine, Mack Rugg, physically removed [the Dean] from Parkhurst. And so, the two of them were the clashing forces, if you will, in the spring of '69. And they got together and patched it up and became good friends.

PASSOT: And when you got back to Dartmouth, did the political activist scene sort of change? Did you see a sort of a decline in SDS involvement, and just activism in general?

AYLWARD: Yeah, SDS blew itself up. It was smashed at Dartmouth by the arrests and... you know, 30 days for a non-violent building takeover was, you know, it's kind of typical of the old school John Sloan Dickey and the then Governor of New Hampshire [Walter R. Peterson, Jr. ('47)] who was a Dartmouth graduate. They were so offended, morally fundamentally offended by that behavior, they just... and getting a judge to lock them up for 30 days on contempt, you know. There's no trial, right? It's just "I told you to get out. You didn't get out. You go to jail." Boom. I mean, it was the biggest sham job legally.

But anyway, they destroyed it there, and then the national SDS meeting in the summer of '69 was where Mark Rudd and the crazies, the Weathermen, took over the national SDS, and my friends who went there just walked away from it. And, so it removed itself as a material—as any sort of

force on the campus and nationally, other than to create havoc in the streets. So, which was too bad because if you read the Port Huron statement (1962), it's a pretty good analysis of what was wrong with America in '64, '65, and if they kind of stuck with it. But it just became... It's interesting how movements can become just more and more and more radical the more frustrated they get. I saw the same thing in Hong Kong, what happened in the streets of Hong Kong, faced with a government that won't give, so you just get angry and angry and angrier, and that's not, at least in our society, that's not how you win.

PASSOT: And what about yourself? Did you stay pretty involved in activism or were you focused on other things?

AYLWARD: Oh, I cranked it up. I was super involved. And the fall of '69 were the largest demonstrations, national demonstrations. There was the moratorium in October and the national mobilization in November. In November there was the largest demonstration ever in DC, both of them in DC, and I was in both of them. At the time what I could do was to say, "Well, this is a news event, so we've got to go cover this news event." So we'd fill a car full of news people and news photographers from *The D*, and we'd do double duty. We'd go demonstrate and then write about it. So, there's some amazing pictures of us getting badly tear-gassed on Massachusetts Avenue trying to march to the South Vietnamese Embassy the night before the big demonstration. And, but I was very, very active.

There was, I think we were supposed to go to class. There was this thing about going to classes. That was part of the deal at Dartmouth, you were supposed to do classes [laughter]. But I was doing the newspaper and anti-war stuff, and with a good dose of *Dartmouth ought to be co-educational*. That was my other activist thing, and there was a lot of that that fall. We had a big co-education weekend where we took over some dorms and shipped in busloads of women for a whole week to show what having women around could be. They'd had eight drama students, exchange students, on campus my sophomore year, which was terrific because I dated one of them while I was there. And then... When was the co-ed weekend? Was that... no, that was '68. That was the fall of '68 or winter '68. That was sophomore year, I'm sorry, because then junior year we had 75 exchange students, and then senior year another 75, and so there was this whole other co-ed thing going on. So if you were an activist, there were three things going on. One was

co-education, one was civil rights, and one was the war. And those were all kind of the same people to one degree or another, and certainly they overlapped a lot.

PASSOT: You weren't on campus when they finally let women...

AYLWARD: No. No, that was the fall after... that was the fall of '71. They...

PASSOT: Go ahead.

AYLWARD: I was going to say. The huge shift in Dartmouth was when Dickey retired and John [G.] Kemeny was selected as president. So, I regard my time at Dartmouth as there's freshman and sophomore years which is Dickey running the place, and junior and senior year which is Kemeny running the place. And Kemeny was as anti-war as I was and as pro-[co]education as I was. And a great man.

PASSOT: Did you have any sort of relationship with either Dickey or Kemeny?

AYLWARD: I had none with Dickey, other than shaking his hand when I matriculated. I ended up with a terrific relationship with Kemeny. Because of my position on campus, I got to know him well, and I got invited to special meetings. I got invited to trustee/administrator/student leader retreats. Got able to work with him. I mean, he was just a really smart guy. And, you know, Dickey was from a different era. Dickey didn't think students were... I mean, Dickey was a '50s guy, you know, and he did really, he did a lot for Dartmouth in the late '40s and '50s. He should have left two years earlier. But yeah, I got to spend a lot of time with him [Kemeny], some of which was directly related to the topics of this conversation, but we're almost to that point, I think.

PASSOT: And I wanted to return to like the sort of first Parkhurst demonstrations. How prominent was the draft in all of these protests?

