Lon Cross ‘75
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Karen Navarro

CALCATERRA: My name is Paulina Calcaterra [’19]. I’m sitting in Rauner Special Collections Library in Hanover, New Hampshire on November 16th, 2018. I am joined by Mr. Lon Cross, who will be sharing his experiences with me as part of the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. So, how does that all sound? Do you feel ready to start?

CROSS: I do.

CALCATERRA: Okay, awesome. So, I’d just like to start with a little bit of background again. So, can you tell me when and where you were born?

CROSS: I was born in Independence, Missouri, and I was born on the 17th of October, 1953.

CALCATERRA: Okay, thank you. And can you tell me who were your parents and what did they do, a little bit of background on your parents?

CROSS: Both my parents were educators. My father was a high school math teacher, and my mother ended up being an elementary principal. She ended up getting a Ph.D. in education administration from the University of Missouri at Kansas City [Kansas City, MO]. So, they were both under contract with the Kansas City Public Schools. My father also was very active in the Army Reserves, so because he had the summers free as a high school math teacher, then he would go off sometimes eight weeks during the summer and be off on active duty with the Army Reserves.

CALCATERRA: And, so you mentioned your mom had a Ph.D. Was that something that was normal at the time for most other families in your area to have a mother with that amount of educational achievement? Or did that seem out of the norm to you?

CROSS: It was rather unique because having grown up in the ‘50s and early ‘60s, there were a lot of women that weren’t even

working, so for my mother to have a Ph.D. was unique, to say the least.

CALCATERRA: And how did that sort of influence your perception of her or did that? Was she still sort of a traditional mother and a traditional wife or was she somewhat non-traditional?

CROSS: There really wasn't anything traditional. [laughter] I mean, my parents were very supportive of each other, but they were basically in their own swim lanes in terms of my mother pursued her career, my father pursued his interest in his career. My father also as an educator was involved in the founding of the teachers union in Kansas City, so he was the original, the founding president of the American Federation of Teachers chapter in, or like local in Kansas City. And also he was the founding president of the AFT, the American Federation of Teachers in the state of Missouri. So he was very active in union organizing.

My mom supported that in terms of just allowing him to do that, and then she pursued her own, first a master's degree, and then a Ph.D., and pursued her own career. And then she was very active as a musician. She accompanied as an organist and a pianist, and then also around Kansas City in some of the large churches she had paid solo positions as a soprano soloist. So, she pushed both my sister and myself—I have an older sister that's two years older—into music, and so we excelled at music, and that was mainly because of my mother's urging.

CALCATERRA: And so, is your sister your only sibling?

CROSS: Yes.

CALCATERRA: And what was life like in the area where you were growing up in? What was sort of the climate, or what kind of a town was it? What kind of comes to mind?

CROSS: Well, I've read David McCullough's biography of [President] Harry [S.] Truman and the way he describes Independence, Missouri. It was very similar. So, the Independence that Harry Truman saw growing up was quite similar to what I saw, even down to the point that McCullough mentions that there were five black families that lived in Independence and they all lived on one block, just five houses in a row. Well, when I was growing up in the '50s, it was the same five black

families; it was just two generations later. Yeah, I grew up in… I never laid eyes on those families. I just knew that that's where they lived.

And Independence by the time I was born had about 40,000, had a population of about 40,000, and by the late '60s, early '70s, it was up to 100,000. So there was considerable growth, but it was still basically a white working class city. That's what it was, adjacent to Kansas City. And not a lot of variety. There were some people that were Catholic, then basically Protestants, and that was it. It was just a lot of Southern Baptists, some Methodists. And then, Independence was interesting because it was the headquarters for the Reorganized Latter Day Saint church [Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints], so the Reorganized Latter Day Saints were those Mormons that chose to stay in the Midwest and did not follow Brigham Young to Utah, so they became known as the Reorganized Latter Day Saints. So, that was really the flavors of people you had.

CALCATERRA: And was your family active in any spiritual community?

CROSS: We were one of the original families in the Reorganized Latter Day Saints church. My family went way, way back, back to the 1830s, in that sect or in that religion, denomination.

CALCATERRA: And would you say that was a large part of your life being in that community, being spiritual?

CROSS: I would say not necessarily spiritual. Well, it certainly affects my spirituality now, my outlook now. But the world revolved around that. I mean, we had Sunday was Sunday school, then you had Sunday service, then you had lunch or brunch at church after the Sunday service, and then there was a Sunday evening service, Wednesday prayer meeting, and Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts was a big thing associated with the congregation that I belonged to. It just, you know, life revolved around the church.

CALCATERRA: And were you integrated with some of the other communities that were Catholic or Protestant, or was it sort of segregated by faith?

CROSS: We were integrated… Most of us went to public school, so we were integrated in that fashion in terms of I had friends that were not Reorganized Latter Day Saints, so we certainly—it wasn't that big a deal. It was just like it was another church, and it's just the fact that there were so many people in Independence that were Reorganized Latter Day Saints that it was just something that was kind of pedestrian. The Catholics, though, were separate. And I can give you an example. The baseball player, Roger [E.] Maris, lived just two blocks away from me. And he had kids that were the same age as me. I couldn't tell you what their names were. They were Catholics. They went to Catholic school, they rode a bus, they came off the bus, and we had nothing to do with them. It was almost like growing up in Belfast. I mean, you knew who the Catholic kids were, but you didn't even hardly know their names.

CALCATERRA: And so, at places like school and everything, what was your experience there? Were you interested in academics, or did you do, you mentioned Boy Scouts being sort of a big thing in the town? What kind of activities were you involved in, as well?

CROSS: Well, I was fortunate because Kansas City public schools had a gifted program, so early on I was in the gifted program. So academics was not something I worked at; it was just something I did and I was good at it. Outside of school, then I was certainly pursuing my musical talents at the urging of my mother. So I started off when I was about eight years old playing the cello and taking cello lessons, and then a couple of years later started piano. Then, at the same time, as soon as I could I got involved in first baseball and then football, as far as sports. And that was just kind of my life all the way up into high school, and then high school, then it wasn't my mom having to schlep me around, but I just went to school and went to practice, and pursued music and pursued sports.

CALCATERRA: And being in that gifted program, was that something that you received reactions about? Were people supportive of that? Did you feel sort of segregated from most other kids? Or what kind of experience was that?

CROSS: It sort of added to the sense of segregation just because there were clusters. So the school that I went to where the gifted classes were was not the school that was in my

neighborhood. So there were lots of kids in my neighborhood that I would play with and associate with, but we weren't in school together because I was getting on a bus and going four or five miles away, I guess it was about three or four miles to another school, an adjacent school where the gifted classes were offered. So they sort of had a cluster concept.

CALCATERRA: And you mentioned your dad being active in the Reserves. So, did you have other family members who were active in the military? Did that influence you at all? Were you interested in pursuing something similar?

CROSS: I had an uncle, my mother's brother. So my father only had a sister; that was it. And then, my mother had two brothers, one was older. So my mother was born in 1927, so by the time World War II rolled around she was a teenager, but she had an older brother that was born in I believe 1921 or '22, at the latest '22. So he was, when World War II rolled around, he was prime age for getting drafted, and he ended up in the Army Air Corps. And so my Uncle Claude was killed in Normandy, and so he's buried at the Army military cemetery [Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial] at Omaha Beach.

My mom had a younger brother that was born in 1935, and he ended up being a Navy fighter pilot. And so, he was like my hero. He was a Navy fighter pilot with all the ego and everything else that goes with it, because being a Navy fighter pilot, if you've ever looked at an aircraft carrier, it's pretty amazing, those guys do, you know, they land aircraft in either the Pacific or the Atlantic Ocean in 40 knot winds and at night. So, it's pretty courageous. So, he did not stay in for a career, but he certainly impacted my view of the world when I was young. So those were my immediate relatives.

But then I had relatives that I grew up with in Independence that were World War I vets. So I had a great-uncle, Clarence, that was a World War I vet. In fact, he was in Harry Truman's artillery battery in World War I, so he was part of the chosen few. And then I had great-uncles. My grandfather was called up, but by the time that they worked him through the process, the Armistice had been called, and so they just told him to go back home. So he never actually put on a uniform.

And the thing that was interesting, and I was not aware of this until I was chatting with my father, was that it wasn't until World War II that the draft age was dropped to 18. In World War I and all times before, draft age was 21. And so, my grandfather came of age during World War I, and they just didn't get around to him. But I had great-uncles that served in World War I. So that impacted also.

CALCATERRA: And did your dad serve in World War II?

CROSS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he actually enlisted before Pearl Harbor, and then he went to Officer Candidate School [OCS] and just stayed in the reserves after he was released from active duty.

CALCATERRA: Did he share experiences with you about that? Or how was it communicated to you?

CROSS: We certainly talked about it, especially later on, because my father just passed away in August, at the age of 98. And as he got older, it became one of his go-to things, he's like, you know, we'd be talking and suddenly he's at Omaha Beach, D-Day plus five, and talking about the Luftwaffe coming in and watching a ship blow up and things like that. So, we talked about it, and he shared a lot of his memories, and that was something that we talked about throughout our shared lives.

CALCATERRA: Thank you for sharing that. Throughout this time in your life, did you have any understanding of other major political things that were going on? So, maybe understanding of the civil rights movement or the women's rights movement or something like anti-Communist and Cold War kind of rhetoric and discourse, or was that at all something you were noticing at that age?

CROSS: When I think back, my first memories are watching the nightly news. And the first thing I remember of sort of international import was an event, it was UN troops being sent to the Congo. So, I'm thinking that's like 1960. But there were peacekeepers being sent to the Congo, and I just remember seeing that on the nightly news. And that's just sort of a detached memory, but it just reminded me that that was something we did at that time. It was—I grew up in the Midwest, so nightly news. And we were an NBC family. There were some families that were CBS families and they

watched Walter Cronkite. We were a Huntley Brinkley family. And, so that's what we watched. And since it's Central Time Zone, the national news came on at 5:00, and then at 5:30 we got the local news. And we would sit and watch that, night in and night out. It was what we did. And we would sit there, and as I recall, my parents would comment on it. And actually we didn't watch a lot of other TV. Friday night we would watch TV, but during the week the only TV we watched was the nightly news, and then we went on about our business, practicing the piano until your fingers fell off or the cello or doing all these other things that your mother kept pushing you, or urging you—I like to use the word "urging"—urging me to do to better myself.

And then there were Boy Scouts meetings. I mean, at least once a week you had a Boy Scouts meeting, so we went to church. Wednesday nights we went to church for prayer meeting. And prayer meeting started at 7:00, so you had time to finish the nightly news, eat dinner, and dinner was always a sit-down meal. You didn't eat sitting in front of the TV. You finished the nightly news and you went over and had dinner and sat down. And then, so there were just things that we had our just regular rhythm that we conducted.

CALCATERRA: And you mentioned the NBC/CBS divide. Did that sort of—was that a symptom of larger divides amongst the community? Did you know who leaned which way or anything like that?

CROSS: Not really. I mean, I think it was just somebody would say, "Well, my family's a CBS family, we watch CBS. My parents like Walter Cronkite." It had—there was not some political divide that was discernible between the CBS crowd and the NBC crowd. But I can tell you that there were very few ABC folks. ABC was just kind of an also ran when it came to news. So, it was funny because I don't recall anybody ever claiming to be an ABC family. You were one or the other, CBS or NBC.

CALCATERRA: And you mentioned your father in particular was involved in union work and some organizing. Did you sort of get a sense that he was liberal in his politics or politically active outside of the union work, or was that just sort of something he did on the side of his teaching jobs?

CROSS: Well, growing up in Independence, Missouri, I think we kind of liked to joke that if you said the "R" word, you spit on the floor. You know, I'm a tribal Democrat, and you had various shades of Democrat, but that was just a fact. My father being involved in the union movement, my mother was involved in the feminist movement, I would say we were pretty liberal. At the same time, though, I grew up in the gun culture, so hunting was not something that was foreign to me. I got with my cousins, and I had cousins in various parts of Missouri, and some of them lived out on farms and we'd go hunting on a routine basis. And so, it was kind of a mix, but yeah, we would be considered certainly liberal, especially with respect to race relations and just the labor movement, and with respect to women's rights, and then that's translated into just overall gender rights. So, yeah, we were liberal.

CALCATERRA: And do you know more specifically how your mom was involved in the feminist movement or women's rights movement?

CROSS: She did not actually—I mean, she was busy pursuing her career, and she was—I think the thing that she most did was just serve as a role model for other women, and to be there to coach other women. But she was not… And she was certainly well-informed, and as certain periodicals started to appear that had that as a focus, then those periodicals ended up coming into the house. I mean, the fact is is that my father was not a vocal advocate of the feminist movement, but his advocacy was just fully supporting my mother, and never questioning, and, for lack of a better term, for celebrating her greatness and her excellence, because he was her biggest cheerleader.

CALCATERRA: Thank you. I think now maybe we'll start moving more towards Dartmouth. I'm interested in if you always planned on going to college, or what your post-high school plans were? How many people in your area typically went to college? Was it the norm at the time and if your parents really expected you to go? Things like that.

