Cuong V. Do ’88, Tuck ’89
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[CLARA A.]

CHIN: Okay. Today is August 16th, 2017, and this is Clara [A.] Chin, an interviewer with the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. I am in Dartmouth College’s Bryant Room in Rauner [Special Collections] Library. This is a phone interview, and Mr. Cuong [V.] Do, Dartmouth ’88, is on the phone on the other line at his home office in New Jersey, and it is about 2 p.m.

Great. So, Mr. Do, can you tell me a little bit about where you were born and what day you were born?

DO: Sure. I was born in Saigon, Vietnam, in 1966.

CHIN: And what was your father’s name?

DO: My father was Phu Do, and my mother was Jo Nguyen Do.

CHIN: Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in Saigon?

DO: Well, I was the oldest of four, and I’m four years older than my youngest sibling. All of us were tightly packed in there. So we were a pretty tight-knit family. My father worked for a construction company that, among other things, built radar installations and air bases for the U.S. government. My mother was pretty much a homemaker, who was an excellent chef, but she also—among other things, she taught French gourmet cooking.

So for me, growing up in Vietnam was a pretty phenomenal life. You know, we went to good schools, we had great opportunities, we were certainly above average in economic means and so forth, so life was pretty good.

CHIN: What was the name of your father’s construction company?

DO: I don't know. I don't remember that. There are many, many things I don't remember. My memory has certainly failed me over the years.

CHIN: Yeah, it must be hard to remember all the way back then. Did your father talk about his job a lot?

DO: Over the years, we—he doesn't talk a lot about it. I mean, he talks a little bit about the experience of us leaving Vietnam, but beyond that, we don't talk very much about it. I think part of his belief and what we certainly learned from him is, like, the past should be just that, the past, right? And it's all about how do we make the most of what's the present and the future.

CHIN: Mmm, I see. Does your mother also agree with your father on that regard?

DO: Absolutely.

CHIN: You mentioned that your mother was a homemaker and she was a very good chef. Did she teach you how to cook when you were in Vietnam?

DO: Not when I was in Vietnam, certainly not—she taught me a fair bit. I learned a lot about cooking from her and so forth, just out of necessity once we arrived in the U.S.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Do you remember much about school in Vietnam?

DO: A little bit. I went to a private school, a private Catholic school, so discipline was quite strict, and I remember learning French, so I was fairly fluent in French by the time I had left Vietnam, to which I've completely forgotten everything. And, nope, that's about it.

CHIN: Did you try to continue learning French when you came to the United States?

DO: No, because for me and my siblings, we did not speak English, so the number one priority was to learn English, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And coupled with being in a new place, and we had nothing when we arrived, so my parents were very busy working multiple jobs and so forth, so for me it's very much a focus on learning English, going to school and doing everything I can to help the family.

CHIN: Mm-hm. So before you came to the United States, did you know that you were going to leave Vietnam?

DO: No, not really. I mean, as the war came to its end, it was very clear to my parents that we were going to have to leave, right? And so they certainly made plans for us to leave, but for me as a child of nine—I was nine years old at the time—I was certainly not part of any planning or discussions about that, right? I just knew that things did not work out well towards the tail end, and that's [sort of? 4:48] the scrambling that kind of—that had to take place at the very end.

CHIN: Mm-hm. So as a child, how aware were you about the political turmoil during that time?

DO: I certainly knew that I was growing up in a war zone, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: Everybody knew that we were in a war. It was certainly on TV, and you could certainly hear it at night, living in Saigon at the end. I had uncles who were in the military, so periodically we would go and visit them in various places outside of Saigon that was nearby, and you certainly will hear, you know, gunshots and, you know, larger ballistic cannons or whatever else as part of the growing up exercise—experience.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And I certainly remember seeing dead people and so forth as part of—you know, it's just part of life.

CHIN: Mm-hm. You mentioned earlier that you felt that you had a pretty phenomenal life in Vietnam, so do you think that this, coupled with what you just expressed about the war

happening—what was that like, those two different emotional threads together?

DO: Well, I mean, I knew I was very much among the lucky one, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: When you're growing up in a war zone, as I observe other children around me, many of them didn't have the opportunities to go to school, didn't have the food, the clothing and so forth, and the fact that I'm able to go to a private school, had food and had friends another things, I certainly understood that I was among the privileged ones that's there, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And we were certainly being shielded from the everyday—the everyday goings on in the country, right?—

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: —by virtue of where we lived and the opportunities that we had.

CHIN: In school, when you were in Vietnam, did you talk about the relationship between the United States and Vietnam at all?

DO: No. I was very young. Back then, it was really learning grammar and arithmetic, right? So the politics of the war really wasn't part of what we discussed, learned about in school, certainly not at that young age.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Were you very close to your childhood friends?

DO: I can't say I was. I mean, I certainly don't remember any of my childhood friends.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Do you still have family in Vietnam?

DO: Not really. All of my family is in the U.S., and for me nowadays Vietnam is purely a tourist destination. I mean, I've gone back there with family to visit, and I go back for

work, but I really don't have close families there that I keep up with.

CHIN: I see. How often do you go back to Vietnam?

DO: When I was living in Asia, I would go back probably a few times, once every couple of years or so, and more recently, with work, maybe once a year, once every couple of years.

CHIN: What is that like when you go back to Vietnam?

DO: Well, the country has certainly changed a lot. It certainly has developed a lot, right? And for me it's been remarkable to see that there's an entire generation that has grown up not knowing, not experiencing the war. You know, the younger people nowadays—it's just going about their life, and it's just—you know, their—their memory is exactly what they have experienced since their birth, and it's just—the country has remarkably developed, progressed and moved on from the devastation of the war. And I think that's a terrific thing.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Is it different going back to Vietnam when you're on a business trip versus when you're just going for family, with your family?

DO: Sure. Going back with my parents, for example, to go and visit different places, you know, I could see the gleam in my parents' eyes, my dad's eyes, the pride that, yeah, certain—a bridge over here or a school over there that he built all those years ago are still standing, still being used and so forth. For me, that is a great emotional experience.