AYLWARD: Right up front. I mean, you have to remember that on the one hand, they're drafting everybody who registered, every man. So, every male is somehow in the process. So every

mother and girlfriend is in the process. You know, the only way we could fight a 20-year war in Afghanistan is because we're not involving everybody in it. But, so the draft is always there. And then one of the things that goes with the draft is that it's so irrational and inequitable. Depending on what community you're from, your local draft board has either met its quota by getting other people or it hasn't, so it's taken lots of people and they may get you. You cannot drop out of Dartmouth. You drop out of Dartmouth, you're an idiot. They're giving you a rifle. Your deferment is there as long as you're in school. And there is a large interest in divinity school. People are going to divinity school meetings on campus to explore becoming a minister. What? What's that about? Easy. I went to a divinity school meeting in the Hop [Hopkins Center for the Arts], in a conference room in the Hop. Somebody would say, "Come along." I said, "What?" And they said, "Well, you know, you're a thoughtful guy and maybe..." And you know, it was Chris Crosby ['71], a guy I almost roomed with senior year.

It was always there. We always talked about it. It was a constant, constant issue of controlling you because you had to stay in school. You couldn't take a year off. You, God help you if you flunked out, because the college would notify your draft board, and you're 1-A, buddy. I mean, it's there all the time. And "okay, you're against the war. So what? Just what are you gonna do about that, Jean Paul? You're gonna go? Well, you know, if you're really against it and you really believe this stuff about immoral, and it's their country. I mean, it's one thing to oppose the war. It's another thing to really oppose the war. And if you really think it's murder, you're gonna go? You can't. And if you can't, what are you gonna do? Well, you can stay in school forever, until they cut that one off. Or you can go to med school, which I couldn't. Or you could get into divinity school. Or you can go to Canada. Or you can go to jail."

So, in my case it came down to Canada or jail, because I didn't have... I thought for a while I could be maybe a conscientious objector, because I certainly conscientiously objected to this war. But, the category was conscientiously object to all war. And so, Peter [A.] Bien, who you would have been, your life would be a better life if he had been your professor just for one term. He taught me Homer and James Joyce and Nikos Kazantzakis. He's a Quaker. And he was this amazing professor of mine for freshman seminar,

which is this wonderful experience I had. And, but he was my mentor and counselor about the draft for a while. And he's a Quaker, so I went to a Quaker meeting with him a couple of times, and his wife. And then they took me to a Quaker conference in Massachusetts, and didn't push me, but just let me experience what being a Quaker was like to see whether I was a Quaker or not, and whether I was really a conscientious objector. And I concluded I wasn't.

But, the war created those kinds of relationships, too. I mean, that's not a normal student-faculty relationship. There was a guy named Jonathan Mirsky, who was a professor of Chinese and a professor of history, who was more of my mentor through, and was mentor to Dave Green. And, I mean, he was the most radical professor on campus, and very anti-war and extremely knowledgeable. You read *The D* from those days and he's giving lectures and writing articles and stuff all the time. And he was counseling us. There were a few in the faculty, like [James M.] Jim Knowles in the Economics Department who was really radical and got himself fired because he didn't—you know, he wasn't the kind of pipe smoking economist that they were comfortable with. I turned that into a scandal. It was a scandal, and I turned it into a public scandal when I ran the newspaper by covering it in detail, which really pissed the departments off, because they were very much used to their little club and being able to choose who's a member of their club.

And when Dartmouth—a friend of mine named Ken Brantel initiated something called the *Course Guide* and started recording student views of teachers, of the faculty, and publishing it, and then we started covering issues like who got tenure and who didn't, it was very upsetting to faculty. But, these are all kind of part of a gestalt that's going on on campus of the *once you stop believing in the wisdom and the truth telling of your government, you start questioning the institutions*, and this particular institution that I'm part of has just thrown my friends in jail for 30 days. So, you know, I don't have much love lost for any of them at that point.

PASSOT: Were there people that were volunteering at Dartmouth, too? Or was it mostly – by this time – were most people kind of disillusioned with what was happening?

AYLWARD: There were... Volunteering for the military?

PASSOT: Yeah, yeah, sorry.

AYLWARD: Yeah. Yeah, there were. There were guys who... Well, I just heard from four or five guys two weeks ago on a Dartmouth reunion Zoom that they gave up their ROTC scholarships at the end of their sophomore year. You had a choice then. You could give it up and you wouldn't have to go. And a bunch of them did that. But a bunch of them stayed. A bunch of them had signed up and said they were going to go in the military, and the military said "okay, we'll pay your college tuition," and for a lot of people, or some group of people, they did that. I never—I don't think, maybe once freshman year, I think once freshman year I demonstrated at a ROTC march, but after that I left them alone. I just didn't feel comfortable with that confrontation. I figured that they could make their own choices and I'd make mine.