CROSS: I mean, college was never a question. I mean, since both my parents were college graduates, it was just, it's what we were going to do. And so there was no other option on the table. The question was just where. Now, in Independence in my immediate neighborhood, there was not necessarily that expectation. A lot of the women were not necessarily college

graduates. Some were, some weren't. Most of the men were. So there was that divide. But in the high school I went to, I spent all four years of my high school in a school over in Kansas City [MO] that was a college prep school. It was called Pembroke Country Day School. So now it's known as Pembroke Hill because it merged with a girl school that was nearby in Kansas City. So, going to that school, everybody went to college, and a large percentage, and I mean, when I say a large percentage, I would say the top 30% of the class either went to Ivy Leagues or one of the small Ivies like Wesleyan, Williams or Amherst, or they went to Stanford. So, out of 60 guys, probably 20 went to a really premier school somewhere in the country. And, so there was an expectation there.

Now, why Dartmouth for me? Well, the principal of the upper school, who happened to also be my wrestling coach, was a Dartmouth grad, and his name was David Badger, and he was Class of '63. And then, my neighbor across the street who I happened to cut his yard was the captain of the Dartmouth basketball team and was Class of 1957, and his name was Robert [J.] Margolin. And then, Robert Goodman, who was Robert Margolin's brother-in-law, I also cut his grass in high school, and I'm trying to think, I'm thinking Robert Goodman was more like Class of '60, '61, may have been even later than that, but he was not a classmate of Robert Margolin's. So, those people were very instrumental in my decision to apply to Dartmouth and end up coming here.

Now, deep down inside my first choice for college was to go to the United States Military Academy at West Point [NY]. That's where I wanted to go. I had read all the literature, read what were known as the *Red Reader* series, which was a whole kind of series with this fictional character named Clint Lane, and it takes him from his first year to his senior year at West Point, and I just lived and breathed I wanted to go to West Point more than anything. But the thing is is my senior year in high school, when I went to take the physical for entry, I couldn't pass the physical. I blew my ankle out in a football game the week before I had to take the physical, and so I wasn't… Long run, the ankle healed up fine, but the fact is is that the regulation was very clear that you couldn't have an injury to a major joint, in a certain period of time before entering the Academy, and I couldn't—at least that year I wouldn't be getting an appointment to West Point. So,

bottom line is I took my second choice and came to Dartmouth, so…And I'm glad I did. I wouldn't have changed anything.

CALCATERRA: And so, if you had gone to West Point, you would have been on that track for that military career, and with Dartmouth, were you aware that they had recently cut the ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] program or were you thinking that you could continue the military career after you graduated? Or what was your thinking around that?

CROSS: I suppose, I mean, it amazes me when I interview prospective Dartmouth students in the alumni interview process, and, you know, some of these kids are just like they got it all planned out for the next 20 years or so what they want to do. And I can't say I was living one day at a time, but I wasn't exactly looking that—I was kind of following my gut instinct more than anything. I had been, and this was my mom more than anything was that it was impressed on me from an early age that I had specific God-given talents, and it was for me to use those talents to the fullest. So, and it's kind of interesting because I wasn't the only Dartmouth student that I ran into that sort of had that same view of the world, and that may have been just sort of what came out of the… You know, my parents were products of the Depression, so that may be something that was passed on to them, but that was certainly impressed on me.

So, you know, coming to Dartmouth, it wasn't about getting a job afterwards and making lots of money. It was about making a difference in the world. And the military was a place to make the difference. The thing is, though, after the West Point sort of disappointment, let's just say, I just looked for other avenues. I kind of put that on the side. And I have to admit that I was still considering the military. I was considering it. The Marines had a program, it was Marine PLC or PLT program. And then it's like Platoon Leaders Corps or something like that. But, they had recruiters that several times during the year they would show up and give their pitch, be available to explain their program, and there were people that did the training. And I was certainly interested. It's just the fact is is that my father, by the time I was a Dartmouth student, he was a full colonel in the Army Reserves. And he basically almost told me he'd disinherit me if I went in the Marine Corps. [laughter] So, that kind of like quelled that interest. And, but we didn't have any discussion,

further discussion about the Army. I mean, we just didn't. He didn't push it. And, but the interest was there, I mean, the door was open.

But, what I chose to do at Dartmouth was get certified to teach elementary school. I had arranged through Tulane University [New Orleans, LA] to do my practice teaching in New Orleans public schools, so I spent fall of 1974 teaching third grade in an all-black elementary school adjacent to the Desire Street Project in the lower ninth ward of New Orleans. And the lower ninth ward, that part of New Orleans just got wiped out by Hurricane Katrina. It was completely underwater, 30 feet of water, for several months.

CALCATERRA: I realized that before I forgot to ask for your parents' names. I realize people might want to reference them.

CROSS: Okay. So, my father is Emil Moore. That's E-m-i-l Moore Cross, Jr. And my mother is Muriel Jean Anderson Cross.

CALCATERRA: Thank you. So, okay, so you went to Dartmouth and eventually were interested in this elementary school teaching career.

CROSS: And so that's really kind of, it's interesting because okay, I got myself where I was certified, so I had my teacher certification. My parents…winter term of my senior year, I was back in Kansas City, so I was off, not taking any classes. I only had one more term to complete, so I was coming back for spring term. So, winter term I went back to Kansas City and I was a substitute teacher for that whole term, teaching everything from kindergarten to high school biology, over about a 10-week period of time. And in the meantime I was really getting myself set up so that after graduation, I'd get a teaching contract.

And my intent was is not get a contract the first year; my intent was to—and this was where the Army came in—I was going to go to basic training in AIT [Advanced Individual Training], so I enlisted in March of 1975 in the Missouri National Guard. Now, when you enlist, that just means you've signed a contract. You don't necessarily start basic training until they give you a date. But, that's why, for instance, well, specifically that's why I'm considered a Vietnam era vet, because I enlisted before the 15th of April of 1975, which was the fall of Saigon. So, from the military

standpoint, officially I am considered a Vietnam era vet. I qualify for Vietnam era GI Bill. It's in my records that I'm a Vietnam era vet.

So, my plan was to go through basic training AIT, come back and start getting involved in my National Guard unit. And the National Guard unit had already assured me that they could get me into an Officer Candidate School class fairly quickly, and then I would just kind of follow my dad's footprints, you know, the pattern that he laid out, which is teach, be an educator, and use the Army, the reserves or the National Guard as additional income, and just something to keep you busy. So, that was my plan. And then I planned, once I was finished with basic training and advanced individual training, and that was all at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, I was going to come back and start graduate school and get a master's degree in educational administration. And my mom had already assured me, "As a young man getting into education administration at the elementary level, you'll be a principal by the time you're 28 years old. You'll just have the paved"—you know, "the road will be paved for you." So, that was my plan. It's just that when I got into basic training, I mean, from day one it was just love.

CALCATERRA: That changed the whole plan.

CROSS: Yeah. It just blew it away, because I said, "This is what I want to do."

CALCATERRA: I want to backtrack a little bit to when you enlisted, and also other Dartmouth things. But for right now, when you enlisted before the fall of Saigon, did you think that you would miss the action and combat and service in Vietnam, or was there a chance for you in your mind that you would have to be involved in the conflict.

CROSS: I never thought of it. I mean, it's not anything that I worried about. I just remember—and that brings up a good point. It's important to note that I'm a 1953 baby. We were the—we still got draft numbers, but we were the first year not to get anybody called up. So, I had classmates at Dartmouth that were '52 babies that ended up getting drafted, and they went on active duty. So, one of my—and I can't consider John [L.] Gile my classmate, because he graduated with '77, so when he comes back for a reunion and for alumni purposes, he's listed as Class of '77. [Transcriber's note: Actually he was in

the Class of 1976.] But he matriculated with my class, and he completed his freshman year with my class. So he was originally Class of ’75, but John had taken a year after high school graduation and studied abroad. He’d done a foreign exchange student year. So he was coming in and joining my class, and he was actually a year older. And, you know, the draft boards didn’t go very deep into the 1952 babies. It wasn’t deep, but his number really low. He was like a single digit. It didn’t take much for them to essentially, for him to fall into the—I don’t want to say the clutches, but [laughter]—it didn’t take much for him to be called up.

CALCATERRA: And was it the Class of ’75 that Nixon undid student deferments for? I saw some D [*The Dartmouth* student newspaper] articles reporting on the fact that student deferment was eliminated around 1975.

CROSS: Well, it was, I mean, it wasn’t specifically aimed at the Class of ’75, but that would have been my freshman year, and it certainly impacted—at first, well, I don’t want to say it impacted. It didn’t impact, but there was lots of angst over that. I mean, there was angst over the draft my freshman year. It wasn’t until later in the year that it became clear that the Army was going to the volunteer Army, and that was a big thing, and they were not going to draft anymore. So, initially, 18-year-olds would get a draft number, but they weren’t—until something changed drastically, they weren’t going to call any more up. And that was all happening. And, you know, the sad thing is in those days, we didn’t have cable TV, nobody had a TV in the dorm, there wasn’t the internet. Our source of information was either magazines or newspaper, and not that many people had access to newspapers, so a lot of what we got was word of mouth. Somebody had heard from somebody… You know, it was just, it was an interesting time. And, so it’s difficult for me, based on that, to really fix in my memory even anything close to a date, because it was coming in just sort of like [makes a pattering sound], kind of like rainfall, it was just kind of pattering in.

CALCATERRA: And, now maybe circling back to more of just your time as a student here, what were your academic plans going in? I think I read that you were a history major. Or, just sort of what was your academic experience like?

CROSS: I was a history major, and mainly because I really liked history. I really, really liked history. But, in terms of—I had no interest in being a history teacher. I saw that as a good preparation for going to law school. Well, my sister got into Harvard Law School. And I didn't want to follow my sister. I was done with that. I'd spent a whole—my life up to this point following my sister, and so it was just sort of like, *nope, I'm not doing that*. And the fact is is that education was really the only thing I knew. So I just figured, *It works for my parents. I'm gonna make it work for me*. And that's what got me into the interest in education. But the history, I chose history just because I really loved history. And I still read a lot of history.

CALCATERRA: And what were your extracurricular involvements like? I know that you, as you mentioned, you were the class president, you were involved in Greek life and athletics. So, what was that experience like? Or what led you to those involvements?

CROSS: I'm thinking about a fraternity. You know, I'm very active in Beta today. I'm on the board of trustees for Beta here at Dartmouth. And now the big emphasis is on leadership development and character development. There's a lot of involvement from the alumni in terms of working with the undergraduates that are brothers in the fraternity. That really wasn't the case when I was an undergrad. We were, it was kind of like the inmates were in charge of the prison. I mean, we were a wild bunch. And it was a combination of being someplace where it was an attractive venue for women to visit, and they weren't women that were Dartmouth students, because, I mean, my class was the last all male class to enter Dartmouth. So, we only ended up with about 50 women that graduated with us. It was the carloads of women that came from Green Mountain Junior College [Poultney, VT] over in Vermont or from Covey Junior College down in New London [CT], or from Boston, or wherever. And certain nights of the week, they just would show up. And Beta was one of those places that it just was a magnet and was always kind of party central.

And a fraternity was a place where at a fixed cost, I could drink as much as I wanted to. So, it was a pretty good value from that standpoint. And, you know, it took a lot of reflection on my part in my older life to say, *Why did I?* And it had nothing to do with brotherhood. You know, it was all about

access to alcohol and access to women. And the funny thing is is that I was one of the early Dartmouth students to have another Dartmouth student as a girlfriend. So, and my girlfriend at Dartmouth wouldn't set foot in Beta. Just the thought of it, she would almost start crying and begging to—she would not go anywhere near it. And she wasn't the only Dartmouth woman that had that opinion of Beta. So… Yeah, so then it got down to I was in a fraternity just to drink myself silly, and that was it.

CALCATERRA: I have a lot of follow-ups. I wonder, so you mentioned your girlfriend's reluctance to go into the frat. Did it seem like other women students were experiencing the same thing of maybe having some struggle integrating into the culture that was so centered around maybe masculinity or drinking? Or was that something unique to her? What were you noticing about women as they were coming into these spaces?

CROSS: Well, the challenge was that there were—the presence of women on campus was noticeable, but the thing is, the college… There were women when I came here as a freshman, but they were exchange students. They were Smith [College, Northampton, MA], Mount Holyoke [College, South Hadley, MA]. They were from the seven college exchange, and that exchange continued, but then the women that came in were Dartmouth students, and it was difficult for the Dartmouth women to distinguish themselves from the exchange students. It's not like somebody just said, "Okay, here, we're gonna score a 'D' on your forehead and we'll know you're a Dartmouth student." No.

So, it was tough for all the women, because you had men here that were students that chose to suddenly become very vicious in their whole attitude towards women, and there was really no way for them, unless they actually lowered themselves to actually talk to a woman, and then find out whether or not the woman was an exchange student or a Dartmouth undergraduate. So, it was a horrible time, because you could look at somebody and you couldn't say, "Well, is he a hater or a lover?" so to speak. You know, it was just a Dartmouth student. You could say it was a Dartmouth student, until the individual opened their mouth and spoke, you didn't know what their stance was. You just kind of had to—you couldn't assume anything. So it was almost like guerilla warfare. I mean, it was just not good.