For work, by the mere fact that I'm a senior leader for a rather large company, more often than not I'm there, and people want something from me, and more often than not I have to say no, right? I'm not going to put more jobs in Vietnam. I'm not going to open up more factories. I'm not going to give you a bridge that you want or a road or a highway or a hospital.

CHIN: Mmm. So your father's role in the construction company has an impact about the way you see Vietnam in your business dealings now?

DO: Sure. I mean, I guess we all pick up things from our surroundings and our families, right? And he has—I just like the fact that this is a man who goes back 30, 50 years later and takes great pride in the work that he did when he was a young—younger person that's still being used.

CHIN: Mmm. It's interesting that you said that your father sees Vietnam and a lot of the things that were there a long time ago, but beautiful has also changed drastically, too, you said. So is there a sense of sadness about the change at all?

DO: No, I think—what I heard from my parents after their last visit—the good thing is that they go without me, too, right?—and it's much more a sense of wonderment and pride that the country continues to—to develop and has moved on from its past.

CHIN: Do you think that the sentiment is different for people in Vietnam when you go back and talk to them versus people, Vietnamese-Americans in the United States?

DO: I—I don't know. I mean, the people that I have interacted with over the course of my travels back to Vietnam or for work or for vacation is—you know, they're just happy with their lives, right? That's their context, and they're perfectly happy within that context. It's—it's been a very, very small minority of older people, actually, who kind of remembered the war, who were somewhat disgruntled from the war, but that is a very small minority of the people I've interacted with over the years of going back.

CHIN: Mmm. Older people in Vietnam?

DO: Older people in Vietnam, yes.

CHIN: Mmm. Okay.

DO: The older people that I know here in the U.S. who have come over have nostalgic visions of going back and living out the remaining days in Vietnam, but I think it's—it's really that: It's nostalgia [chuckles] because when you raise the—the opportunity, "Okay, when are you going back? What are we gonna do?"—it's that those days never come, right?

People would dream about it but actually don't really want to do it.

CHIN: Mmm. So a lot of people don't actually end up going back?

DO: Yes. I think there is a—there *is* a minority that—that does that, right?—that goes back for various reasons. Like, I mean, I have a handful of—of older cousins and stuff like that that have gone back, for their own personal reasons, but I—I can't say that that is a widespread phenomenon.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: It is not like what's going on in China right now. China—what's going on in China right now—there's a term called the "sea turtle effect," right? So, essentially, it's Chinese who have gone abroad, who have studied abroad, made their fortunes abroad, had their successes abroad and are now coming home to China to replicate that. I don't see that same phenomenon happening in Vietnam right now.

CHIN: Hmm. I wonder why that is.

DO: I think part of it is that the opportunities to pursue what used to be the American dream in China is far greater in China than it is in Vietnam, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

So I wanted to go to this because you mentioned that you had visited Vietnam recently, but I actually want to go a little bit farther back to when you first came to the United States. Do you have any memory of that? I know that was a long time ago, in your childhood, but—

DO: I actually have very vivid memories of that. I remember my family only having two hours' notice to get to the airport, right? I remember, as it was told to me—let me back up. As it was explained to me, my parents, my dad certainly could see that the end was coming, so he essentially started finding a—an evacuation plan, putting in place an evacuation plan for an extended family, right? So somewhere along the way, I think he bought a boat and, you know, made arrangements for a very large group of people to leave.

And somewhere along the way, the boat got damaged, bombed, confiscated or whatever it is, but those plans all fell apart. And at the very end, it was through his various connections at the embassy and so forth that got him to the airport, where he pled his case with a—a State Department [U.S. Department of State] person for why he should be able to bring his family to the U.S., right?

The story that he tells is a fascinating story of, you know, somebody who is making a case for bringing, you know, 15, 16 people to the U.S., and I can go into that later on, if you like. But upon receiving the approval to bring the family, that person—his name is [Joseph]["Joe" McBride at the State Department, an official. Joe basically tell [sic] him, "Get your family here quickly, within the next few hours, because you're gonna be on—on among the last planes that will be leaving, and those planes will be leaving tonight," right?

So my father would call back home. We were one of the few houses that actually had a phone. He called home. Basically said, "I'm coming right now, and we're just going to turn right around to go to the airport." So we literally had two hours' notice. We left everything behind to make it to the—to the airport.

And by late evening, early morning, right?—it was certainly overnight at that time, we were on one of the last [Lockheed] C-130s to leave Saigon. And this was April 24th-April 25th, 1975. I remember it vividly because it was liter- —it was exactly one month before my birthday. My birthday is May 24th, right?

So we arrived in—at Clark Air Force Base [sic; Clark Air Base] in the Philippines, right? And the U.S. was using Clark as a transshipment location at the time, so refugees were being flown from Vietnam to Clark, and then they're transshipped on to Guam. And the reason why it's so vivid is that as we were getting ready to board the next plane for Guam, I started complaining that I didn't feel well.

CHIN: Mmm.

DO: And as it turned out, I had appendicitis and needed an appendectomy,—

CHIN: Wow.

DO: —an emergency appendectomy. And if this had happened 24 hours before, one or more of us would have been stuck in Vietnam. If it had happened 24 hours later, I would have been on a plane to Guam, and I would have had significant difficulties if not death, because these things happen pretty quickly. So I was a very, very lucky few for—on many dimensions, of being able to leave Vietnam and—and continue on.

So after—after that surgery, we stayed in the Philippines for about a week and eventually made it to Florida. There was refugee camp there, and from there we made it to Maryland for a few weeks, and then really where we settled was in Oklahoma. So we arrived in Oklahoma literally with twenty dollars to our name and a change of clothes, simply because my father had a friend that was in Oklahoma. When you're starting over again, it's as good a place to start over as any, right?