But, there were—what was early in this conversation I talked about this arc. When you go from '65 when there's nobody that—the first teach-in I think at Dartmouth happened, the first kind of lecture saying "gee, there's something going on here," to the big peace demonstrations in spring of '66, to the fast in the spring of '68, to the [Parkhurst Hall] takeover in spring of '69, to... when you get to spring of '70, it's 95% anti-war, and to the extent you're still pro-war, you shut up. I mean, you're not out there waving a flag, not on that campus, not in May of 1970. Which doesn't mean there weren't ROTC that were still around. They were. But, they weren't—you'd have to be an idiot to be saying then, and they weren't mostly, saying, you know, "We're defending freedom." It was "I signed up and, you know, I'm gonna keep my commitment, and I'll try to get to Germany rather than Vietnam" by that point.

PASSOT: And what about your draft story? Do you want to elaborate a little bit on that?

AYLWARD: Yeah. The Nixon Administration figures out that everybody being involved in the draft means everybody's mom is involved in the draft and everybody's girlfriend's involved in the draft, and everybody's dad to some degree's involved in the draft. And so, this is a political problem for them. And so, they figure *let's pull the tooth on that and not have everybody after us. Let's have a lottery. And then, just the people whose names get drawn will be... and that will avoid a lot of the inequities about how, you know, who's getting picked, because it'll be by number rather than all of these*

draft boards deciding who goes and who doesn't go. And now that I do health and I'm focused on who's living and dying from Covid, you know, it's the same group of people who were living 10, 15 years shorter lives than I will and you will before Covid, poor people and people of color, and you go back to 50 years who was fighting and dying in Vietnam, poor people and people of color. You know, it's the same damned story every time in our society.

And, so they come with a lottery. And on December 1st, 1969, they have a drawing in Washington. And I met the woman, a woman for dinner in December whose husband drew the numbers. And I said, "It's impossible. You're too young." And she said, "He was an intern at the Selective Service." And it was televised, and nobody senior wanted to be on national television drawing people's names out of the barrel. So they—it kept going down the list, and finally they got to the intern and they said, "You do it." So, there we are in the evening of December 1st, and at the newspaper we had an old teletype machine, the UPI [United Press International] wire, that would go *doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo* and would print the news, right? The national news would come across. And that's how we got the numbers.

And so, I'm standing next to this black machine, and it was wired so if there was an urgent report, it would ring a bell, right, so the editors would come and look and see what was coming. And a bell rings and they start doing the dates. And the first birthday out of it was number 1. And up to that, at that time they were taking up to 180. So, if you were one of the first 180 numbers, when you lost your deferment you were going. You would be drafted. And, so I just watched these numbers come and come and come and come and come, and got to mine and it was 89. So, February 15th was 89. At which point I knew that I was going to Canada or I was going to jail. And so, at the time I wasn't editor yet. I was a news editor. So I said, "I'm done" and walked out and walked over to Fraternity Row to Foley House in which I was a brother, and got thoroughly drunk. And I went back to my—walked back to my dorm, and poor dorm... I had—on the stairs going up had these glass windows, and I proceeded to punch out a significant number of glass panels, particularly when two guys from Navy ROTC blasted me from farther up the stairs, because they had each drawn numbers over 300, so they were not going to—they were

going to drop out and not go. So that was a pretty horrible night.

And from then until... March of '71 was when I got notified of a medical condition that got me out of the draft. From then until that day, I was—one of the constants of my life that would come more or less each day was what I was going to do when I graduated. And what ultimately happened is in the midst of the spring of 1970 in this maelstrom of the student strike about the Cambodia invasion that I was one of the leaders of, after a full week of frantic activity of the school being on strike and getting very little sleep, I had a spontaneous pneumothorax, which means a popping of a lung. I was walking up past Dick's House—no, it was down that road, somewhere around Occom Pond, I was walking up past Cutter Hall, I think, and kicked the soccer ball, and felt this little twinge in my lung. This was a Friday or Saturday, I forget which. And thought nothing of it, kept walking. And that night was Green Key weekend, and we'd gone ahead and kept it, the concert by the Youngbloods. And, so I went off with my girlfriend, one of the exchange students, Sue Brendel, and we got—imbibed certain banned substances and went off to listen to the Youngbloods play. And John Kemeny gave a great speech and tossed out—he gave his famous lemon speech and threw lemons into the crowd, and which is another story. And then, the chest got worse and worse and worse. Then we went to the Hop [Hopkins Center for the Arts] and danced, and it got worse and worse, and finally said, Sue said, "You gotta go check this out." And so, they took an x-ray and found I had popped my lung. And it took until the next February or March, but the draft board submitted with the medical records, said, "Well, if you've got one pop in your lung, you could have two, so you're gonna be a 4-F." So, which means medically I wasn't going to go. So, that was when the draft was lifted from my head.