And it's interesting because, you know, I'm class president, and the Class of '75, we just did a newsletter that came out last week that was specifically on, that had a lot of input from the women in our class, and they shared their experiences. And what was also interesting was that several of the men came forth and they wrote, they submitted articles for the newsletter where they just fessed up and said, "Yeah, I was part of it. And I regret it. And I'm embarrassed. And I've had shame and remorse since then." And it's been kind of a healing process. And we've got another issue on the same topic coming out in February, and it's several women that are from later classes have read it and they just say, "This should be mandatory reading for all Dartmouth women," because, you know, those first women put up with a lot of crap. I mean, they did. They put up with a lot of crap.

CALCATERRA: Sounds like it took a long time for that processing to start because maybe there wasn't enough space or time to really sit and think and talk together about it. But it sounds like this has really helped people do that work.

CROSS: It's starting to. I mean, it's really a… It's very powerful. And you don't even have to be… It's so well-written. I mean, it's really a phenomenon of any Dartmouth class. I mean, every one of us comes here with the ability to write well and do all of those things, and sometimes you just kind of take that for granted. And then all of a sudden you put together a class newsletter and you ask for submissions from across the class, and it's just the quality of the writing and the depth of thought, the insights, it's just like, *Oh, this is Dartmouth*.

CALCATERRA: So it sounds like, as class president you were sort of a leader in the community, or at least were very integrated in maybe multiple communities. Do you want to speak to maybe what led to you becoming class president?

CROSS: I wouldn't have considered myself a leader as an undergrad. I mean, for me, Dartmouth was just this kind of confusing morass where it was just trying… That's why when I got in the Army, it was just like, *Oh, this is nice!* I could see everything. I could see the structure. People have ranks. I could tell… And then if I did A, B, C and D, and did it to this standard, then I could move up. It was all laid out. You know, Dartmouth is like, it's not just Dartmouth, it's just American college life is just kind of like, it's like wrestling with Jello. And the fact is is that I didn't realize at the time, I've been

diagnosed since then, that I'm ADHD. And my mind wants structure. And so, when I'm confronted with this sort of all these options and everything else, it just shuts me down. So, I managed to find my way through, and weave my way through. And it was, ah, it was pretty phenomenal that I did, because it just was a confusing mess, and that was it.

And it wasn't that I was going to flunk out of school. It was just like, I basically ended up creating two majors. I didn't need to do that. I could have just gone and been a history major, and my grade point average would have been a full point higher. I mean, I could have found the easy path, but that's not what I did. And at the same time, I didn't seek out any kind of input from any adult. It was just my teenage and young adult brain just kind of making it up as I went along.

But, you know, in the long run, it was a great education. Because the fact is it's not what you learn in the courses necessarily; it's all the other things. So… And Dartmouth doesn't hold you back. That's the key thing. It's just it's this palette, and you come here and you make of it what you can. And so, yeah, maybe I didn't like just absolutely knock the cover off the ball in certain classes, but there was so much else to take advantage of here. And it wasn't just like the performing arts.

I mean, one of the things that was really impactful for me was that for, well, let's see, from my sophomore year on, really it was winter term my sophomore year, I was a painter for the college. I worked on the college paint crew. I was the only student that had ever done that. And so, when other people were—and this is back in the '70s—when other people there, the top wage at the dining facility, because that's what most people did when they needed a financial aid job, was like $4.50, and that's what a supervisor made. And they were limited to working 10 hours a week. I was working as a college painter, getting union wages, and I worked two full days. I had 18 hours. I was guaranteed 16 hours of work a week. And I got to meet some really good guys. They were the farmers and all the guys that make up the paint crew today. And they had nothing to do—some of them weren't even high school graduates. But, you know, I really had a chance to really meet true people from New Hampshire and Vermont, and that was part of my education.

CALCATERRA: Didn't just stay bubbled away and in the bubble—

CROSS: Absolutely. It allowed me to integrate into the Upper Valley region and get to know people that lived in Enfield [NH] and live out in these farms and everything, and actually understand the difference between an Emmett and a Knute. Oh, I could just go on and tell you stories that would just like crack you up. And there would be probably some of them we wouldn't want to record because they're a little racy, [laughter] so we'll leave those to another day. Yeah.

CALCATERRA: [laughter] Okay. So it sounds like your experience was a lot of trying to make sense of all the different dynamics going on, somewhat confusing at times, and sort of trying to take opportunities when they arose and make your path. Did you notice along this sort of college career different tensions that were arising within the student body, particularly political around reacting to the Vietnam War? And what were your reactions to seeing that, if you saw it?

CROSS: Oh, I didn't see a lot really. Periodically… I wasn't… I was, I mean, I didn't have strong feelings about Vietnam, for or against. I know how my father felt, so his view was that any criticism of the military, specifically Army, was just unpatriotic and should involve either torture or firing squad. [laughter] I mean, in that regard he was not particularly liberal. I didn't agree with him. I thought that was a little extreme, but at the same time I just didn't give a lot of thought to it. I didn't sit down and say, you know, *what are the moral aspects of Vietnam?* I mean, I was busy just trying to get papers written and things like that.

I had a roommate freshman year, and it was interesting because he would go to protests and, as a general rule, if he went to the protests, he was the one that was going to get arrested. You could have a thousand people to protest and he was going to get arrested. And the thing was is that—and his name is Steve Harper ['75]. Steve was small. He was a small guy. So, the state troopers when they'd show up and say, "Okay, we gotta arrest some people," given the choice of arresting me or arresting Harper, who was about 5'4" and maybe weighed 105 pounds ringing wet, who do you think they grabbed? Harper, every time. [laughter] They'd grab the little guy. "Okay, we've gotta—it's just numbers." So they'd grab the little guy. So, it was hilarious.

But, the fact is Harper, yeah, Steve was, he was very, very active in the kind of like that part of the community where that was something that—I lived in a triple as a freshman over in Middle Fayerweather, and my other roommate was [Ken] Kenny McKenna ['75], and we were sort of ambivalent about it. We were just getting on with our lives and trying to do what we needed to do to get through Dartmouth. But, Steve was very passionate about it, and he was—whenever there was an opportunity to go protest, whether it was up at the lab, the cold weather lab [Transcriber's note: in reference to the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory, Hanover, NH] up here, or somewhere else, then he was going to be in on it.

CALCATERRA: So, those were not all particularly on campus, but just in the area?

CROSS: Yeah, he would go… Now, there were people that were students that were organizing this that were involved in organizing, and he got plugged into that early on as a freshman. And now, the thing is is that Steve was different from Kenny and myself because Steve had an older brother here, and his older brother was the one that—so it was his older brother that really got him plugged in. And I can honestly say that, now I wasn't looking for that, but at the same time I never ran into that. I never had people come up and try to recruit me to the cause.

CALCATERRA: So it was sort of a closed community that people could enter if they had connections, but they weren't trying to recruit members?

CROSS: I was never like actively recruited, but at the same time, I mean, there's a chance that there may have been certain fraternities that it was more active. You know, I was in Beta. It didn't even come up. It wasn't a discussion. All we cared about is making sure the keg was full and making sure that we didn't do something to screw up the flow of women. That's what it was all about.

CALCATERRA: And, so throughout this time there were also some debates around ROTC, and different faculty votes to either keep the decision or revisit the decision, and ultimately, somewhat before you arrived, the decision to actually remove the ROTC was made. Did you ever follow that discussion or hear anything about the College Republicans had some

backlash to that and responded, or other alumni who were upset around that decision, did any of that sort of come onto your radar throughout your time there?

CROSS: No, not really, because I don't recall anything from the College Republicans. If there was even an active group known as the College Republicans, I never heard of them. ROTC was just, again, we've got to remember the nature of so much of information was just oral. No internet. There was just… Didn't have cell phones. I'll give you an example of how odd it was. When I was a freshman, the year before Dartmouth's football team was undefeated, untied. I mean, it was one of the most unbelievable teams that Dartmouth had ever produced. And so, the next year, and I was playing freshman football, I wanted to go see the varsity play, and their first game was down at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst [MA]. And I had a sister, my sister was at Smith as a senior. So I said, *Okay, I want to go to the football game, and that weekend is also house parties at Smith, so I want to go to both.*

And my choice—and I didn't have a car, I was a freshman—so I could hitchhike down, or I could arrange something that I could take some friends. I chartered three buses. Okay, the college didn't do that. I did. I didn't even have a checking account. I wasn't even 18 years old. I didn't have a cell phone. People to this day say, "How did you do that?" I have no clue. I cannot, to my mind, I have no idea how I did it. I just decided I was going to charter three buses. Most of the people that were on a bus were guys that I played football with, but there were just freshman. And to this day there are guys that will come up and say, "You want to know something? Because of that, I'm married to" whatever, "because that weekend I met my wife at Smith." And I know of at least two classmates that got married out of that weekend.

But, getting back to it, I cannot—you know? How did I coordinate going and doing a term at Tulane to do practice teaching in the New Orleans public schools in exactly the environment that I wanted to be in. How did I do that? I don't know. I really can't tell you, because I can't remember, and because the world has changed so much. What you know as the world and what I knew, I mean, I grew up with black-and-white TVs. There was no cable TV. That was a real excitement. I mean, all that has changed so much. So, it's

difficult because I have to go back and I have to remember how it was and why was it that some of these things I just wasn't really—because if it didn't come to me orally and it didn't just like jump up at you… And so, Steve Harper got involved because his brother had already been involved. He got plugged in. And that's the way you got plugged in, because you weren't getting bombarded by all this information like we do now.

CALCATERRA: Yeah. It's a good reminder not to use our current frameworks of how we get news and involve ourselves, and apply that to that period when, like you're saying, it worked completely differently.

CROSS: And the thing is is that if you lived in a dorm, especially like a freshman, sophomore, unless I went over to Beta and there was one black-and-white TV up in the library, I had no access to TV. There weren't TVs all around with lounges and everything all over the place around campus. They didn't exist.

CALCATERRA: So a few last questions around Dartmouth life at this time. So, you mentioned the football team. So, were you involved in these communities, as well, some athletic communities? And what was that involvement like?

CROSS: Oh, I played football as a freshman and I played lacrosse as a freshman. Then after that I was involved in playing intramurals with Beta. So as far as sports activities, it was intramurals. And then I had hockey players for roommates later on after freshman year, and so, they were kind of neat because they got a hold of a pair of skates and I'd never skated before. And so they got me a pair of skates that—the hockey coach would get sample skates from the skate manufacturers, and they would provide a pair of skates, and it just happened that there was a sample pair of skates that were some really nice skates that fit me. So, they made arrangements through the hockey coach and he let me use those skates. And then, I would go down and, two or three times a week I would go down and have the whole ice rink to myself. And I taught myself how to ice skate. And nobody was there to watch me fall and bust my butt. It was very good. And then I would go down to the swimming pool and just do laps. And nobody went with me. I mean, I was perfectly okay to be by myself and have that time by myself.

CALCATERRA: Sounds like somewhat of a community and people you met through these sports, but also some just independent activities that you were involved in.

CROSS: But getting back to it, yeah, fraternities really were like the central… Yeah, that was where, that's where really your life existed. And oh, I have to admit, there were a couple other places. I got interested in Judaic history. And it was kind of neat because the, I don't know what it's like now, but the Judaic history courses, the guy that was the sort of Jewish Studies professor was a guy named Steven [T.] Katz, and I just really hit it off with him. And the Judaic history courses were not treated as history courses. They were treated as humanities. Well, I have a distribution requirement. I've got two history courses that they were history courses, I don't care how you want to look at it. They just weren't offered by the history department, but they were history courses. But I got to treat them as humanities. I only had to have three humanities, and two of them were Judaic history courses.

So, Hillel is the Jewish organization. Well, Steven talked me into joining Hillel, because a lot of times they needed to have a, I forgot what the term is, it's like a quorum. They have to have a required number of men to be able to do a Torah reading. Well, it doesn't say they gotta be Jewish, they just gotta be men. So I qualified. So I joined Hillel.

So, I mean, my experience at Dartmouth was just take advantage of everything and not get locked into one community, and to just take advantage of the whole smorgasbord. And, yeah, I'm ADHD and I'm wandering all over the place, but at the end of the day, I look back very fondly on my Dartmouth education because it was that experience, the broad experience.

CALCATERRA: I guess one of my last questions about Dartmouth is if you sort of noticed any racial tensions, or what race relations were like at Dartmouth at the time when you were there, to your knowledge?

CROSS: Yes, there were, not so much tensions. I mean, there were some incidents that I found disturbing. For instance, there was a—I can't remember his name, he was on the hockey team and he was from Canada—and I always thought of Canadians as being rather open minded and liberal. And this guy was just an unbelievable bigot. I mean, he just would go

off if—especially if he had any alcohol in him at all, he would just be using the “n” word and just lash out. And that was very disturbing. And the fact is is that instead of somebody standing up to him and saying, “Shut the F up,” it was just kind of like—oh, I remember his name now, but I’d rather not say. Rather than telling him just to shut up because what he was saying was totally unacceptable, people just kind of shook their head or something, but… When I look back at it, and the fact is is that I wasn’t present for any of these incidents; I just heard about it. But it was still very disturbing to know that this is what went on.