So my—upon arriving in Oklahoma, my father worked on an assembly line for I guess one or two other companies before working for GM [General Motors Company]. That's where he spent most of his—his life in Oklahoma, working on an assembly line for General Motors, making cars. My mom was a secretary for the heath department, right?

CHIN: At GM?

DO: For the health department, the city of the county health department, the state health department. And to make ends meet, my mom would—would essentially take on other jobs—you know, cooking or—no, not cooking—sewing and so forth.

And I would—since I was the oldest and would be coming home from school much earlier than my parents did, so it was upon me to essentially start making dinner for the family and making sure that the siblings did their homework and all of that stuff, right? And that's how I used to – really started to

learn to cook and enjoy good food. When you—when necessity calls, you got to do what you can, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm. What kind of food did you cook?

DO: A lot of it was—a lot of French food and American food. And, frankly, we just kind of made up stuff over the years.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And because the number one priority was to learn English for me and my siblings, we just watched a lot of TV and read everything that we were able to get our hands on, right? And through a strange series of happenstances, all of this was happening at a time when modern immunology was taking place as we know it today, right? So I was reading things in *TIME* magazine and—and the papers about modern cancer and modern immunology and so forth, so I was beginning to ask my parents about those—what I was reading. And they, of course, couldn't answer my questions.

But my mom worked not too far away from where the medical school was, so she just took it upon herself to contact various professors and others there and just took me around to see anybody that as willing to take any time to talk to a little kid, right? And this was about 1980 or so, was when this was happening. And so in early 1980, I met a professor who was intrigued that this little snot-nosed kid was asking these questions, so he just took me under his wings and—and from that, I started working in his lab, right? So I started doing medical research when I was 14, and that has made all the difference ever since.

CHIN: Wow. And which college was this?

DO: This was at the University of Oklahoma School [sic; College] of Medicine and at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation.

CHIN: Was it very close to your house?

DO: No, it was across town, right? So it was—during high school, I would go off to my school in the morning, go to a [magnet school? 22:04] in the afternoon, and then spent the rest of

the afternoon going to this to kind of do my research, but then I spent my summers doing—going there to do my research as well.

CHIN: Mmm. I definitely want to come back—

DO: Little did I know at the time—I'm sorry, go ahead.

CHIN: Oh, that's all right. You can keep going.

DO: Yeah. But little did I know at the time the questions I was asking and the research that I was doing at the time—we didn't have a name for it; we didn't know what to call it, but nowadays it's known as immuno-oncology, right? And so essentially what I was trying to do was how to stimulate the body's own immune system to fight off cancer cells, right? And when you fast-forward the clock 30 years, when I became the chief strategy officer for Merck [& Co., Inc.]—when I arrived at Merck—Merck wanted to exit the oncology business and wanted to out-license this tiny little molecule that no one really understood that was being worked on in R&D [research and development], right? And I looked at the situation and said, "This is absolutely insane that we would try to do something like this" and took about a year to reverse all of those decisions.

And the fact that I point to that basically made a lot of it happen, again, has to do with the stuff I started doing when I was 14, because that's what I was—my research area, and as a result, I completely understood what Merck—what was possible with this molecule that nobody fully understood and fully appreciated.

CHIN: Mmm. That's so interesting. I want to talk more about the immunology business, but I want to go back a little bit first. You said that your father had to basically plead his case with the State Department. And can you go and tell me a little bit about what his story was?

DO: Sure. You have to imagine a situation where it's chaos everywhere, right? It's chaos. Everyone could see the end was coming. And those who had any connections, any means to try to get into the embassy or to the airport used them, right? And my dad doesn't talk too much about *how* he

got into the airport, but just the mere fact that he was there, making his—pleading his case was a testament that he actually knew somebody.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: So he stood in line for a long time to—to wait to see a State Department official to make a—a request to be—to be evacuated. The person in front of him was a soldier, who was there with his Vietnamese girlfriend and her mom, right? And so he made it to the table to see Joe McBride, and he made his case for why he should be able to take his girlfriend and her mom to—to the U.S., to which Joe then got very angry, raised his voice, and basically told the soldier that there is just no way that's going to happen. He basically said, "Well, I'll let you take your girlfriend because you knocked her up and got her pregnant," right?—"but there's just no way I can let you take her mother as well," right? So based upon that, he basically said, "Now be happy with what you have here. Now, just get outta my sight" and sent him off on his way, right? And so literally, by this time Joe was very agitated, very angry and just sent the soldier, an American soldier off on his way, right?

So my father then was next, and Joe basically looked at him and was like, "Okay, boy, tell me your story," right? And my father then had to make his case, to which he said, "Please, sir, before I tell you my story, let me essentially give—give you a bit more fact," right?—"because if I"—Let me repeat. "Boy, tell me how many people you want to take," right? And then before—my father then said, "Well, sir, before I answer your question, please let me tell you my story and why I can—I believe this would be a good thing for my family and for the U.S.," or something to that effect, right?

And so after a few minutes of telling the story, Joe just basically looked at him and just said, "Boy, I think—I know you're"—something to the effect that "you're a bright and resource- —resourceful—and I hope you will be successful in my country," to which he then just took a stamp and stamped, "Approved," right?

CHIN: Mmm.

DO: And my father was, like, beyond tears, right? He was expecting to be rejected. He was expecting to be able—*not* to be able to take everyone that he wants to take; therefore, have to start to justify, negotiate how many people he can take, right? And here, all Joe did was, just based upon the story that my father told of what he's done and how he's—and so forth—all he did was stamped "Approved" and then sent him on his way and told him to get the family to the airport quickly, right?

CHIN: Wow. So—

DO: And my father has never forgotten that person, right?—

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: —Joe McBride, so that when you fast-forward the clock many, many years later, it was in 1991 or '92, is when he—my parents retired to the [Washington] D.C. area, and they re- —reinitiated their quest of finding Joe McBride, and eventually they did find him, right? And then they just—they have been good friends ever since, right? So they would get together for meals on a periodic basis. These are Christmas, holiday cards, presents, exchange - exchanging friends.