PASSOT: I'm just kind of curious. Could you return to this lemon speech story?

AYLWARD: Oh, sure. John Kemeny... well, it's part of the whole strike story. So, I could tell you the whole strike story. So we're in junior year and the war is grinding on, and I'm trying to remember if there's anything in the winter of '69, my junior year winter that's of interest and I can't think of anything other than just more of the same, and Nixon clearly not wanting to end the war and upping the bombing and so on.

Along comes the spring, and one of—you know, I mentioned that you've got civil rights going on, you've got co-education going on, you've got the war going on. Well, two of those are national issues, civil rights and the war. And one of the things that's happening is that the Black Panthers have emerged as an "in your face" force, and at the time we had a much rosier view of the Black Panthers than history has now conferred on them.

But, suffice it to say that there was a very clear sense that the FBI and the Justice establishment was not being just and was trying to crush the civil rights movement, which clearly they were, and not just the Panthers, but Martin Luther King and everybody else. And they had put on trial some Black Panther leaders who were being tried in New Haven, [CT] and there was a called East Coast national demonstration in support of the Panthers in New Haven. So a whole lot of us piled in cars and drove off at the end of April to go to this demonstration in New Haven, which terrified the government because they thought revolution was coming. They flew in units of the 82nd Airborne; they activated the National Guard. New Haven was an armed camp that weekend. And I didn't know how badly it was an armed camp until I read a book about this afterwards. But, they really thought all hell was going to break loose, because every radical east of the Mississippi was there. Abbie Hoffman was there. Jerry Rubin was there. The Panthers were there. It was an edgy crowd, would be an understatement.

And then, driving down there we hear Nixon give this speech that he is expanding the war and invading Cambodia. Well, that just blew the lid off of everything. While I was there we met with the other Ivy [League]—by this point I'm the editor of the newspaper, and that happened February of my junior year. We took over until February of senior year, and then we handed it off to the next group. So, met with the other editors and agreed that there should be a single editorial by all the Ivy papers calling for a student strike, and we weren't the only ones. Schools all across the country were going to strike over the expansion of the war. And here's the guy that's gotten elected in the fall of '68 saying he's got a secret plan to end the war, and now he's expanding the war, just the opposite of what he said he was going to do. So people are absolutely enraged. And there's, in my case I get the worst tear-gassing of my life in New Haven. By the way, if you're ever in a demonstration and there's National Guard

on the other side of the street and they don't want you to go past them, don't get in the second or third row, because the guys in the 10th row are always the bravest ones and they're the ones throwing bricks and bottles at the soldiers. So, there's this affix bayonets order and the gas started coming. Anyway, that was not good.

So we drive back to Hanover on Sunday afternoon, having called ahead and called for a strike meeting in North Fayerweather. And so we got there and we got back and lots of other people gathered around, we had about a hundred people, and agreed that we were going to form a strike committee and go on strike and call a big meeting for the Hop [Hopkins Center for the Arts] the next night to really get it underway. And then, sometime then or Monday, I think sometime Monday, Monday afternoon, Monday evening, a delegation of us went to see John Kemeny, and said, "We want you to know what's going on. We're gonna close the school down tomorrow."

"Tuesday we're gonna have a big meeting on the Green and then have a strike vote and go on strike." And that morning we'd published this editorial in the paper [*The Dartmouth*] calling for the strike. It was a pretty good editorial actually. And then Tuesday there's a good editorial that I wrote calling for the strike vote, and Monday night we'd had this intense meeting, and so all that's going on.

So we go off to see Kemeny, and I'll never forget, we sat in his private office in his home and told him what we were about to do, and he said—I'll never forget, he smiled and he said, "David, beat you to it. I'm going on WDCR and close the school down myself in about a half an hour." So, he goes... Now, the man is not a fool, right? He sees this train coming at him, and he doesn't want it coming at him. A year before it was coming at Dickey. And, you know, a lot of campuses, they were fighting the administration. And he didn't see any reason for Dartmouth to be defending the Administration, and he's anti-war himself, so, and offended by all of this. So, he gives this terrific speech. Somebody just showed me the transcript. I haven't read it. But he said, "We're shutting down for a week and we're gonna really spend the week talking about this, and meeting and seeing what we can do." But basically, he got in front of the train.