And there were certain fraternities where, because I had played football and I’d been a linebacker/defensive back, you know, a number of my close friends were African-American; they were black. And there were certain fraternities that they just did not feel comfortable going into. And then when you actually look at the composite photos, you look and go, “Yeah, there’s no color in this photo, no brown faces.” So, there was also just sort of this kind of gap of ignorance. And it’s not ignorance; it was just indifference. Because the thing is is what I struggle with and when the College talks about inclusivity, that’s not to say that we’re going to, we white people are gonna let you black people or you dark people to participate in our events. That’s not inclusivity. Inclusivity is is that I take an interest and I want to learn about your culture, and I want to learn about your sensitivity so I’m not a jackass and I don’t run around and appropriate pieces of your culture for my use. That’s inclusivity. It’s not, you know, “Oh, you can come to my country club now.” No, that’s patronism. And that’s kind of what it was, we were patronizing.

Because it hadn’t been all that long since really the ‘60s that they started really making an effort to bring black men to Dartmouth. And the thing is is that, you know, the fact is is that when you look at the women that were coming to Dartmouth, there weren’t black women coming to Dartmouth. My black classmates had to road trip, period. If they wanted to meet any women, they had to go to Wellesley, they had to go to Mount Holyoke, or they had to go to Smith. Because these junior colleges, they were lily white. And when the carloads came to Dartmouth, they weren’t bringing any black women. And the thing is my white classmates to this day are like—they didn’t get it. They were like “out of sight, out of mind.” And so, the problem was there was this kind of

benign neglect attitude that "you people can be here as long as you don't cause trouble." All right? "Don't make waves."

CALCATERRA: So, sounds like there were definitely certain spaces where students of color, particularly black students, felt comfortable and had community, but there wasn't a broad appreciation of racial difference or like an investment in understanding their cultural unique identifiers and…. Thank you.

CROSS: And I've got to admit, because I really got involved and really started to take an interest but, at the same time there's not a road map for a kid that grew up in Independence, Missouri, in lily white mid-America, and how do you map your way to where you have some sort of understanding? And I've got to admit that my black classmates were extremely, the word is—oh, God—they just put up with all the, some of the idiot things, because when I look back and go, *How could I have been so stupid?* with some of the things where I was really trying and they appreciated it, and they never said anything. [laughter] Nobody pulled me by the side and said, "Look, dude, this is not… you don't do this." But I was trying. And so they gave me like a gold star for effort.

CALCATERRA: So, yeah, I imagine a lot of other students also didn't have—they weren't coming from places where they would have had any experience with cultural differences or black communities they were close to. So that probably compounded, like you said, even people with good intentions maybe didn't know how to act on them when they were at Dartmouth. Yeah, I think that's—it's helpful to know what it was like from your perspective when you were there.

CROSS: Well, and see, the thing is is as class president, because I deal with these issues today when, you know, you go back to the Black Lives Matter protests, and I had to deal with classmates that were all up in arms and wondering why students weren't kicked out over that. And they couldn't understand what the whole deal was, *What's Black Lives Matter?* blah blah blah, and I was just like, you know… "Have you ever spoken to one of our black classmates?" "Oh, ah, I don't even know one." "Well, good. Shut up." [laughter] "You just stop breathing, okay? You're stealing oxygen from somebody who needs it." I mean, that was my approach. Because if the answer was, "No, I've never…" then "why are we having this conversation? You've never reached across the divide." Because the one thing is the key

ingredient to all of it is intellectual curiosity, and if you don't have intellectual curiosity, you can't be empathetic, you can't put yourself in the other person's shoes and understand at some little level that they might have some pain. So, yeah. But see, the thing is, Dartmouth played a major role in that in opening that up for me. And, you know, I benefitted greatly.

CALCATERRA: Well, I think now it would be maybe a good time to sort of think about, and I'll start asking maybe more questions about your military career after Dartmouth. We have been going for over an hour, and if you need a break or want a break or anything, let me know, or if you want to keep going, that's good, as well.

CROSS: I'm good.

CALCATERRA: Okay, cool. So, as you mentioned, around mid or late April of '75 was the fall of Saigon, and that sort of clearly changed a lot of things in the landscape of military enlistment and what that meant. So, when that happened, did you have any sort of reaction to it, or did your plans change at all? Or was that sort of just something, again, that was in the news and maybe you heard a little bit about and it didn't have much of an impression on you?

CROSS: Well, we need to back up in what was critical, because fall of Saigon wasn't as earth shaking for the Army as the decision to go from the draft to the volunteer Army. That was big. Big. I can't tell you how big it was. And it's carried on to this day. And so, as an Army officer, I had no experience with the draft Army. Mine was purely the volunteer Army, and I would never ever think of going back to the draft. The officer corps professional military, we have no interest in that, because of the quality we have and just, it just changes the whole nature of what you can do. So, that was far more important than… I mean, the fall of Saigon was just, it was a foregone conclusion by that point. You know, it was like, *Well, finally*, you know? *They're dead. Put a fork in him*. And so, it wasn't that monumental. And for me it was just, it's just a line where it says, "Okay, Lon, you enlisted on this date before that, which means now you've got certain benefits." And I'm eligible for Vietnam era GI Bill. That's probably the biggest thing. And I get one little ribbon that says I'm a Vietnam era vet. Not a Vietnam vet, but I'm a Vietnam era vet. So that's really all that has to do. It wasn't—that date, the big thing was the switch to the volunteer Army.

CALCATERRA: And did you have friends—I know you mentioned John Gile—did you have other friends or acquaintances who were involved in combat in Vietnam or…

CROSS: Well, John never went, because the thing is is keep in mind that by 1972, combat units were, the last ones came out of Vietnam. So, okay, John was drafted—he completed freshman year, so that would have been spring of ’72. By the time he went through basic training and AIT, that would have been the end of ’72. I mean, now he spent two years at Fort Carson, Colorado, as a military policeman. And then he came back to Dartmouth and graduated. So, I knew other people that I was growing up with that got drafted, or they went into the Air Force or the Navy to not be drafted in the Army, and that was their choice. And, so they did that rather than get drafted and go to Vietnam. The thing is is that Air Force enlistment or Navy enlistment, enlistment was at least three years, where if you got drafted, you were limited two years in. In some cases, you got out in 18 months. So, some guys were willing to just kind of do the roll of the dice. I mean, getting drafted didn’t mean you were going to end up in Vietnam. There was plenty of that. So, I had some experience, but not a lot.

CALCATERRA: And today it sounds like you don’t necessarily identify at all with the Vietnam veteran community, because like you said, it was more a technicality that you were placed in that.

CROSS: Right. Yeah, I don’t run around and hang out with Vietnam vets. I mean, part of it also was that, you know, the officer corps only makes up about 10 percent of the Army. So, the vast majority of the people that are veterans are enlisted. Well, I mean, we just don’t hang out together. So, a lot of the Vietnam vets you see running around were guys that got drafted, spent two or three years in the Army, and they were enlisted guys. So, my experience and their experience is like night and day.

And the fact is is that, I mean, I spent 20 years as an Army Ranger. That is the snobbiest community on the planet. I don’t hang out and talk to other people just ‘cause they were in the Army. You know? Got no interest in it. If you didn’t jump out of airplanes and you didn’t do what I did, got no interest. I don’t care if you were in Vietnam. I will be nice and chat with you and all because that’s what I’m expected to do

as a retired lieutenant colonel, and representing my rank, but just to chat with you because you're gonna be my buddy, I don't think so.

CALCATERRA: So, do you want to talk more about your trajectory through your military career after being a Private First Class, I think at Fort Leonard Wood [MO]?

CROSS: Yeah, Fort Leonard Wood. Fort Leonard Wood is, I mean, the Army, especially if you look at bases in the United States, basically you have two flavors. You have bases that are part of the training base, and when I say training base, it's like the training foundation for the Army. And then you have bases that are support units that would be—it's the projection, so they have to have the capability of supporting a deploying force. So, they've got to have rail facilities, air facilities, all these, so that the forces that are on those bases can be projected worldwide. And, so the training base, Fort Leonard Wood was a part of the training base. And so it's basic training and AIT. AIT is Advanced Individual Training, and that's where you train in a specific military occupational specialty. So, because I was going into the Missouri National Guard and I had signed up with the 110th Engineer Battalion in Kansas City, I was going to Fort Leonard Wood as a what's known as a 12 Bravo Combat Engineer. And 12 Bravo is just like if you, if somebody tells you, "I'm on 12 Bravo," you just know that's a Combat Engineer. And as an officer, I was on 11 Bravo, which is an Infantryman.

CALCATERRA: And so, from the time you started that, as you said, it sort of like clicked and you felt like this was where you were supposed to be? Do you want to describe those first kind of experiences, more in training or…

CROSS: I think it's funny, because I took a bus and my dad took me down to the Greyhound station in Kansas City, and I got on a bus, and I don't know, it was kind of late in the afternoon, so it was July 10th, and it was late in the afternoon. And I got on that bus because that's the ticket that the recruiter had given me. The recruiter had given me the ticket, so that's the bus I took. And I got down to Fort Leonard Wood. The bus dropped me off at the reception station. And so, a reception station, when you go to basic training the reception station's your first stop. And so, recruits will go into the reception station, and the reception station is prepared to have people come in kind of 24/7. It just kind of collects them up, and

then it gets enough recruits to fill a basic training company and a basic training battalion. And so, a company will have 100 recruits, more or less, and a battalion will probably have, oh, let's see, the basic training they probably had an Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta company, so they'd have 400 recruits, basic trainees.

And so the reception station, it's just this, it's prepared to collect up these people over really about a span of about a week that they're filtered in, and then the actual basic training unit, the cadre for the basic training unit, will come over and collect the recruits, and then just start putting them through basic training. So, actually basic training doesn't start until you show up at your basic training unit. For whatever period of time it is in the reception station, you're in Purgatory. I mean, you're still getting paid, you're still in the Army, you're wearing a uniform, but you're not moving ahead to become the chief of staff of the Army or anything. You're just marking time.

So, yeah, when I first—they had already just sent a group over, so I was like the first guy. So, I got in at like 10:00 at night. There was just like one or two people in the dining facility, the mess hall. And the choice was like this big something, it looked like this overboiled kielbasa and sauerkraut. And I was famished, because I'd been on this bus riding through rural Missouri for the last four or five hours, and it was the middle of July and it was hot as shit because nothing was air conditioned. And so I had this whatever it was overboiled sausage and the sauerkraut and that was it. And then they found me a bed and I went in and I was in this barracks all by myself. And I just remember it was sort of like, *What have I got myself into?*

And so, like about early in the morning, and it was sort of like nobody said, "We're gonna wake you up," because there was like… I was just in Purgatory, you know? Like nobody was really like, "We're gonna come and beat you within an inch of your life tomorrow." No, nothing. Nobody told me when I had to wake up or anything. They were just bringing people in, and then they waited until they had enough people that they would actually give you some clue what you were going to be doing over the next couple of days with some semblance of schedule. But it was interesting because I woke up and I had these severe pains, and I thought, *Oh, my God, I haven't even been in the Army 24 hours and I'm*

gonna be dying. Well, I forgot that I'd had sauerkraut. Oh, boy. It had purged me. So I just remembered that from then on out that be careful with the sauerkraut, especially if you're really hungry and that's all you're getting, because I ate a lot of that sauerkraut. And it just cleared me out.

So, over the course of the next week, you know, things kind of came together, and I got my shots, got my uniform. That's what they do in the reception station. That way you're not wasting time in basic training running around getting uniforms, getting shoes, getting all your basic issue, and getting all your shots. That's all taken care of in the reception station. And so, they're equipped to just take you, "Paulina," you know, check, check, check. Each person has this little folder and all the things that have to be done before you're ready to go to basic training. And that's the purpose of a reception station. So, it worked.

But I, yeah, I sat around there for a week and I got to basic training. And that was a whole different story because it was… I got there the first day, the drill sergeant I had was a guy named Drill Sergeant Gallagher, and one of his first tasks was to essentially establish who his platoon guide was, that's the trainee that would be sort of his go-to guy. He was kind of like an overseer on a plantation. [laughter] And so, he was looking for a platoon guide, and then some squad leaders. And so, he wanted to have—his criteria, because I did not enter the Army as a private. I was a private E-3, which meant I was pay grade 3, not pay grade 1. And I was a pay grade 3 Private First Class because I had four years of college, and at the end of four months I was going to become an E-4. And that was in my enlistment contract. So, he wanted to know who in the platoon—and the platoon had, let's say, 30, 35 soldiers. And remember this is before really the integration of men and women, gender integration, so this was all guys.

So, he identified who the Private First Classes were, and then he went down the line and asked, "How come you're a Private First Class?" And there were five of us, and four of them were what's called Stripes for Skills. It happened to be all four of them were General Motors certified mechanics, which the Army really wanted at that point. And so, their recruitment contract stipulated that at the end of four months, they would make pay grade 4, E-4, and then at the end of the year, pay grade 5. So they would have very rapid

promotion. So, as soon as they said Stripes for Skills, he just told them, “Nah.” And then he got to me. And I said, “Four years of college.” And then he just looked at me and he said, “Come here, boy.” So we went in and I had this conversation with him, and he said, “Where’d you go to college?” And I just said, *Well, he’s not gonna know*, so I said, “I went back East.” “Son, I didn’t ask you what part of the country. I want to know the name of the college you went to.” I said, *Well, he’s not gonna*… “I went to Dartmouth.” “Oh, my God, I’ve got myself an Ivy Leaguer.” Oh, God, he was doing handsprings down the hallway. He thought that was just the best thing going. So he rode me like a Palomino pony. I mean, he just rode me. ‘Cause he knew that he could give me any task, I would understand it, I was in good shape, and he just, he was a happy camper. It made his job a lot easier.