CHIN: Wow. Do you know when Joe McBride move back to the United States? Was it also in 1975?

DO: Oh, I assume so. He was part of the State Department staff that was there. I'm sure that was part of the staff that was evacuated as Saigon fell.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: He went on to other countries, of course, right? And he has since retired from the State Department. But, yeah, he and my parents have kept up. Our families have gotten to be quite good friends over the years.

CHIN: Do they still talk?

DO: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. *I* still send Joe Christmas presents every year.

CHIN: Wow. What is that relationship like?

DO: Well, it's just—you know, at the—when they first—when my father first tracked down Joe, Joe of course has no memory of this, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: But he—when they talked about it, they just found that they have a lot of things in common, in interests and perspective on life, and I'm sure that's why they continue to be friends.

CHIN: What was the initial meeting like between Joe and your father when they first reconnected?

DO: I—I'm not sure. I wasn't there, right? So you can imagine how—you can imagine a situation where my dad was very emotional and very grateful [chuckles], and I'm sure Joe just had to—was a bit perplexed and bewildered as to why is this grown man here talking to me and thanking me for something that I don't even remember I did.

CHIN: Mm-hm. So this is when—when he's pleading his case, this was at the State Department building in Saigon?

DO: I'm sure it was at the airport. The airport was where a lot of activity was going—in Saigon, in Tân Sơn Nhất [International Airport]. [Transcriber's note: More commonly known as Tan Son Nhut.] That's the name of the airport. April 1975.

CHIN: What is the name of it?

DO: Tân Sơn Nhất [TAHN SAHN NYAHT]. I think that's how you pronounce it. Tân Sơn Nhất is still the name of the airport that's there today. It hasn't been changed.

CHIN: It's still there today. Wow.

And so who were the other people who came to the United States with you and your family, your mother and father?

DO: It was my parents, all my siblings, my dad's parents, some of my dad's siblings and one of my mom's siblings.

CHIN: Do you all—did you all move to Oklahoma?

DO: No. No, just—just my immediate family and my mom's brother. [cross-talk; unintelligible; 31:47] my mom's—

CHIN: Where did the rest of the family—

DO: Well, my—my-my immediate family and my mom's brother moved to Oklahoma, and the importance—the—the reason it was so important to get my mom's brother out is that he was of that age where if he had stayed he would have been drafted and—and had to go into the army and so forth and so on. So that's—that was a big relief, to be able to get him out. And when we moved to Oklahoma, he then went on to college and so forth. The others all stayed [cross-talk; unintelligible; 32:17].

CHIN: What was your mom's brother's name?

DO: Phat, P-h-a-t, Nguyen. He's now a—

CHIN: And where did he go to college after?

DO: University of Oklahoma, and then eventually he spent his whole career and his whole life in Silicon Valley. The last I heard, he was working for Nvidia [Corporation].

Then the rest of our group, more from my father's side of the family—and that side of the family essentially had settled in—in Maryland, so that's where they all essentially settled, [unintelligible; 32:56] D.C. area. My—my father had a sister that was working there already. She had left Vietnam well before the end of the war, right? And so that's—the rest of the family kind of settled in Maryland around that nucleus.

CHIN: Mmm. When did she leave Vietnam?

DO: Oh, I—I wouldn't—many years before the end of the war, along with—along with—

CHIN: You said that you were—

DO: Okay, go ahead.

CHIN: Oh. You said that you were in the Philippines for about a week. Do you remember where you were in the Philippines?

DO: Yeah, Clark Air Base, Clark Air Force Base.

CHIN: Oh, so you were at the Air Force Base the whole time.

DO: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

CHIN: And was the appendectomy towards the beginning of that, or—

DO: I mean, literally we arrived in the middle of the night one day, and we were—the plan was to be there for 24 or 48 hours. That's how the U.S. government was—was moving people through, right? And so it was within 24—I think it was 24, certainly within 48 hours of our landing in—at Clark that we were getting ready to board the next plane, and that's when I started complaining of being—of not feeling well.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And so everything was—was at Clark, right? Clark—I don't know if you've been to Clark or know much about Clark, right? But it's one of the largest bases the United States have anywhere in the world outside of the U.S.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: So when we [cross-talk; unintelligible; 34:40]—

CHIN: It's since closed down, hasn't it?

DO: Yes, Clark was closed down well over a decade ago, although there's discussions of opening it up again, given some of the craziness that's going on in Asia. But it's closed down long, long ago, right? And the infrastructure there has been used by FedEx [Corporation] and a few other companies for—as a logistics hub, and there is still space there for a lot of other things, so it was a huge facility.

CHIN: So what was happening when you were in the Philippines after the first couple of days?

DO: Well, I was laid up in a hospital, right? I—I had an emergency appendectomy, and then I was in the hospital for a week to recover. And during that time, the rest of my family were just kind of waiting. And you have the picture in your mind: a sea of tents, right? Because there's—all of this was happening very, very quickly. Whether it's in the Philippines, in Guam or various refugee camps in the U.S., there were no fixed infrastructure to kind of move the hundreds of thousands of people that were moved, right? And so what the military did was just pitched up—pitched regular military tents, right? And so our family was, you know, stuffed into one or more of those tents.

CHIN: Mmm. And so the initial evacuation plan that fell through—you mentioned that there was a boat—was it a military boat?

DO: No, no, it's a—it's a civilian boat, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm. And so was it—

DO: [cross-talk; unintelligible; 36:37]—

CHIN: —your father who was—

DO: Yes, my father essentially made arrangements to purchase the boat or lease it or whatever, right?—so that we could just bring a lot of people out.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Were you going to bring more people besides just the 12 people who came, or was it the same group of people?

DO: Absolutely, absolutely, absolutely.

CHIN: Does your father talk at all about what happened to the rest of the group?