And so, the Manchester *Union Leader*, which was run by a guy named William Loeb, [Jr.], who was about as fascist as

in any newspaper in America, I mean, and I'm not misusing the term, writes—he used to write these front page right-wing editorials, and he wrote one saying Dartmouth has a lemon as president. He attacked John Kemeny for shutting the school down and called him a lemon. So, but on campus, we go have the meeting on Tuesday morning anyway, and we have about 2,000 people on the Green and we have a number of us give speeches. I had forgotten I gave a speech, and somebody sent me a picture of me giving a speech to that crowd, about two months ago. So we have a number of speeches, and then a guy named Lynn Hinkle ['71], a classmate and friend of mine, calls for the vote and we vote that week, and then everybody goes nuts planning doing different things. I'll come back to that.

Kemeny—at the end of that week is when I popped my lung—and Kemeny shows up at the Youngbloods concert, and before the band starts playing, he gets up and gives a speech. And he talks about how proud he is of everybody working together, *and there are other places that have come unglued and unstuck, and but Dartmouth hasn't. Dartmouth has really come together and worked together as a community with the town, with people for peace.* And at the end of his speech, he holds up a lemon in his hand, and the crowd goes nuts, absolute nuts. And he throws this lemon out into the crowd. So, that's the lemon speech. The thing I left out of this story is that—I told you we had the strike meeting on Sunday night. Well, Monday all across the country there are demonstrations on all these campuses, and Monday afternoon in Kent State [University, Kent, OH], well, on the weekend of Kent State, the ROTC building gets burned down, and on Monday at Kent State the National Guard opens fire on the kids and murders four of them. And so, so that's the other thing that just bashes into this. But anyway, that's Kemeny's lemon speech.

And they ended up doing a really smart thing, which is the faculty voted to give everybody pass-fail, so you could leave your courses, you could get a pass. You could continue your courses if you wanted to and they would keep teaching. And a bunch of people went off to Washington to lobby. A bunch of people went off canvassing. There were lots of... just everybody was doing something, or most people were doing something anti-war. And one of the interesting things for me personally was that starting Sunday night very late into Monday and Monday night, a guy named Cleve, Cleveland [Webber], and I cannot remember his last name, but he was the leader of the Afro-American Society, and he was 30

years old. They had a program [the Foundation Years] that year which brought former gang leaders from Chicago to Dartmouth, and he was one of them. There were two or three of them that came. And because they were older and they really had experience, they were recognized by the growing Afro-American community on campus as real leaders, and deservedly so. And I had met Cleve because I was editor of the paper, and so we knew each other, but not really well. And he came to me at some point, or somebody told me I needed to go see him, but basically he said, "You know, you're doing it again. You white guys are just worrying about the war in Vietnam. I come from a war at home. What are you doing about the war at home? You have a list of demands for Dartmouth and the society for the war in Vietnam. What about here?" And he and I and a couple of other people negotiated a coming together of their demands so that the strike became about both, not just the war. And it was a really... I'll just never forget those conversations. It's kind of funny because he would tease me by calling me—he'd always say "revolutionary brother Dave." Whenever he saw me, whenever we talked, he would call me "revolutionary brother Dave," which I knew half of it he was tweaking me. But, anyway, good guy.

PASSOT: So what does your senior year look like at Dartmouth?

AYLWARD: Boy, it was boring compared to that. You know, it was interesting because you leave, and I came to DC and left my swimming pool job and got a job as the copy boy for United Press International's Capitol Hill staff. I had this amazing job working with, back when UPI was like a really big organization. It had 10 reporters covering the House and 15 covering the Senate, and I was the go-fer for all of them, running back and forth and really being exposed to real journalism. So I did that all summer. And I remember writing an article, calling around to student leaders around the country to find out what the campuses were going to be like in the fall. Nothing had changed, right? Everybody was up in arms and lobbying like crazy in the spring. Some of that had continued in the summer, so you figured you would come back to campus, it'll keep going. Well, it didn't. Campuses were very quiet and calm. The war continued.

And what really—and, you know, I was just consumed. Running a daily paper when you have your own printing

press, I spent a lot of nights, I learned how to set type, lead type, and make up a page, and help our staff, paid staff, put the paper out. So, that was a pretty consuming... And the kind of leadership that came with it on campus with co-education and those kinds of things took up a lot of time. I remember being—I was in Casque and Gauntlet my senior year and living there, and a guy across the hall who I referred to earlier, Ken Bruntel, who ran the *Course Guide*, convinced me that I should take this middle level philosophy course with him. And I said, “But I’ve not taken any philosophy,” and he said, “You don’t need to. You just jump right in. You know, you’ll be fine. You’re a smart kid. You’ll do well.” And so, I’m drowning. This is winter term senior year. I’m drowning in this philosophy course, and running a paper at the same time. And Professor [Willis] Doney calls me in after the first mid-term and says, “Mr. Aylward, um, is it correct that you haven’t had any philosophy before this class?” This is Descartes and Kant and people like that, and I said, “Yes, sir.” He said, “I thought so.” He said, “Well, I’m glad you’re taking this course pass-fail. I’m gonna pass you because I really like what you’re doing with the newspaper. But, don’t take any more philosophy.” [laughter]

PASSOT: As far as demonstrations and activism, did you continue through your senior year?