CALCATERRA: So, was it a positive relationship or was he sort of…

CROSS: No, he didn’t give a shit about me. He didn’t care about me. I just made his life easier. I mean, honestly. It wasn’t like some day we were going to get together and have a beer or something like that, no. I was just… The drill sergeant basic trainee relationship is not like some kind of relationship where you have a faculty member here at Dartmouth taking an interest in some student. No, I was just one of 35 people, and as soon as he was done with me after eight weeks, then he was picking up another cycle. It was just like cycle, cycle, cycle. And then there would be, the way they’d work it, they would probably after about three cycles in a row, then they would get a break of about three weeks, so the cadre members could go off on leave and take care of stuff. But it was pretty tough duty being a drill sergeant. So, it was just like a grind. He didn’t care about me. I was just somebody to make his life easier. And I didn’t care about him. I had no desire to go back and see Drill Sergeant Gallagher, even after I was an officer and I clearly outranked him. No interest. I never have given a thought to like, *Where do you think Drill Sergeant Gallagher is now?* you know? If he got hit by a truck, it wouldn’t upset me, and if he didn’t, it wouldn’t upset me. I just don’t care. He did his job. I did mine. And he wasn’t a mean guy. He was competent at what he did, and I did what I was supposed to do. It was a just strictly a transactional relationship.

CALCATERRA: And then, after basic training how did you become a Ranger?

CROSS: Oh, okay. So, I'm getting to the Advanced Individual Training. Completed that. In the meantime, while I was, during basic training, I made arrangements to contact a regular Army recruiter. So, I was part of the National Guard. The National Guard was paying, it was their funds that were paying for basic training. And it's interesting, and this is something that is sort of a holdover from the Vietnam era… When I was going through basic training in 1975, there were still remnants of the draft. There were still people coming into the Army that had been drafted and managed to defer their induction. So, when we went through the—and where we saw this was in the dining facility, because when you went into the dining facility, you declared whether or not you were regular Army, reserve, National Guard, or AUS, and that's Army of the United States. Well, that's the designation for a draftee. See, regular Army is somebody who actually enlisted and volunteered. AUS was… And so, you can see if you go back and study World War II, you see that distinction between AUS and regular Army. And this is all the way up, this is units. So, you had units that were National Guard divisions or regular Army divisions, or AUS divisions. You didn't have any reserve divisions. You had reservists, but you didn't have reserve divisions. And that goes back all the way, I mean, that's been around for a long time. So, you know, that was one of the things that just caught my eye, that it was still, even in 1975, there were people that were still coming in in the summer of 1975 that had managed to dodge the bullet, and they finally got sucked in and had to serve their two years.

CALCATERRA: And then move on.

CROSS: Yeah, move on. Yeah, they…

CALCATERRA: And was that a tense relationship, or were they sort of…

CROSS: You didn't even know about it. The only time you saw it was like when you came into the mess hall. I mean, nobody cared if you were National Guard. It certainly did not… Now, the cadre, like Drill Sergeant Gallagher, he was regular Army. But they didn't make a distinction, and for them it's just an accounting, it was just some administrative thing that they had to do, and that was that. So I went to Advanced Individual Training, and that was the Combat Engineers. I had contacted the regular Army recruiter. They told me, "We

cannot touch you at all until you've completed Advanced Individual Training, because Missouri National Guard is paying the bill for you. Once you do that, then we can make arrangements."

And so, I went up and visited, went to the recruiting station in St. Louis [MO], and they bussed me up there after Advanced Individual Training, and I went through the whole process of recruitment with the regular Army recruiters, and then they made the arrangements with the Missouri National Guard to release me and let me go. And so at that point, then I was switched over to the regular Army. And my first assignment was Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and that was the 101st Airborne Division.

So, now you asked about the Ranger thing. So, I went to the 101st Airborne Division as enlisted. I had to go through the whole process of getting approved to go to Officer Candidate School. And that's a selection process, where first of all you fill out the application, and then there's a series of interviews, boards, where you go before a board of officers and they ask you a bunch of questions, and then they determine whether or not they're going to recommend that you be—you know, send the recommendation forward. And the board is not the decider. The decider is done up at the centralized… And I have no idea what that board looks up at. I have no idea what it looked like when I went through. It probably was like three guys sitting in a room going, "Okay, local board says 'good'? Okay, good." I mean, that's probably what they did. They probably didn't give a whole lot of thought to it. You know, they were just filling an OCS class. So, that's what I went through.

CALCATERRA: OCS was you were pursuing—or at this point were you still pursuing the educational path that your father went through?

CROSS: No. By that point, I'd switched over to the regular Army.

CALCATERRA: Okay.

CROSS: That, as soon as I did the regular Army, I was pursuing an Army career. Yeah, going to be an elementary principal was not in the cards. I wanted to be a Ranger. So, that path took me to Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, then infantry officer basic course at Fort Benning. And that's Fort Benning, Georgia. And then, followed by, now, since I hadn't

done West Point or ROTC, I had not up to that point had an opportunity to go to jump school and become parachute qualified. So, I went to Ranger school, and then I went to jump school. The majority of the soldiers that go through Ranger school are already airborne qualified, and they've already got their jump wings.

CALCATERRA: So your path was slightly non-traditional?

CROSS: Yeah, slightly. I mean, it wasn't like it was all that unique because out of our Ranger class there was about a third of us had not gone to jump school. So, it really didn't make a difference. It was just a, if anything, less of a hassle, one less thing to worry about, one less way to injure myself in Ranger school. So that was it.

CALCATERRA: And what about being a Ranger and a parachutist drew you to that work? Or what about it were you passionate about?

CROSS: I don't know, I guess there's something in me that wants to be a bad ass or something like that. I don't know. It was just like… I liked what they did, you know, the way the things, the kind of work that they did, the missions and everything. I mean, I liked the prospects of doing something that was potentially dangerous, and when you jump out of an airplane, there's the likelihood that things aren't going to turn out right. And this isn't skydiving. This is jumping out at 800 feet at night with a lot of other people. So… But that's what I wanted to do. I guess I'd seen too many war movies or something like that, but that's what I really wanted to do. I was passionate about it. I wanted to be an Infantryman and do bad things to bad people.

CALCATERRA: It sounds reminiscent of your uncle's work that you felt inspired by.

CROSS: Yeah.

CALCATERRA: Were your parents supportive of that choice to go through that route?

CROSS: I don't know that we really had a lot of discussion. My father certainly—yeah, my father was supportive. I mean, I don't know, we never had a discussion about whether or not they had any angst, you know, any anxiety over… Because the thing is is that Ranger school's considered to be one of the

hardest courses, period. And, I mean, the failure rate is… For people to just go through Ranger school without getting recycled, the chances are that your chances are maybe, probably about 30% of the students actually make it through without any hiccups, and then there's a whole bunch that never make it through. They get busted up or they get booted out just because they just don't make it. They can't pass their patrols or whatever. So, but I really didn't think about that. I always kind of had an optimistic viewpoint that there wasn't anything in the Army that I had run into up to that point that I couldn't handle and just kind of master. But, why Ranger and master parachutist? That's just all ego. I wanted to be able to just act like a bad ass and be a snob. And, so it gave me what I wanted. And I suppose deep down inside I thought I was going to have—it would make me more successful with women. [laughter] Nah. But, I had that dream, you know? We are our delusions.

CALCATERRA: And at that point did you have any family started? Or I know you mentioned your girlfriend at Dartmouth. Was that a relationship that was something you maintained?

CROSS: No, no. I think one of the tough things about my decision to go in the military, I mean, the fact is is that when I graduated in '75, I was the only member of my class to go on active duty in the military. I was it. Now, a lot of my classmates thought I had just like I might as well have consumed Drano or something. I mean, since I did something that they could not even fathom doing themselves, it was so foreign to them, they couldn't like even pass judgment. And then I had high school classmates that I've been very close to, and they just like, they cut me off. And I had some classmates, both high school and college, because of their views towards the military, they just didn't want to have anything to do with me. So, now, I didn't think through any of that, I didn't consider it. That wasn't a motivational thing. It was just, I didn't even give it consideration.

CALCATERRA: So, do you think those perspectives were influenced by them watching the Vietnam War and reflecting critically on that?

CROSS: Yeah, it was part of that, and part of it was just, if you look back during that time period, and when we were growing up, unless they were exposed to a bunch of World War II vets and World War I vets that wanted to just kind of share their experience, which was not usually something that vets do,

you know, they formed their opinion of the military from shows like *Gomer Pyle*. Have you ever watched an episode of *Gomer Pyle*?

CALCATERRA: Huh-uh.

CROSS: Or *Sergeant Bilko*. I mean, so that you had these goofy—and they were comedies, so you have this idea that the military is just populated by a bunch of dunces that are just… and there's a lot of screaming, and the non-commissioned officers are screaming at the enlisted guys. And it's like, okay… And then on the other side, then you have these movies that are all about being heroes. And so, when I was growing up in the '50s and '60s, the movies were, they were straight up, they were about glorifying. There weren't movies that really questioned the military. That was later. That was certainly late '60s, late, late '60s. But, '50s and early '60s there were still the sort of World War II carryover.

CALCATERRA: And when you look back and you're describing that part of what drew you to this was the ego, as you said, do you say that with self-criticism or are you—what kind of personal judgments are you bringing to that statement? What does that mean when you were saying that?

CROSS: Hum. I'm trying to think. I mean, it's just… You know, I'm so different now than I was then. And what drove me as far as my desires are certainly different. I mean, the fact is is that yeah, it is kind of a judgment that what drove me to want to be a Ranger… I mean, I have no regrets. I really don't. But when I look back and just look at what drove me was it was very superficial. I mean, it's shockingly superficial. I suppose if I'd sat down and I had really thought through it and really mapped it all out, I could have really come up with a really solid reason for it. But when I go and I'm being honest, you know, my reasons for wanting to be a Ranger were just like 'cause I thought it'd be cool, you know. I had no idea what it was going to entail. I just wanted to be able to say, "Yeah, I'm like him." And I thought he looked good and yeah, it was incredibly superficial. So…

CALCATERRA: It does sound like, earlier you had talked about making a difference in the world and leadership, and it does sound like that seemed like a route to do that, at least at the time.

CROSS: And you bring it up, because I viewed that when I looked at—good point—because when I looked at guys that were being selected for leadership positions further up, generals, they were all master parachutists and Rangers. That was a path to success. So, yeah, it was a superficial thing. It didn't have anything to do with trying to attract women. It was all about, it was ambition. I was trying to move ahead, and that was important because what I wanted to do, being a Ranger was just absolutely—and it's not being necessarily a Ranger, but being Ranger qualified, and having that qualification, and being a parachutist. And it wasn't necessarily have to be a master parachutist, but it was a matter of being Ranger qualified and being parachutist qualified. You needed to have those qualifications to be able to meet the mark and end up at high levels of leadership. And it was just kind of like a necessary cost of entering that sort of group for consideration.

CALCATERRA: And, so I want to ask about, I know there were a couple of things in your description that you mentioned around going to Korea, being the first US Army advisor to the Colombian Special Forces, being involved in the invasion of Grenada. I'm wondering if you want to touch on any notable points in your experience that felt and feel important to you and formative experiences?

CROSS: The thing at I guess Korea would be a good example. That was my first assignment where I was, you know, I'd finished Ranger school and I finished the parachute training. And so, I was going, I went to—I got sent to Korea. And after all that training, from basic training, or had a little gap between basic training AIT and then going to OCS [Officer Training School], but OCS, entry officer basic course, Ranger course and jump school, that was about 10 months of just solid, it was from July all the way to May, so July of '76 to May of '77, I was like just grinding. You know, that was it. It was just training. And I was ready to kind of have some fun.

So, I had already kind of done my homework and knew where I didn't want to go when I went to Korea. And first of all, my first choice when I put in my preference statement for assignment, my first choice was to go to Germany. Oh, I wanted to go to Germany. There were so many—because in those days the Army was, there were two parts of the Army. There was the Army of Germany basically, and these units that were over in Germany, and then there were units in the

United States that were associated with those units. So, the units in Germany were armored units. They had tanks. They had armored personnel carriers. They were very mobile. They were designed to fight the Russians—the Soviets and the Soviet Army. They were designed to go head to head there. And then you had units back in the States that were similar in terms of their design, and they were just a place where soldiers that had finished their three year or four year commitment to serve in Germany needed a place to land, and they would come back and go to these units over here. And they were armored units and they had armored personnel carriers and tanks and all. That wasn't the Army that the Rangers fell into.

Then you have this whole other Army that would be called the light part of the Army. And you didn't have all these vehicles. You had soldiers on foot. And paratroopers don't have tanks. It's just them, their weapon, and the bad guys. And the way to get to their—their commuting? They commuted by parachute. That's how you got to work. It's a fun way to go to work.

So, there were two parts, two different Armies, I mean, completely different, because once you got into one of those, then that's all you did is you just got into an armored unit and that's you went boom, boom. You'd go Wiesbaden, Germany; Fort Riley, Kansas. Back to Wiesbaden; back to Fort Riley. That's what your pattern was. And, but Korea… And I really wanted to go to Germany. I wanted to get into that. I don't know why, but that's what really kind of I wanted to go to Germany. I was looking forward to it, and I'd talked to all sorts of people that were ahead of me as far as that were more senior to me that had served in Germany, and they'd told me all these wonderful stories.