DO: Not—not really. I mean, maybe of the years he did, but I just don't remember too much of it, right? But the group—my mother was the oldest of 13, right? And my father is the oldest of five or so, so you can just imagine how that—those numbers multiply very quickly when kids and so forth are involved.

CHIN: Yeah. So this story has been retold to you by your father?

DO: Yeah.

CHIN: And, of course, some of it is your own memory, too.

DO: Which could be faulty [chuckles], right?

CHIN: [Chuckles.] Yeah, well, I guess that's how it always is.

So when you were in Florida, do you remember the name of the refugee camp?

DO: Sure. It was Eglin Air Force Base.

CHIN: Okay.

DO: E-g-l-i-n, Eglin. It's one of several of the refugee camps that the U.S. set up at the time.

CHIN: Mmm.

DO: We were there only for—

CHIN: Remind me again how much—

DO: Go ahead.

CHIN: Oh, yeah, I was just going to ask how long you were there for.

DO: Yeah, we were there probably for two or three months, for all the paperwork and everything to—to be worked through and for everybody to be vetted, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm. Do you remember much about that time?

DO: Not really. It just kind of flew by, in many ways. I just remember—first of all, I was still somewhat recovering from the appendectomy,—

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: —and frankly, there wasn't that much there to do, especially if you were a kid [chuckles], right? You're in a sea of tents, and the days were all just kind of—you're just waiting, and it wasn't like you could go and hang out on the beach.

CHIN: So after Florida and Maryland, did you fly to Oklahoma?

DO: We drove to Oklahoma, I'm pretty sure, yes.

CHIN: Did you drive with just your family, or were there other people too?

DO: Yeah. Well, no, there was just—we were all packed in, right? So by this point, we were seven people, right? The—the four of us: my parents and my mom's brother, so there were seven of us that were packed into a little car, and we drove from Maryland down to Oklahoma.

CHIN: And you lived with your father's friend?

DO: No, I think—I remember living—the first place that we lived in was this tiny, two-bedroom apartment in a not a very nice part of town, but that was a necessary thing that just needed to be done so that we can start school in September or whenever it was, sometime in the fall, so we can start school. We were there probably for a year or so, and frankly that's probably all we could afford at the time. And from there I think we moved to another house for a little bit before we actually bought a house that—that I grew up in.

CHIN: What was it like growing in Oklahoma?

DO: In many ways, it was a fabulous place to grow up, right?—because there wasn't much for you to do or—and therefore get into trouble, right? And stereotypes of rednecks and bigotry and so forth—we really didn't experience that, to be honest. We were mostly welcomed with open arms, and, you know, I made friends, and—and so forth.

And when I was in high school, I was the—I was certainly—I wouldn't say popular but certainly well known in the school, in the class, right? Academically, I was—you know, I was the valedictorian of the class, so academically everybody knew I did well. I was also, over the years, editor of, like, the

newspaper, the yearbook, photography editor, and so was quite actively involved in the social scene at the school and, at the same time, very busy doing my research and all of this other stuff, so, like, lots going on that prevents you from getting into trouble.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What was the name of your high school?

DO: Northwest Classen [High School].

CHIN: Were there a lot of other high schools nearby?

DO: Well, not so nearby, right? [Chuckles.] High school [cross-talk; unintelligible; 42:37]—

CHIN: Mm-hm, because it's pretty small.

DO: [unintelligible; 42:41]. Yeah, it was. My—my high school class was about 500 or so, right? So the total high school was maybe 2,000, 3,000, somewhere in there.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What was your high school like in general?

DO: It was a fairly standard, middle-class, middle-America school, right? And back in those days, I remember people would pull up into—into the high school parking lot in their pickup trucks, and some of them would have guns in—on their gun rack in the back, right? And that was a fairly standard thing back then.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: Right? And nowadays I'm told that when you go back to the school, there are metal detectors and so forth. The neighborhood has deteriorated—the usual decline of cities. But back then, it was a average, middle-class neighborhood. We were just an average family trying to make do.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

So you said that you watched a lot of TV shows to help learn English. What kind of TV shows did you watch?

DO: Cartoons were great when you were a kid.

CHIN: Yeah.

DO: And I watched a lot of news, right? My siblings would watch things like [*The*] *Beverly Hillbillies* and stuff like that, right?—just senseless entertainment for the time—at the time.

CHIN: Do you still speak Vietnamese with your family?

DO: Not really. My—my brother is much, much better than I, partly because he married a Vietnamese woman, so they speak Vietnamese at home and so forth. But I lost most everything. I can understand what's being said. I can understand what my parents say, but I mostly speak English.

CHIN: Mmm. Is there much of a Vietnamese community in Oklahoma, where you lived?

DO: There was. I can't say that we went out of our way to interact and be part of that community. To me it was just, you know, we're here; we're just going to—"assimilate" is not the right word. We're just going to be part of wherever we are, right? We didn't try to segregate ourselves off into a separate community.

CHIN: So what sort of community did you find in high school, then, when you were in Oklahoma City?

DO: Well, most of my friends were Americans, so, I mean, I don't remember having more than a handful of Vietnamese friends, right? But, again, going to the high school where I went, there probably wasn't more than, you know, a single-digit percentage of the class that were Vietnamese, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

So can you talk a little bit more about your research in immunology, then, when you were in high school?

DO: Well, I was trying to figure out how to activate a certain kind of immune cells, called natural killer cells, and—and macrophages and get them to identify and attack different kinds of cancer cells. Breast cancer was primarily what I was working on. And so I was trying to essentially use different—

[cytocines?; 46:28] different things to see if I could activate certain things, to activate the activity of these immune cells, and that's essentially what I tried to do, in a—in a nutshell.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What was the relationship like between you and the professor at the University that you were working with?

DO: He just treated me like any member of his—in—in his lab. And, of course, everybody else in his lab was much older and so forth, but he just treated me like a member of the lab. In many ways, I was just free arms and legs, helping with the research, which was perfect, right? I was learning; he was getting something out of my work. He was getting something out of my questioning and so forth, right? So I learned a lot from that, right?