AYLWARD: Yeah. There were some—there must have been some demonstrations in the fall of '70, and in '71 Jim Wright, who had arrived on campus from Madison [WI] in '68, I think, '68 or '69 as a young history professor, had founded the Hanover Peace Committee, because there wasn't a town anti-war group, and therefore had gotten to host and meet George McGovern when McGovern came to campus in 1970, and volunteered to be McGovern's guy on campus as McGovern moved towards running for President. And got to know me because of my anti-war activity in the newspaper. And sometime in January or February or March of '71, recruited me, or tried to recruit me to go to work for the McGovern campaign after I graduated, in a program they had to start organizing in New Hampshire. And I told him that I had absolutely no interest in getting anywhere near electoral politics, that I thought it was all corrupt, Hubert Humphrey blaa, blaa, blaa, and Richard Nixon blaa, blaa, blaa, and I wasn't gonna sully myself being involved in electoral politics. And over three or four sessions over innumerable beers, as I was reminding him at breakfast last

year when we were catching up, he fundamentally said to me, "Bullshit. If you care about ending the war in Vietnam, there's only one thing you can do when you walk out of Dartmouth and you have to go to work for George McGovern's campaign." And I did. And that changed my life. Both women that I married to I met during the campaign, that led me into politics, led me on the Hill, and all because of Jim Wright, who subsequently became president of Dartmouth.

PASSOT: Can you go a little bit more into your involvement in the McGovern campaign and how it sort of escalated and, you know, became more important?

AYLWARD: Well, yeah, I spent this—I was going to Georgetown Law School [Washington, DC] in the fall, and so I spent the summer—there were eight of us, teams of two, who went town by town and went and met with leaders in the town, Democratic leaders, and tried to talk them into supporting McGovern, and sent them letters, and basically built a card file of everybody who was anybody. And then, I went home to DC at the end of August to start law school. And I was standing in line to register at Georgetown for my classes, and it just kind of hit me. I said, *What am I doing here? I can't go to law school. This is not right.* So, I went and—this is in the days prior to wireless phones—I went to a pay phone and called my boss up in New Hampshire and I said, "Hey, if I come back, can I have a job?" And he said, "Yeah, yeah. Yeah, we'll make you student coordinator for New England," because he had a slot to fill for that. And I said "okay." And I got back in line and said, "Give my slot to somebody else," and went back to New Hampshire, and within a month or two they put me in charge of the—there were and are two congressional districts, and I was put in charge of field organization for the western half of the state, which I did until... So I lived in Manchester [NH] until the primary in March, and then went around kind of state by state to Wisconsin and Ohio and Michigan and New York, and then in the fall was the head of field operations for northern Ohio.

And then went to work for McGovern in the Senate office after, because I was one of the earliest people in the campaign, so I knew him well. He hired me as a junior staffer into his Senate office, where I was until... Along the way I reapplied to Georgetown, because McGovern was a

longshot, and so I was sure he wouldn't get the nomination. And they admitted me again, and he got the nomination, so I told them again I wasn't coming. And the third time I applied to Georgetown, they said "screw you," so I ended up going to law school at GW [George Washington University Law School, Washington, DC]. And that's how I became an activist.

PASSOT: What about the end of the war? What was that like for you?

AYLWARD: Well, I remember exactly where I was, in Akron, Ohio, just before the '72 election, November '72, when Kissinger announced, "Peace is at hand," conveniently 10 days before the election, right? And then it turned out it wasn't at hand. And I went back to work. Then, we got killed in the election, and I went to work for McGovern in the Senate, and Nixon launched the Christmas bombing, where they went wild bombing the crap out of North Vietnam, and so I was delegated from McGovern's office to go be part of the coalition that was organizing opposition, grassroots opposition to the bombing. And I remember marching against his inauguration—we called it "the inhoguration"—in January of '73. And interestingly, like every other demonstration—my folks, remember, lived in DC, so every time we came down from Dartmouth, or my sister came from Radcliffe, we brought our friends with us and we took over my folks' house. So, I still meet people who say they slept in my basement and I have no recollection of them, you know, for some demonstration. But my mother would feed us all, and then we'd go out the door to march.