And then my assignment came in and they said "Korea." *Oh, God. I'm gonna go commit suicide. I don't what to do this*. I was like *ahhhhhhh*. I was just upset. Because Germany's a three-year assignment. Korea's a one-year assignment. And I hadn't talked to anybody that had ever been to Korea. I didn't want to go to Korea. I didn't know anything about Korea. So, I went to Korea. Of course, the Army told me to go to Korea, so I went to Korea.

And it was funny because I went over there with five other officers. We had just finished jump school. So we were all in

the same boat. We'd gone to Ranger school and we weren't parachute qualified, and then we went to jump school. So, these five guys, they were not Officer Candidate School graduates. They had gotten their commission through ROTC. So, they were a little more pumped up about going out and doing bad things to bad people. They didn't want to just go have a good time. Because there was like almost 10 weeks of training that they didn't do that I did, because they didn't do OCS. They just showed up at the infantry officer basic course same time I did, and that's when it started. So, you know, they had done their commissioning. So, ROTC, they had done that before they ever showed up to Fort Benning for the infantry officer basic course. Just the way it is. They're ROTC graduates. So they were all excited about going to Korea, and they wanted to be on the Demilitarized Zone. There was only one unit—at that time there was only one battalion that was up on the Demilitarized Zone, and they wanted to be in that battalion. And it was, they had no idea what went on up there, but that's what they wanted because they were convinced that's where the action was or was going to be if there was going to be any action.

And you have to remember that I was going over in May of 1977. In August of 1976, there was an incident on the 18th of August of 1976 that occurred in the Peace Village, Panmunjom. And two US officers, Lieutenant [Mark] Barrett and Captain, and then later he was promoted posthumously, [Arthur] Bonifas were killed. They were beat to death with axe handles by North Koreans. And, so there was this kind of melee between the North Korean guards and the UN guards in Panmunjom, and it was a melee over cutting a tree down, because the UN guards wanted to cut the tree down because it was blocking the view so that the North Koreans would like use that tree to do things behind it. And so they wanted to cut the tree down and the North Koreans went in and they, you know, they created this sort of event, and two US Army officers were killed. So, that got everybody's attention.

Life up on the Demilitarized Zone was, you know, potentially hazardous to your health. It was exciting. It involved real ammo. It involved real hand grenades. It involved real people that want to shoot at you. So, that was what attracted these, my compadres. And me personally? I didn't want anything to do with it. I just wanted to get drunk and chase women. That was it. That's all I cared about. I just wanted to

have fun. So we got to Korea, and when you come in country, you don't just go straight to your unit. It's this whole process, again, of reception stations. So, we came in and we landed at Osan Air Force Base south of Seoul, the capital. And then we took a bus up to Yongsan. Yongsan is just a part of Seoul. It's a district in Seoul where the 8th Army headquarters is. So we went to Yongsan and went to 8th Army reception station. And we already knew that we were going to the 2nd Infantry Division. But, we had to go through 8th Army to get up to the 2nd Infantry Division, which was at Camp Casey.

So we came into Yongsan, and they actually put us up for the night, and we stayed in a barracks, and then the next day we got on a bus and we went up to Camp Casey, where the 2nd Infantry Division headquarters were. So, at that point that's where my plan kind of fell apart, because I was planning to try and figure out how I could get into a unit where I could just kind of like take it easy and have fun. So, there were only five of us that day, because each day this goes on, each day there are planes of soldiers going over to Korea and planes of soldiers going back, because they just rotate people.

So, only five of us that were officers that showed up, and we went into this hut where there were steel chairs, and an officer came in, he was Captain Davidson—I remember his name—never laid eyes on him afterwards. But, he came in and he just gave us—tried to convince us that he'd given a lot of thought to these assignments, and you know he didn't because we were all on paper the same. There was no difference between us. So, two guys ended up going to 1st Brigade, which was just like right around the corner at Camp Hovey. Then, two guys ended up at 2nd Brigade, and then there was me. So, you know, those guys were all like, "Oh, my God, I'll never be chief of staff of the Army. I'm not going to the Demilitarized Zone." They were just weeping and wailing, just upset about it that they weren't getting what they wanted. And I'm just kind of going, Okay, 3rd Brigade. I've got two chances. One chance that I can be in a unit that's not on the Demilitarized Zone because there were only two battalions.

So, Captain Davidson cut to the chase, and instead of saying, "You're going to 3rd Brigade," he said, "Oh, and Lieutenant Cross, you're going to 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry,

and the Jeep that's gonna take you up there is outside right now." So it was like, *Oh, my God*, Because I was like, I thought I had it figured out where I would be able to get to some place where I could have fun. And so, within, I mean, in a matter of like hours, I was looking at North Korea. I mean, where I was, you looked and there it was. It was like right there. It was two kilometers away. It was real. And the other thing is is that everybody else was south of the Imjin River. We were north of the Imjin River, so we were in the sliver of land in between the Imjin River and the Demilitarized Zone. So there was a river at our back. So, I didn't—I couldn't just like go off base and go do what I wanted to do which was chase women and get drunk. No. I was on the Demilitarized Zone.

So for the next year it was 10 days—it was night in and night out of walking patrols, and if I wasn't walking patrols, I was in the Demilitarized Zone, and the patrols were in the Demilitarized Zone. So, what would we do on a patrol? It would be like eight guys, and we'd get all suited up with all the ammunition and everything, and put camouflage on our face, and then we would get inserted into the Demilitarized Zone and go in there and set up an ambush, and wait for North Koreans to come across. And we did that night in and night out.

CALCATERRA: And were there any incidents where there was…

CROSS: Yes. And then there was also just the incidents where you had, you know, the North Koreans would come in and they would plant land mines, because over time there wasn't that much space in the American sector of the Demilitarized Zone, so it was not a really huge box. And so, they could just tell by the terrain and where the footprints were where we went night in and night out as far as our movements. And, so we had to be very careful about the presence of land mines. And the North Koreans were not at all adverse to coming across the border and setting up an ambush on our side. We did not go over on their side. That was never in the cards. But, we were—we had to be very conscious of the fact that North Koreans did not play by the same rules we played by. So it was nasty.

CALCATERRA: And how did you cope with that heightened stress, not knowing necessarily how safe the surrounding environment was or if there were land mines?

CROSS: Well, I mean, the fact is I was a platoon leader. So, my focus was on the soldiers, and, you know, the challenge was also, and this is where the Vietnam, and sort of the back blast of the Vietnam era… You know, the sergeant 1st classes, the platoon sergeants, that as a platoon leader I would really lean on a platoon sergeant to really make things happen in the platoon, and make sure that all the soldiers were taken care of. Because I was a platoon leader. I was a 2nd lieutenant. I was still learning my business. The Sergeant 1st Class, the platoon sergeant, had been in the Army for 10, going on 15 years, and was more mature and really knew the business. And so the day-to-day taking care of the soldiers and making sure they maintained their weapons, made sure that from the platoon level down through squad level down through fire team level to individual soldier level, that all that training was being done.

Well, the non-commissioned officer corps was just shot to shit after Vietnam. I mean, part of it was because the rapid promotion to fill ranks that were just depleted. You had non-commissioned officers getting killed off. You had non-commissioned officers just doing 20 and that was it, no more. It was just, it devastated the non-commissioned officer corps. So, the impact on me was as a platoon leader, and in one year I had seven different platoon sergeants. They just couldn't last. My best platoon sergeant was the one that I had for the first two months, and then after that it was just like this revolving door.

And the thing is the platoon sergeants understood that, I mean, they understood quickly. They looked around and went, *Why am I here*? I'm on the DMZ. I'm facing this day-to-day grind and going into harm's way, and there's nothing in it for me. There's no motivation. Why should I do this? And so, and they knew if they got themselves booted out of the unit up there and forced to transfer out of the unit, as long as they did it before 60 days, it wouldn't show up in their efficiency report. So these guys would show up, and then after a while, then they would have a little bit to drink, and there was a little club on our compound because the compound I was on was 50 meters from the south barrier fence, and it was just a single company. So there were about 150 guys on this compound that was smaller than a football field. That's where all our buildings were: supply building, administrative building, dining facility. And so, there was this

little club there, and the NCOs [non-commissioned officers] would go in there and then get a couple of beers in them and then drop the "n" word. I mean, I would say of my platoon, at least a third of my soldiers were black. And that's all it took. Just drop the "n" word, do an "n" bomb and you're out of there, you're gone. Then they got what they wanted. That wasn't available to me as an officer, but for the NCOs, they had an easy out. As long as they did it before 60 days, they wouldn't get an efficiency report. They'd just get shoved down where they wanted to be, which was, you know, in the perfect world they end up in Seoul, doing some desk job, and then they don't even have to—you know, it was easy street. But the problem was is the non-commissioned officer corps was bad to the point that there were non-commissioned officers, that was okay with them. They didn't care. They didn't want to be with troops. It was just a job to them. And I went through seven platoon sergeants, and I'm not the one that fired them. They just got themselves booted out. I didn't have a say in it.

CALCATERRA: And how long were you in that environment for?

CROSS: That was a year. That was almost one year to the day.

CALCATERRA: And before you mentioned sort of jokingly that when you heard about this assignment, you joked about committing suicide.

CROSS: Yeah, I'd never… It's just, it was just kind of like, I can say I was upset, but, you know, I was just like, nah, I was just blowing off steam because I was upset because I really had my heart on going to Germany. And in retrospect, there was nothing in Germany that—I mean, Korea was a great assignment. It was very, very demanding. You know, Germany would have just been another 9 to 5 job, had the weekends off, and there you go, and every once in a while you run around and beat your chest, but for the most part it was just an easy job and you're in Germany and you go around and see all these great sights and take lots of pictures, and end up marrying a German girl, and that was great. Nah, it didn't happen to me.

CALCATERRA: And, so you've been discussing some of the after effects of Vietnam, at least like structurally the different ways in which the NCO corps was impacted and things like that, patterns you were noticing. Was there like discussion of the Vietnam

War era or open conversation about that? Did it come up amongst people sort of reflecting? Or was that something not talked about?

CROSS: I would say that when I look back, some of the non-commissioned officers I served with as an officer, at first they would never talk about Vietnam, but after you got to know them at all and you'd be in some quiet time… And I remember when I was a company commander in the 82nd Airborne Division, and my 1st sergeant, so he was my right-hand man, my 1st sergeant and I, and we'd been together for a year at that point, and we just were sitting, we were on an exercise together and we were just kind of sitting around, it was kind of a lull in the action and we were just sitting around for something to happen, and he started talking about it, talking about his experiences in Vietnam. And he was just this—he was kind of a little guy, little wiry guy, Bobby Ray Shepherd from Bonneville, Kentucky. And he was just a little wiry guy, and when he was… And the thing is is that at this point he was a 1st sergeant. Well, when he was in Vietnam, he was just like a private or a specialist, an E-4. And because he was a little guy, he was one of those guys that was given a .45 and a flashlight, and he was a tunnel rat. So he was sent down into the tunnels to essentially run the Viet Cong out, get them out of there. I mean, and God, I couldn't have done that. But he talked about it.

I had other guys that were on long-range reconnaissance patrols. They were LRRPs. Man. And some of the shit that those guys had to—I mean, the fact that they got out alive, you know. They were like literally… One guy, there were only like eight of them, and they had moved into position and had gone to sleep, and of course they had at least one guy up for security. But, in the middle of the night, and as they're in their position, a whole North Vietnamese regiment moved in, and they were like literally, I mean, just they were everywhere. I mean, the regiment's like 3,000 men, coming in and just like coming in, they just came in quiet as a mouse. And the guys that were up on security knew that something was going on because they could hear, because it's hard for 3,000 guys to move in in the jungle. But, they were still pretty damned quiet. But, they couldn't do anything about it because they were already in a kind of a hide position, and so they were literally, those guys, he had to sit there. And, of course, get up and use the bathroom? I don't think so. So, stuck for like four days, hardly breathing,

shitting on himself, peeing on himself, hardly able to move to even eat, until the North Koreans picked up and moved on. And you're like, talking about scared. So, you know, that's the kind of stuff where every once in a while one of—somebody that worked for me, or… I don't remember any officers just opening up.

The thing that I remember was that there were certain songs, because we'd sing when we marched—there were certain songs that became verboten, were not allowed because they came out of the era when soldiers were essentially not real thrilled about Vietnam. And so I just remember when I was over in Korea and this one song was just, somebody sang it once and then it was made clear that "that song will not be sung again." Yeah. So, there were certainly a lot of holdover. And holdover in terms of the way we conducted tactics. You know, it affected a lot of things.

CALCATERRA: And I'm wondering… I spoke at another one of these interviews with someone who was doing patrol boat work in South Vietnam and he described...

CROSS: Yeah, they would have been in the Mekong Delta, right.

CALCATERRA: He described sort of, after leaving had developed some substance use issues with alcohol and some other drugs that were used over there as coping mechanisms. I'm wondering if like some of those kinds of patterns were effects maybe of trauma or evident amongst veterans from there who were in your immediate vicinity, or anything like that?