And certainly that is what I've tried to pass on to my own children. My daughter, who is 16, turned 16 this summer—she has just spent the summer at Stanford Medical School [sic; Stanford University School of Medicine], working in a research lab there that's doing stem cell research, right? She started out doing exactly the same kinds of things that I did when I was 14.

CHIN: Mmm. And so you started school at Dartmouth in 1984?

DO: I did. I did not graduate from high school early, frankly because I was having too much fun and I didn't see the reason to—to go early. I started Dartmouth in '84. I was a pre-med. Had every intentions of going on to medical school, so while I was at Dartmouth, I was also in a hurry. I was a double major in biochemistry and economics. I went abroad for the gov- —FSP [foreign studies program] in Budapest [Hungary], the music FSP in London [England]. I did an honors thesis as well.

And on top of it, I decided to do—to take a detour to [Amos] Tuck [School of Business] to get an MBA [master of business administration], because I realized doctors were the worst managers around, and in the early days of managed care, being an average doctor with no management skills was not something I wanted to be. So that's why I deferred Stanford Medical School, went off to Tuck, get my MBA, with every intention of going back to

Stanford to finish up the work. But then life intervened, and I took a different course.

But I owe everything that I am today to Dartmouth, right?—because Dartmouth gave me the loans, the scholarships, the opportunity to go and—go and do something dif- —very different, right? There are many—I can trace back everything that's happened in my career and life to a few key decisions, one of which was to go to Dartmouth instead of going to Stanford [University] undergrad. If I had gone to Stanford undergrad, I'm sure I'd be doing something different, standing at a different place right now. But the decision to go to Dartmouth opened up lots of doors. Dartmouth gave me the opportunity to go and do all these things.

CHIN: What made you decide to choose Stanford—I mean Dartmouth over Stanford?

DO: As I looked around, I knew I would get a great education anywhere, right?—Harvard [University], Stanford and so forth. And frankly, at that point in time, I was too young, too cocky and so forth. I was pretty sure I would be able to get in any of those schools because of—because of my work and my research, because of my ranking internationally as, you know—and so forth. I was somewhat recruited by the various schools. I—I knew I could go to a good number of these schools, so to me it was not about the education only, the institution.

Dartmouth just stood out as being a different place. It was smaller, smaller. There was—the middle of nowhere, right? And it just kind of offered that little something that I just couldn't really put my fingers on, that goes beyond just a—an academic education, right?—which I would have picked up at Harvard or Stanford. And that was a tough decision, right?—because I had a couple of really good friends who went on to Stanford as well. In Oklahoma, not that many people leave the state, right? But I had friends who were more academically oriented, gifted, who come from families that value that as well, right? So birds of a feather do flock together, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And so good friends went on to Stanford. One went on to Brown [University]. And everybody expected me to go to Stanford because I really did love that school. It was a fabulous place. But in the end, I decided to apply early decision to Dartmouth because I just thought about the—there was something very different about the—about Dartmouth.

CHIN: How did your parents feel about you going away to college?

DO: They were ecstatic, right?—because for my parents, their entire goal in life was to make sure that all kids had a college degree. They did not have college degrees, and so they wanted all kids to have college degrees. It's your typical immigrant American story, right? And so the fact that by the time I graduated high school I was the number one ranked biochemist internationally in my graduating class, right? I entered all these different fairs and competitions and so forth, so I was the number one ranked student in my field,—

CHIN: Wow.

DO: —going on to an Ivy League school—

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: —to be a pre-med with plans to go on—to become a doctor, right? This was a parent's—an immigrant parent's dream, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: That's [unintelligible; 52:52]. I still remember the conversation five years later or—yeah, five years later, when I called up and said, "You know, I just finished—I'm finishing my MBA. I've decided I'm *not* going to go back to Stanford. I'm not going to be a physician. Instead, I'm going to go and be a consultant," right? That was a bit of—a bit more difficult conversation.

CHIN: Mmm. Was it difficult to convince them that your change of decision was the right thing to do?

DO: No, it's just they didn't understand what it was I wanted to do, so it just took a little bit of conversation. At the end of the day, my parents have always said, "It's your life. You have to decide what you want to do," right? They never questioned, really, anything that any one of us did, right?—because they believe that we have to decide for ourselves, right? But like all parents,—I mean, I'm not sure I have that kind of fortitude just to have one of my children—let my children decide for themselves what they want to do. But they—they asked questions and made sure I thought things through. I mean, I've learned a lot from my parents. That makes me who I am today, and I'm trying to pass that on to my children, right?

So you would expect that my parents, having left everything behind, a very good life behind, to be disappointed, bitter, whatever it is when we had to start over with practically nothing. They weren't at all. They just kind of accepted life is what it is. This is a speck in time that my parents had to become refugees, pick up and leave. And so their point of view is, like, "Don't worry about the past. It's all about the future. And the future will be what you make of it, so if you work hard, things will be fine."

CHIN: Mmm. And you feel—

DO: And the reason—

CHIN: —like you're on the same page?

DO: Absolutely. That's why for me it's always about the future, right? The past is—is that. Just leave it there.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

So can you tell me a little bit about what societies and activities you did at Dartmouth?

DO: Sure. I was in the Nathan Smith Society. I was president of the Nathan Smith Society, which is essentially the pre-med society. I was in [Chi] Heorot, right, right? Hard to believe, but yes, I was in Heorot.

CHIN: [Chuckles.]

DO: I was also in Casque and Gauntlet, and I'm also somewhat remembered on campus as one of the creators of the Safe Sex kit, which back at the time was quite the controversy. Little did we know what we were doing then. This was in the early days of AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome). We really didn't understand what was going on, and more im- —certainly, it was not easy to build awareness and educate freewheeling college students on the dangers of—and what the disease is all about. But I helped create this thing called the Safe Sex kit, where we put together information about AIDS and HIV [human immunodeficiency virus], packaged together with condoms and lubricants and other things to essentially make a good marketing tool. And overnight, it became a national controversy, right?