And this time, the January '73, my mother said, "Gee, could I come with you?" And I said "sure." And so, we had a bunch of Dartmouth people, even though I had graduated two years before, and four McGovern people all marching against Nixon in this demonstration, with my mother standing next to me as we chanted obscene slogans. "One, two, three, four, we don't want your fucking war. Five, six, seven, eight, organize to smash the state." Those kinds of slogans that were not typically what you said around your mom. Years later she told me that every other time she had gone and demonstrated, as well. For some reason, she packed us off and then she went and found a couple of friends and went and marched, as well, but she didn't tell us.

I don't know why. I don't remember the end of the war. I don't remember how I felt when they signed the peace agreement, and I don't remember watching the last days of Saigon. Now, I've seen it repeatedly on tape since then, but I don't remember kind of what was going on. In '74 I was in law school. And it was so anticlimactic. It was so...

(Hang on one second. There's someone at the door.). To someone else: Hi. Here you go. All right, thank you. Thank you, sir. (Hang on. I've got to post two people at my door.) To someone else: Thank you, sir. Be safe.

Yeah, I don't remember any of that. I think by '74—well, the peace agreement was signed in '73. I was starting ... leaving McGovern's office, starting law school, in a relationship that ended up being my first wife, and my last demonstration was against Nixon's inauguration. And it was just such a waste, such a complete waste. It wasn't a waste of my time. I mean, it was the right thing to do, and I'm proud of what I did. And the causes, you know, those were the right causes. I was out of the country when the civil rights movement flowered, but we were on the right side of history. And if people had listened to us earlier, a lot of lives would have been saved. And the saddest story I have is that McGovern said to me years later it was really sad that he was unable to end the war, but he was convinced that what we had done would make sure that America never did it again. And then, he and I talked after the Iraq invasion, and one of us reminded the other of that conversation, because you know, he didn't just say it to me, and how amazed and saddened we were that we did it again.

PASSOT: Uh-huh, yeah. Well, that kind of leads into exactly what I was going to ask next is just sort of, upon reflection of that time, I mean, so much time has passed and stuff, what are sort of your thoughts on what you did and what happened, and how do you see its influence today, either in personally the things that you did, how do you see those experiences in terms of your own life, and then on a broader scale, how do you see those events influencing...

AYLWARD: Well, one of the things that... you know, those years traumatized my generation. And I don't think—I haven't seen any writing about it. I'm sure there is. But, you can't live through believing in your country and believing the myths of "mostly goodness". I mean, I never thought that we weren't—

that we hadn't murdered the Indians, but you can't go from that to kind of fundamentally hating your government in three years or four years, and thinking your government wants to kill you, and your heroes are getting murdered. Bobby Kennedy. Martin Luther King. You know, it did to us what I think if you were a young Black male you would say, "Yeah, I know what that's about," just kind of any time. But it was a traumatic thing that happens just as you're growing up, right? And figuring out what your values are.

In my case it kind of committed me to a lifetime of causes. Somebody asked that question during the Parkhurst reunion, just the question you asked about individually what it means. And I said that I committed myself to causes, social causes, justice, for justice, and what that time means to me is that at the times in my career when I have strayed from that, and have ended up in a big law firm doing really well, for example, or running a consulting firm and doing really well, but straying from the freedom, using the freedom of owning my own firm to use it for good purposes and ending up making too much money. At those times the events that we've been talking about bring me home.

And most recently that has been to start a career as a professor in a medical school, because I'm committed to trying to figure out ways to fix our health system. Now, I have no training in medicine. I think I'm the token lawyer, or non-medically trained person in the University of Colorado's medical school [University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora, CO], but I'm delighted to be there and I'm delighted to be part of it, and I'm delighted to be committed and throwing myself into, particularly now, into fixing the health systems. But, you know, that starts with Eleanor Roosevelt, and parents who really believed in service. But we don't, you know—if you went back through my career you'd say, well, how did being a lawyer at Jones Day [law firm], a clerk for two years and a lawyer for a year fit into that path? And it didn't. I'm glad I did it. I learned a lot. It certainly gave me some skills. But, being that was not who I am. So I think that's how it affected me.

I think it, in a broader societal sense, I think that it, number one, cracked something incredibly valuable which is the belief that our government is there to serve us. And second, it created an extraordinary, and we need to define what the "it" is—but it created an extraordinary backlash. The

combination of civil rights and the attack on the war, the whole war experience, with the liberation of Black people through the civil rights movement, and the attack on the government, the culture—the attack also became an attack on culture, I mean, long hair and beards and dope and that whole thing—created—didn't create, but fed the Nixon Southern strategy, law and order, feed in a Ronald Reagan “government is the enemy,” “white people need to be in charge” MAGA [“Make America Great Again”] stuff. I mean, in the grand sweep of history, you know, Clinton didn't take us back. He just—he even continued some of it, getting rid of welfare as we know it. Are you kidding me? And so we arrive at Obama, and that just takes that stream of America that is the reaction stream and fires it up, and look at what we have today.