CROSS: Not really. When I think about it, I remember when I came back from Korea, I spent 18 months in what I call Purgatory, which means I went from the light part of the Army to the heavy part. So I went to Fort Riley, Kansas. So, I had a non-commissioned officer, Sergeant Hockenberry, and he was a really good platoon sergeant, and really, really functioned well, until we went on an exercise and we went from Fort Riley, Kansas, and we went to Germany, and we were in Germany and this was, by this point we went to Germany in like January, February and March of 1979. Sergeant Hockenberry was one of those people that had gone Fort Riley to Wiesbaden, Germany, Fort Riley, and that's up to that point in his career, and he'd been in the Army for about 15 years, that's what he'd done. Three years here, three

years there, three years, dah dah dah, just going back and forth. So he was very familiar with Germany, and he even spoke German. I think he had a German wife. And the second we got in Germany, that guy was such a drunk, it was unbelievable. I didn't see any of that at Fort Riley. Now, it may have been going on, but because at Fort Riley it was basically 9 to 5, he was doing that home, so I wasn't seeing it. We went to Germany and we were together like all the time, because there wasn't any home. It was you were in your tent or you were out doing your job, and boy, that guy, he was—and he was bad. Like, fights, military police, German police, I mean, it was… And it was like every freaking night. And it only lasted about three or four days and then we just basically locked him up. Because, it was horrible. I mean, he was a serious alcoholic. I mean, he could get through the day, but by about 5:00, he was just wanting to go and get drunk. So, but Vietnam, he wasn't a Vietnam vet. Had nothing to do with Vietnam.

Oh, I can tell you that in my own personal experience, and so, I mean, substance abuse is not really tolerated in the military, especially when it comes to drugs. I mean, by 1979, 1980, the gloves were off as far as drugs were concerned in the military, especially Army had worked out all the kinks and they knew how to conduct drug tests. So, everybody, me as an officer, everybody was subject to a random drug test. And you didn't have a choice of like, 'Oh, gee, I don't feel well today." No, you go pee in a bottle, doesn't matter who you are. Everybody. And so, there were times where I might get drug tested as an officer. I mean, it didn't matter. It was just you were a number as far as the random drug test was concerned. So when your number came up sometimes, I mean, it might be literally just two weeks apart, boom boom. And then I might not get drug tested for six months. But, they were really, really after as far as drugs.

And then, alcohol was not tolerated, because if you had a DUI, that was a career ender. If you were a non-commissioned officer or an officer and you got a DUI, you just might as well… You would get a letter of reprimand which would go into your official military file, which means the next time you came up for promotion, you were never going to be promoted again. You would not be able to survive careerwise a letter of reprimand, whether you were an officer or a non-commissioned officer. And so, that's it. So, alcohol was like…

But the thing is, when I came back from Korea, I was a pretty angry guy, because I'd been doing something that was really, really, really stressful. And I went back to Fort Riley, where everybody's back there and it's 9 to 5 job, and it's five days a week, and everybody's got weekends, and *Korea, what's that all about? Who cares*? Blah blah blah. Nobody cared. I had nobody to talk to. Because I came back. It wasn't the unit came back. I came back. That's the challenge of when you have individual rotation into places like Korea, especially like the Demilitarized Zone, and you get individuals coming out, and they have nothing to anchor to. And my drinking went through the freaking roof. And so did the violence.

I mean, the stuff I did… I'd wander off, because Fort Riley's out in the middle of Kansas, I'd go off into some other little town away from Fort Riley, walk into a bar and find somebody that thought they had a—you know, and not identify myself as a soldier, just walk in and start chit chatting and find somebody that thought they had a monopoly on being a patriot, and I'd beat the crap out of him. And I'd be stone sober, not a bit of drink. Then I'd go back to Fort Riley and just drink myself silly. And I didn't do that night in and night out. But there were several incidents like that where I was just so pissed. Then, looking back on it, that was PTSD. You know, I'd suffered bigtime, and then turned right around and it wasn't long before I was in Colombia. And if you thought Korea was bad, Colombia, you know, that was a whole different kettle of fish. And I was the only American down there. There weren't any other Americans.

CALCATERRA: Sounds like there really wasn't any support throughout to deal with that change or changes.

CROSS: No, because the whole idea, I mean, anybody that had PTSD, first of all, it was just, they were starting to get their hands around it and then it was all focused on Vietnam vets. They didn't really understand it. They didn't understand that PTSD can be—a Dartmouth student can get PTSD. You don't have to be—you know, there's all sorts of ways to end up with post-traumatic stress. I mean, kids that are in an abusive family end up with PTSD. So, for years I went around with undiagnosed PTSD, just based on the deployments and stuff that I was exposed to, and then some of it was just being in really, really stressful jobs where just

for like months on end, you know, working 14, 16 hours a day, seven days a week, no break. No leave, nothing. You're just grinded. And that takes a toll. So…

CALCATERRA: And what sort of led to your decision to retire and leave the military?

CROSS: Well, I mean, my wife at the time was an Army brat. She was tired of moving around. Plus, while I spent three years on a faculty at West Point teaching economics, and so, while we were up at West Point, she got an MBA through Pace University [New York City, NY]. And I had an MBA from Wharton [School of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA], so I was kind of like itching to use the Wharton MBA and see if I could go out and do great things in industry. And so, yeah, we just decided that's it, 20 and that's it. We're not gonna, I'm not gonna… And the other thing is the fact is is that as an Army officer, you've got to be astute enough to realize that what needs to be in place, if you're going to stick around for the long haul, you want to be a general officer. Well, that's not a guaranteed deal. And it's not a guaranteed deal just because you worked hard and everything like that. Because once you get up to that level, there's probably three qualified or four qualified officers for every officer that is picked to be a general. So, who's going to decide? Well, it gets down to who you know, plain and simple. I mean, the bottom line is is that, you know, if you got three guys that are equally qualified, then what's the discerning factor? Well, again, it's who you know.

Well, I mean, I had three mentors that I was really close to in the Army, and by the time I was approaching that point, the 20 year mark, all three of them had [makes a whistling noise]. They had not gone to the level that I needed them to go to. They hadn't done their job. I loved them as mentors, but damn them, damn their souls, they didn't… You know, they didn't end up as four-star generals, and that's what you need. You got to have at least one four-star general in your camp that's going to pull you along. And I didn't have it. One of them made three-star, one of them made two-star, and one of them just one star. And that was it. I didn't have the horses in place and I just had to make that decision. And I could have been a full colonel, but I didn't want to—at that point, in order, (a), I would have had to stick around for at least a couple more years to be considered for full colonel. And I had a record that was good enough that I felt pretty

comfortable I'd get that. But then even after that, then I'd have to stick around for another three years or more to retire at full colonel. Just because you get promoted doesn't mean you get that retirement. You've got to actually stick around for two or three years.

Well, at that point I'm not talking about getting out at 20, I'm retiring at 26. Well, why not just stay around for 30? But the point is also is that as you go along, okay, at some point I was going to have to serve in the Pentagon. I didn't want to serve in the Pentagon. Had no interest in that, none. I hadn't been overseas since 1982 when I came back from Colombia. At this point we're looking at 1995. I had a big target on my head as far as my assignments officer to go back overseas. And I didn't want to put my family through that. And the fact is is that I was a trained Spanish linguist, which even though I'd served in Colombia and you'd think that I had paid back my obligation? Not as far as the Army was concerned. I was going to end up paying that off for the rest of my life. Yeah. So, I didn't want to go to Guatemala or some place like that with my family. Sorry. So, I got out at 20. And those were things that were unavoidable. That was what was in the cards.

CALCATERRA: And the transition to getting your [MBA] at Wharton and teaching, what precipitated that?

CROSS: Hm, that's a good question. Well, I'd gotten to the point, I mean, it's sort of like at the 10-year mark, that I had really considered getting out of the Army at that point. And so I'd applied to business schools. I applied to, so the leading MBA programs: Wharton, Harvard [University, Cambridge, MA], Tuck [School of Business] here, and for [University of Virginia] Darden [School of Business, Charlottesville VA]. And, you know, the bottom line is that I got into Wharton. That was what I wanted to do was Wharton, because it was the number one school at the time. And I was planning on getting out, and the guy that was my boss, who happened to be a West Point graduate, just suggested, "You know, you don't have to get out of the Army. You could just see if you could get West Point to pick up the option and you'd go up there and teach." And I hadn't even thought of that.

So I contacted West Point and they just said "yeah." And it was just I was really fortunate, because West Point does a—they've got a whole process where they evaluate you and

say, “Yeah, you could probably… We want you.” Then you get to apply to graduate school. And then you go to graduate school. So it’s like, just getting to the point where you’re going to apply to graduate school is at least a full year or two years. And I just called up and said, “I’m in Wharton. Do you want to use me?” And they went… And it just happened like literally that day, a woman who they had been working with for two years in their pipeline, she was accepted at Stanford [University] for the MBA program, and she contacted them saying, “I’m going to Stanford, but I’m going on my dime. I’m gonna get out of the Army.” And literally that day she had pulled the plug. If she hadn’t done that, it would have not worked out the way it worked out for me. I would have gone to Wharton on my dime and you wouldn’t be talking to me now. It wouldn’t be an interesting story.

So, as is, that happened and I ended up going to Wharton and stayed in the Army, and stuck around for 20. Because by the time I came out of Wharton and I went to West Point to teach economics, and then I went to Fort Leavenworth [KS] for the Command and General Staff College, by that point I was in for 16 years. So it’s just four more years to get essentially full retirement. You know, healthcare benefits was a big deal. And then, get 50% of lieutenant colonel salary for the rest of your life. So, not bad.

CALCATERRA: And you got to teach and you got to go to West Point.

CROSS: I did.

CALCATERRA: And those other earlier dreams.

CROSS: Earlier dreams got fulfilled. I did. I got to teach and I got to go to West Point.

CALCATERRA: And along the way you started referencing your family. When did you meet your wife and start developing your family throughout your career?

CROSS: I met my wife when I came back from Colombia, and you’ll see there’s a pattern in my life where I’ve encountered women in bars. So, I was at the officers club. And my wife is Puerto Rican, or my former wife is Puerto Rican. And she was with another friend that was Puerto Rican and they were speaking Spanish. And I was already probably about half lit, so I was probably at least six or seven beers down the line,

and so I was feeling pretty frisky, and I thought I'd show off to them how well I could speak Spanish since I'd just come back from Colombia. And that's when I found out that they really could speak Spanish. They were not faking. And, but yeah, it was kind of funny because my wife [Wilma?] made every effort to ditch me. [laughter] And I just kept popping up, so… Yeah. So we met at Fort Benning when I came back from Colombia, and so we met in the spring of 1982 and we got married in November of 1982, just before I left Fort Benning to go to Fort Bragg [NC].

And Fort Bragg, that was one of those really stressful jobs. Fort Bragg, 82nd Airborne Division. I was a division operations officer. I was a captain doing a major's job, and I was working like literally 14, 16 hours a day, seven days a week. So, the Grenada thing. I wrote the operations order for Grenada. That was what I did. Somebody had to write it. Well, I was the guy that wrote it. And went through all the iterations and everything. And then once we were done with Grenada, nothing changed. I mean, that was the grind is that Grenada, all that did is just like cause more work, because then there was the after Grenada stuff plus everything else that we already had as far as the training plans. Because you had all these deployments and exercises that were already funded, that were planned, and life went on. But layered on top of that was, you know, getting a two-star general ready to testify in front of the House Armed Services Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee. I mean, it just like went on and on and on. I mean, it just was a grind.

And it was interesting because when I went to graduate school—it took me literally like four years to really get to where I was like any semblance of just unwound, because it was just back to back to back. You know, from the time I left for Korea, just coming back, and then going to Colombia, and then 82nd Airborne Division for three years. Then, Wharton was, I could start to unwind. And then, I was about two years into West Point before… And then, the other thing is there was just the physical effects. I mean, after all that, from about May of '85, it took me four years before my feet stopped peeling. And I lost toenails on—the two toenails, the small toes, I lost the toenails on both feet. Gone. And that was just from having my feet immersed in water for too much time. That's why my feet peel. And they just peeled and peeled and peeled, and then finally after about four years…

and the feet were really tender. And yeah, so it was a beat up.

CALCATERRA: And now the work that you're involved in is, from what I understand, sort of organizational structure risk management kind of work? Is that how you'd describe it?

CROSS: I consider myself retired now.

CALCATERRA: Oh, okay.

CROSS: Yeah, I spent… I mean, for the last 18 months my focus has been taking care of my parents, because my father just passed away and so, it's just all the things. I mean, part of the reason I'm moving to Arkansas is so I can be there for my mom, because I have power of attorney for her. But I'm in a position I can do that. You know, I just turned 65. And once I get settled in Arkansas, I may look for work, but it's probably going to be a non-profit.

But yeah, I did risk management. I wrote a book on risk management. And I did some implementations with government agencies, Veterans Health Administration, did a complete risk management system for them. And when I say "system," it's just their whole structure in terms of the terminology they use, their protocols, documentation, just how they manage risk.

And then I did the same thing for [US] Customs and Border Protection for the fence on the Mexican border. Actually, it was called the Tactical—oh, Secure SBI, so it was Secure Border Initiative Tactical Infrastructure Project, I think it was. But it was the fence on the Mexican border. And you don't want to get me started on that. It was just a waste of money. And the people that were really pushing it were the construction companies that were going to make a lot of money on it. And to this day, anybody that's pushing that, they do not want you to know that "oh, by the way, the bill for maintaining that thing on a year to year basis is about a billion dollars a year." Oh, yeah. Yeah, just maintaining a fence in that environment from Brownsville, Texas, to Tijuana, I mean, that's a long fence, and really harsh environment. And it requires maintenance. That's all there is to it. Stuff breaks down. There's a lot of electronics and high tech stuff. Stuff breaks down, and when it's that much, yeah, a billion dollars, you can go through a billion dollars like that.