CHIN: Mmm.

DO: Because little did we know at the time—it was the first time that college funds were being used to give away from condoms, and *The Dartmouth Review* was a very vocal perhaps more—a bigger voice on campus than it is now. Overnight, it became—you know, it was a controversy. So I eventually went on to, like, *The Today Show*, *The* [*Phil*] *Donahue Show* and other things, trying to essentially explain why this was a good thing to be happening on college campuses. And other college campuses followed suit, of course. And, you know, in time I think it became a non-issue, but at the time it was a big deal.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Who were the other students that were the co-creators of the Safe Sex kit?

DO: Well, it wasn't another student. The other was—the other person is—her name is Beverly Conant Sloane. She was the director of health education at Dick's House at the time. And then it was [Jack H.] "John" Turco, who was director of health services at Dick's House, right? So I worked closely with the two of them to create this thing. And John, or Jack Turco was the one who eventually went on to all these different shows with me back in those days.

Just one second. Hold on. [Silence from 58:01 to 58:11]. All right, sorry about that. I'm back.

CHIN: No problem.

So whose idea was the Safe Sex kit?

DO: You know, I can't say whose idea it was. You know, I—I had a—a work-study job at Dick's House at the time, and this was just one of those things—you know, it's just part of what—we knew what the obj- —what we needed to do, and due to discussions, it somehow came about.

CHIN: How long had you been working with Dick's House prior to this part of your research?

DO: Well, I always had a work-study job on campus, right? I think at first it's—I probably spent a year working in Asian studies. I remember doing that. I also had a job at Kiewit [Computation Center] with computer support and so forth, right? And somehow, somewhere along the way, I made my way down to Dick's House. Oh, I think—the reason is Beverly was one of the advisers or Jack was one of the advisers for the Nathan Smith Society. That's why. And that's how I got to know them and started working at Dick's House as a result of that. So I was president of—

CHIN: What—

DO: Go ahead.

CHIN: I was just going to ask about what kind of work you did besides publicizing the—the kit. So, like, what were the initial stages of creating it?

DO: That is a walk down - that is ancient history that this mind is just not able to recall. I just recall—I recall being part of the Nathan Smith Society freshman year. I was president of the society sophomore year, right? And that's—and it was over the course of the summer between freshman and sophomore year that I spent a lot of time with—with Beverly to basically plan for the activities of the society for the following—for the following year. And I think that was part—it was over the course of those things, the various conversations, that eventually led up to the Safe Sex kit. I'm not even sure if I was officially working at Dick's House at the time, although I was spending a lot of time down there.

CHIN: Mm-hm. So between the reviews [sic; *The Review*], since they had a lot of negative things to say about the Safe Sex kit, and students in the Nathan Smith Society, was there any tension?

DO: Any tension? What kind of tension?

CHIN: Well, I was—actually, I read an article in an older version of—I mean, an older copy of *The Dartmouth*, and it seems like there are a lot of talks on campus between representatives from *The Review* and people from the Nathan Smith Society who were also part of this initiative.

DO: Well, I don't—yeah, I don't remember—I never read *The Dartmouth Review*. I just believe in just doing what I believe is the right thing. I think I believe everybody should just do the right thing, and how can you argue against educating students and providing more information to people, especially when you're on a college campus, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: At the end of the day, I just believe that a great diversity of thought is what's really going to move the world forward, right? And so—I'll come back to your question about the Safe Sex kit. That week, right?—and when everything happened, right?—during the week, I was in New York for *The Today Show* and other things. I remember going to church that Sunday, or maybe the following Sunday, right? And my roommate and I did what we usually do, which is we sit in the front pew at church, and the homily that Sunday was a scathing rebuke of what we were trying to do on campus. It was being portrayed as promoting promiscuity and all this other stuff, right?

And so, of course, everyone in church knew what was being discussed, who was—right? So, people were beginning to scoot away from me from the—people were joking that they were starting to scoot away from me in church, from the pew, because the lightning was going to strike at any moment.

I'm sorry if you're hearing some background noise. For some particular reason, we have the gardeners outside right now. [Both chuckle.] They've [unintelligible; 1:03:04] a perfect time [chuckles]—a perfect time for the garden work.

CHIN: That's okay. So this was the week you were in New York. Which—what year was this?

DO: This would have been 1986.

CHIN: Okay, so this is when you were a sophomore.

DO: I was a sophomore, yeah.

CHIN: Mmm. And what was it like being sort of like one of the main figures, going on *The Today Show* and speaking publicly about it?

DO: Well, it was certainly no- —nothing like I've done before, right? But frankly I just don't think about it. If there is a task to be done, you go and do—do the task.

CHIN: Mm-hm. So you also mentioned that you were a member of Heorot.

DO: Yeah.

CHIN: Can you talk a little bit more about that?

DO: It was a great—for me, it was an absolutely great experience, right? I think many people have to learn to grow up, and I think a fraternity experience helps with that, right? It helps you understand what craziness is, what crazy behavior is. So did I spend my fair share of evenings in basements and so forth? Absolutely, right? But I think from that experience I kind of learned what—also what not to continue doing later on in life. [Both chuckle.] And if you look in my—the brothers, you know, we all kind of turned out okay later on in life.

CHIN: Yeah, more than okay, it seems like. [Chuckles.]

DO: Yeah.

CHIN: No, go ahead.

DO: One of my brothers - good friend, John [B.] Osborne [Class of 1988] is now president of BBDO [Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn]. A number of us have turned out to be okay. We turned out okay in life.

CHIN: Yeah. Well, it must have been an interesting time to be in Heorot because there were a lot of issues with the administration in the late ’80.

DO: [Chuckles.] Yes, we—as one of the officers of the class [chuckles], yes, it certainly was. You know, we were constantly under probation and so forth.

CHIN: So you were one of the officers of the Heorot class, of your year?