So, you know, I believe that when faced with injustice or something wrong, that you go after it and you attack it. But it didn't prevent us from going into Iraq. And the questioning of... I mean, if you look at the polls that “our government can be trusted to do the right thing generally,” in 1962, '63, 75% of the American people agreed with that statement. It's now like 25%. And, you know, it comes out of the lying leadership of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon who started that. But it's also a horrible racist reaction to Black liberation, and it's threatening of kind of the established white... I mean, I don't know how much of the '60s and early '70s, the culture war, but we're seeing the same damned—another version of that now.

So, me personally, I think, you know, it's made me who I am, and I'm very happy with who I am. I'm very happy with what I've been able to do and I hope to keep doing what I'm doing, because it's new and, you know, it's new every day. But I despair of a society where 40% of the people now don't listen to truth, don't listen... How do you turn public health facts into partisan beliefs? It's unbelievable. I'm not happy with it, the current status of our society, but...

One of the things we believed when I was 15 is in the linear progress of Western civilization. *Now, we're moving forward.* I can't say that anymore. It's much more it kind of seems to be in circles, I mean, with much greater inequality, much greater inequality. Much greater political inequality. So I'm not... I'm scared where the country's going. And then when

you see the police in Minneapolis [MN], I mean, that's what was happening in the '60s.

PASSOT: Right. Well, I... Yeah, go ahead.

AYLWARD: Anyway, yeah, I interrupted you.

PASSOT: Yeah, I was about to say I don't want them to cut us off or I might have to jump off here pretty soon. I did want to ask one question that was just kind of on my mind. You mentioned earlier that you had like the worst tear-gassing of your life. I was just curious how many times have you actually been tear-gassed and what does it actually feel like?

AYLWARD: Ah, great question. Maybe four. First time was on the grounds of the Washington Monument on Honor America Day, where but lightly. And another time there. Then New Haven and on Massachusetts Avenue. And it is a choking feeling, depending what kind of tear gas is used. But it's a choking feeling. It's very hard to breathe, and you don't want to breathe in deeply because then you really get it. It makes your eyes—to your eyes it's like getting close over chopping up onions. You just want to wash your eyes out just constantly. But it makes your eyes burn and it's very hard to breathe. You do not want to be around it. And so, what you do is you take a kerchief, a mask, and put water on it, and try to use that, and that doesn't work very well, it doesn't work for the eyes. But when you get to an aid station, you wash your eyes out, and you just lie down and breathe. And that's what happened in the Massachusetts Avenue at the South Vietnamese Embassy, because we kept going back for more. You know, we'd retreat, and then go march back up and they'd gas us again, and retreat back.

In New Haven I wasn't looking for trouble. I was actually reporting. And that time I brought a gas mask with me, and we were in a conference room. Just before the confrontation, we're in a conference room, and I'm sitting next to—do you know who Abbie Hoffman is?

PASSOT: Yeah.

AYLWARD: So I'm sitting next to Abbie Hoffman with Jerry Rubin across the table from me, and about 10 other people. It's Yale...

PASSOT: Just for the purpose of the recording, do you want to just say who Abbie Hoffman is real quick?

AYLWARD: Oh, Abbie Hoffman was the leading Yippie, and he was absolutely crazy. And he and Jerry Rubin were the clowns of the New Left. They were halfway dramatists and actors and troublemakers and half political; whereas people like Tom Hayden were 100% political. So Jerry Rubin had given a speech that afternoon in the Yale [University] chapel saying, "If you want the revolution, you've gotta kill your mother." And this room, chapel full of Yalies, "Right on. Right on." "If you want a revolution, you've gotta kill your father." Right on." And I'm sitting in the corner laughing my ass off saying, "Who are these assholes?" But he's having fun, right? So that night we're sitting in this conference room smoking dope, and I get stoned and I leave my gas mask under the table. And then we go out to have the evening demonstration, and we get gassed. So, lesson, if you have a gas mask, take it to the demonstration. [laughter]

Anyway, great talking to you. You've gotta run. If you want to do some more of this, if there are other questions, I'm happy to do it. As I said, it's recording my own history as well, so I'm happy to do more if you want to do it. And I did promise to introduce you to Jim Wright, which I'm going to do.

PASSOT: Yeah, that's great. Well, thank you for being here and for all your time and your stories. I'm going to go ahead and end the recording now, and then if you want to pick up later, we can.

[End of interview.]