CALCATERRA: Who knew?

CROSS: Yeah, who knew. So, yeah, I did risk management. It's thankless work, especially dealing with the government, because you've got people that you deal with the government, and you might work with one client, one person, for like three years, and then they get promoted out of the job. Somebody else comes in and you go, "Oh, we're starting all over." So, three years of just work, and you're starting all over. Just because, whatever, because they're now in charge and they don't want to do what their predecessor did.

CALCATERRA: And throughout this time when you started doing risk management work, and now that you sort of have been more fully retired, do you still have relationships with colleagues from the military?

CROSS: Less so. Part of it is the politics of the day. I didn't take a right turn. You know, I explained my background. I'm a liberal from Independence, Missouri. There's no common ground. I will not tolerate racism. I'm not going to put up with the crap, you know, that's just going on right now as far as just fear mongering. *I'm going to sit there and get all upset about 3,000 people in a caravan coming towards the border. Ah, wow, that's scary*. And then the crap that they're coming up with like "oh, they're carrying smallpox," or whatever. Give me a freaking break. No, no, no. No, there's no common ground now. And it's just, you know, they're uncompromising, and so it's just been combinations like "well, we're not even gonna agree to disagree. We're just not gonna…"

So, I really don't have—I'm perfectly happy being where I'm at. Yeah, I don't feel a sense of loss. Nope. And, you know, I mentioned that my high school classmates and some of my Dartmouth classmates, you know, it's just like, some if it is just like because they never considered the military as anything that they would be remotely interested in, you know, they just like… They don't even know questions to ask. So, it just doesn't come up. I mean, most of my classmates know I spent time in the military, but it just really doesn't ever come up. I'd say I could count on one hand the number of classmates that ever even expressed an interest in what I did. You know, that's it. A few of them will say

"thank you for your service." But, you know, I'm not looking for that, because it was, for me serving in the military was just a tremendous opportunity. And it's not about serving the country and all, it was just a tremendous opportunity to grow and to work with some people. Because even the ones that I don't talk to anymore that have decided to take a right turn and do whatever, live in fear world, I still value the time I spent with them. I mean, they were good people, you know, and I'm sorry they've made the choice they made.

CALCATERRA: Sounds difficult to sort of have the Dartmouth community maybe not understand and assume things about your military involvement and be somewhat separate from them in that way, and then also somewhat separate from…

CROSS: It's just life. I mean, I know who I am. And so, I don't run around and try to reveal to people. I just know who I am. I'm comfortable with who I am. Now, I've recently got involved with a woman in Arkansas. And the first time we went out on a date, I mean, she looked at me. I mean, she knew, but the fact is she really didn't know me, she just kind of thought I was an attractive guy, and okay, we're both about the same age. And so, she'd kind of assumed that I was like, *okay, the guy's retired*. She didn't know I was retired military. And I'm white. I'm 65 years old. *Must be a Republican*. You know, *must be*. You know? When I walked in, what did you think? Don't know. But, chances are, that's what people, that's where they go. And she was very liberal. And the fact is, she was shocked. I'm used to that. You know, it's just, that's the way I roll.

You know, I don't run around and wear a sign on myself, but if you ask, and especially if you do something that is not in a line with my values, then I'm going to tell you that. I'm not going to get in your face. I'll just say, "I disagree," or "let's not do that." That's it. And, so I'm past all that, really. I'm just getting on with life. Because it's not about me. I got what I wanted out of it, and it was very rewarding. And whether or not my classmates… I mean, so what? I mean, I've been talking for how long now, you know? We're going on three hours and nobody wants to sit for three hours and listen to a stream of consciousness. I mean, that's the truth. If you can't get it down and somehow convey it in 10 minutes or 15 minutes, and you can't. It's a lifetime. You know, why did I go in the military and what was it like? You know, I can't answer that in 10 or 15 minutes. And so, why bother?

CALCATERRA: Sounds like you've come to this place of, like you said, acceptance about that and a place of peace about who you are, and you know what your background and beliefs are, and that is sort of how you approach things.

CROSS: The only thing that matters is who I am now. The fact that I spent the time in Colombia, well, that's how I got where I am, but that doesn't define me. And just like, being a retired lieutenant colonel… you know, I learned a lot from my dad in the sense that my father, God, he just wore the fact that he was a full colonel in the Reserves and he just wore that right to the bitter end. When I retired from the Army, I kept no uniforms, none. My dad got buried in his dress blues. I don't even have a uniform. I have not a scrap. And it's not that I'm embarrassed or I regret my time in the military. It's just I moved on. So yeah, I carry a—I got an ID card, okay? But yeah, that's for my benefits. I earned that and I hang onto it. But I don't go around showing people, "Look at me, I got an ID card." No. It just sits in my wallet. When I have to use it, it's like a credit card. That's it.

And the fact is is that, Paulina, a week doesn't go by when somebody—and I'll be at like a Ford dealership, and I start talking to a mechanic, and I haven't told the guy—I'm not wearing anything that says "hey, I'm retired military." I haven't told the guy anything. All of a sudden he starts talking about his time in Afghanistan. And because of my experience, I know what questions to ask. And the next thing you know, it's a 45 minute conversation. And then, we shake hands, hug, and move on. And I don't know if I'll ever see the guy again or not, but… And I think there's something that people just kind of say; you know, I don't walk around and do that. I don't have to. So… And I have no regrets. But I don't let it define me. It just left its stamp.

CALCATERRA: Sounds like in those situations it fosters this connection with that person and maybe they also couldn't find people who knew what questions to ask, and in that way…

CROSS: Don't know. It's just all we got is the now. Just like you and I are sitting here talking right now and it's all we got. I don't know what's gonna happen in five minutes. All I know is that it's all we got right now. So… You live right now.

CALCATERRA: I guess some of my last few questions are sort of around your engagement with Dartmouth. It seems like your class president role has kept you connected to at least coming back to the campus periodically. Do you want to speak more to your current relationship to the college and how your experience as an alum has been?

CROSS: It's interesting because I've come back, I always come back to reunion. I remember coming back to the first reunion, the fifth reunion, and feeling the pain of driving away from the campus, and I just realized that, you know, just there was an attachment there that wasn't going away. It wasn't. At least, that was my personal… Now, I can't speak for other people. It was just me. And it was just this attachment. And I can't say that my experience at Dartmouth was this great experience and I was given all these awards or anything like that, you know, but I just had this attachment, this feeling of actual just physical pain leaving Dartmouth, you know, driving away, looking back at Baker Library across from Interstate 91, and just that sense that—and just saying, "I'll be back." And it's been that way ever since.

And then, really coming to grips with what Dartmouth represents. But the bottom line is I chose Dartmouth. I chose to come to Dartmouth. I chose to make it part of my life. And I can't change that. I can't change that any more than… I mean, I could change my religion. I can do a lot of things. But I can't change the fact that I graduated from Dartmouth. It's part of me. It's just like I chose to go in the Army. It's part of me. So I can either embrace it and own it, or just go drown myself, because I can't run away from it. There's no place on the planet I can run away and not have that be part of me. And it's part of my very existence, all the way down to my bones. And I refuse to run away from it and just like pretend that it's not there.

And I feel sorry for my classmates who just like, they just like try to attach and act like… Act like what? At what point, you know, do you go through life that, you know, we all come out and we go into various professions or whatever and people are going to say, "Well, where did you go to college?" And if you're a guy, you can't avoid it. I mean, you're sitting there at a football game and you're looking at a football game and somebody looks up, and you know, oh, well, and you live in Dallas, and they go, "Did you go to the University of Texas?" "No, I went to Dartmouth." Unless you want to lie. And that's

a hell of a way to go through life, to just now lie to everybody and deny that you went, you know, you didn't go to Dartmouth. I'm not going to do that, and so I embrace who I am. I mean, I embrace the fact that I'm from Independence, Missouri.

CALCATERRA: And as you're identifying with your status as an alum here, like what does that look like on—how do you act that out? Do you come back and visit, or are you active in sort of, like involving yourself in current issues at the school? Is thinking about sort of weighing in or being involved in change that the campus is making?

CROSS: No. I mean, as you mentioned, I'm a class president. So, each Dartmouth class is set up as a 501(c)(3) corporation. So, we are a non-profit, each class. So I'm essentially a CEO of a non-profit organization, and I have targets to meet, goals to meet as far as fundraising is concerned. We raise class dues which are separate from fundraising from supporting the Dartmouth College Fund. We support a class project that, are you familiar with the Barbary Coast Jazz Ensemble?

CALCATERRA: Uh-huh.

CROSS: Well, they have in the fall in the winter term, their concert, they have a guest artist. We pay for those guest artists, to the tune of $20,000 or more a year.

CALCATERRA: Wow.

CROSS: So, yeah, wow. And we also, for the student ensemble concert, so that's woodwind, I think there's percussion, dance, Barbary Coast, and I think there's five of them that are student ensembles, they have concerts in the fall. We underwrite 200 free tickets for freshmen. So, freshman attendance at the ensemble concerts has increased 30%, 40% since we started giving out the free tickets. So, that's what I do and it's, I could choose to do a lot of things. Because I've moved a lot, I haven't really gotten deeply involved in local club, because I mean, I'm in DC, they've got a very active club in DC. The Dartmouth Club of DC's one of the biggest and most active. The thing is I don't drink alcohol now. I don't drink at all, and that's by choice. And a lot of the activities involve drinking alcohol. I mean, they're almost always set up at some bar or something, and I'm just not

interested in doing that. It's not what I'm doing. And the thing is is that what I do with the class eats up a lot of time. So, I really don't have—if I were to do anything with the local club, it would be just kind of just to show up. And I'll do that, and I pay my dues to the local club and everything. I just don't have time to really get involved the way I'm involved with the class. And then, I've always been an alumni interviewer. I think that's something that every alum ought to do, just to keep their fingers in the pie and really stay connected with young people. As we become old farts, it's good to stay connected with the young folks, so…

CALCATERRA: I guess my last question that I'm curious about, as you mentioned your interest in history, some veterans I've also interviewed get very interested in reading a lot about the Vietnam War and being really interested in learning about it after the fact, and now, and especially when things like the Ken Burns documentary come out, they're very interested in learning more about it. I'm wondering if you've done any of that sort of looking back on the history of the war, and also as we were talking about your time at Dartmouth when none of that information was available to you, have you done that? Have you learned a little bit more, like done some of that pursuing information, and has that changed at all the way you reflect back on your time?

CROSS: I just really, I mean, I do a lot of history reading and all, and just Vietnam just never really interested me. It's just not, in the overall scheme of things when we look back, it's just not going to be that important. It's not going to be like some big shift. It's just, in the overall scheme of things, it was just a campaign in the Cold War, and was played out globally. And a hundred years from now that's going to be how historians view it, and it won't be The Vietnam War, it'll be just the campaign, a campaign in the struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States, and between two ideologies. That's it. So, it's like why do I want to spend a lot of time on it? Because there are other periods of history that I find more interesting that I'd like to reflect on. But it's not Vietnam. I'm certainly interested in visiting Vietnam. I think the culture's fascinating. But, you know, to sit there and study the Vietnam War… I mean, for those that actually served in Vietnam and participated in particular battles, it might be interesting.

I mean, from an official standpoint, the only combat I saw was [Operation] Urgent Fury, was Grenada, and I wrote the operations order. I know more about that operation than anybody, so what the hell am I going to study?

CALCATERRA: [Laughter] Fair.

CROSS: But, you know, the other stuff like Korea, I mean, that was just a day-to-day grind. There wasn't some big event or battle or anything. There wasn't anything to study at all. It was just a day-to-day grind, and God, does it get cold in Korea. Imagine, you know—I was watching the Olympics and they actually called off events several days because it was too cold. Trust me, they didn't call off patrols. And we were going out with equipment that was manufactured and designed in World War II. It wasn't this fancy GOR-TEX or anything, because hello, it was 1977. So, we had this stuff that was just antiquated and we're going out there and sitting in ambush positions for six hours. So you're sitting there not moving. Oh, God, it was just unbelievably cold. And you had to do it. And it was like you had to do it night in, night out. It was one thing to have to put up with that once, but to know that you gotta do it again, and then the worst thing was you had to motivate soldiers to do it. You know, you had to motivate soldiers to willingly go out and experience pain night in and night out. It was a grind. So, no, not interested in studying the Vietnam War.

CALCATERRA: Yeah, I definitely understand that perspective on it. Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about that I didn't ask about?

CROSS: No, I appreciate the time. I mean, the key thing is is it gives me a chance to kind of reflect. I mean, a lot of the stuff I've reflected on over the last few years, you know, it helps kind of put everything in perspective and think about it. So…

CALCATERRA: Well, thank you so much for spending your afternoon sharing your stories and experiences. It was very interesting to learn myself about them and to reflect, and will be very important for the historical record. So, yeah, we're really grateful that you participated today.

CROSS: Thanks, Paulina.

CALCATERRA: Of course.

[End of Interview.]