DO: Yes, I was. I think I was an executive-at-large, whatever the heck that meant. I think that just meant I was—

CHIN: What does that mean?

DO: —one of the responsible one—yes, I think it was just because I was one of the responsible ones that you can count on to get things done or keep things under control.

CHIN: Mm-hm. So did you have to deal with a lot of logistical issues with the administration then?

DO: I don’t recall having to deal too much directly with the administration.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: But I just—I do recall us constantly being in trouble.

CHIN: Was it nineteen eighty- —

DO: [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:06:34], but I think we—

CHIN: Go ahead.

DO: I mean, I think other houses were as well, right? But I think we were constant—we were certainly the poster child of bad behavior.

CHIN: [Chuckles.] Was it 1985 when the hockey rink was built?

DO: Yes. [Chuckles.] Yes.

CHIN: What was it like back then?

DO: It was—well, there was just crazy things going on [chuckles], right? Boys will be boys, and boys will do crazy things when they've had too much beer. But we got it out of our system.

CHIN: Yeah. Was there a particular reason you wanted to join Heorot or just be in a fraternity in general?

DO: My friends were there. I mean, I was in Richardson [Hall], and that was just a number of the guys in Richardson that I liked and spent time with rushed. I spent a lot of time in Heorot. I spent more time in Heorot, and I liked the people, and I think that's ultimately what it's all about. It's just a sense of community and spending time with people you like.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What was your social life like at Dartmouth besides being in—or prior to rushing?

DO: Frankly, not much. I was not the most well-rounded person. I did not get as much out of the Dartmouth experience as others have, did, or I could have. if there was on- —I mean, I don't look back. I mean, I have no regrets, right? But if there's one thing I could do differently is I would have taken more time. I would have taken more classes. I would have done more things I didn't know and study things I didn't know right?

And part of the reason for it—as I mentioned before, I was in a hurry. I was a double major in biochemistry and economics. I'd taken enough courses for a minor in music. I had taken the maximum number of classes you can at Dartmouth, right?—because there are only so many number of terms where you can take an extra class. And I did an honors thesis, and I did an MBA, did all of that in five years, right?

CHIN: Yeah, so much in five years!

DO: And so the early years—and on top of it, I worked probably 20 hours a week as well, right? So the early years—there really wasn't much time for socializing and so forth other than just the weekend parties or whatever it is down at Heorot or other fraternities. And then towards the latter couple of years, I was spending more and more time down at Tuck. And, frankly, by that point in time I could - grades. I wasn't too worried about grades. I could—academically I was doing fine. So that's when I really started spending more time with my friends at C&G and so forth. So to this day, my closest friends now were my two roommates at—at Richardson and many of the friends I made at—during my time at C&G.

CHIN: What was your involvement like with C&G?

DO: C&G just brought together a group of campus leaders, and we just kind of enjoyed the companionship of the group, right? So for me, it was a mind-expanding opportunity, to kind of spend time and get to know so many talented people. And for me, it was absolutely great. I mean, I hung out there as much as I can and spent a lot of time with people, right?—from there. And literally, I still keep in touch with probably a third of the C&G class that I spent a lot of time with, right? Many of them came to my wedding, right? We went to their weddings, that kind of stuff.

CHIN: Sorry, there's kind of a loud noise.

DO: Sorry about that. No, it's just a group of people we spent a lot of time with, right? Many of them came to my wedding, and we went to—and I went to many of their weddings.

CHIN: So aside from Casque and Gauntlet, you were—were you also in the Handel Society [of Dartmouth College]?

DO: I *was* in the Handel Society, yes, early on. And, again, like I said, I was—I [had? did? 1:11:27] enough to essentially have a minor in music if there were minors back then, right? So I was—I love music. There's a difference between music as a vocation rather than an avocation. [Chuckles.]

CHIN: Mm-hm. When did you first start doing musical activities?

DO: Well, it was in school. I was in church choir.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Was the Handel Society a big influence on your time at Dartmouth?

DO: Some. I think it was *an* influence. It's one of the—one of the activities I devoted time to, and I enjoyed it, but I can't say it was one of the defining experiences I've had on campus.

CHIN: Mmm. What would the defining experience be for you?

DO: For me, it really is C&G, Casque and Gauntlet. To me, that was the capstone of my Dartmouth experience. It was my time with the guys in Richardson. It was an all-male dorm at the time, right? And many Dartmouth people I keep up with nowadays were from the combination, somewhere along the way, of Richardson, C&G and Heorot.

CHIN: Were a lot of the dorms gender segregated in the '80s?

DO: No, no, not at all. We were—Richardson was one of the few that was still single sex because the facilities themselves were quite challenged, right? It was one of the oldest dorms, if not *the* oldest dorm on campus, so it was very difficult to try to make it co-ed.

CHIN: Yeah. I know there were also quite a bit of protests regarding gender issues in the—I think it was 1987 in particular? Was that at all anything in the background of your Dartmouth experience, or not really?

DO: I don't recall that being one of the big issues, around gender. I mean, I think the defining protest when I was there was essentially around apartheid, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And the—the movement—essentially, the shanty was built on—on the Green, right? And there were high emotions on both sides of that issue.

CHIN: Were you at all involved in the protests, or had you been thinking a lot about the protests at the time?

DO: I was not. I was not. Like I said, I was in a hurry. I was—I was – crazy course load and busy and different things. Like I said, I did not get everything out of the Dartmouth education that I would have liked to have had, right? And participating in different social movements I think would have been one of those things that I could have benefited from.

CHIN: So looking back on those protests now, do you have any thoughts about what you would have done if you had participated, or like to have gotten involved?

DO: Frankly, I just don't even think about it, to be honest, right?

CHIN: Mmm.

DO: It's in the past.

CHIN: Mm-hm. But you see political involvement as sort of an experience that you missed out on?

DO: No, I think it's about leadership more than anything else, right? And it's about—and that's where I spend a lot of time with my daughter and children on, is this whole notion of just go and do the right thing. The learning and having a judgment on what the right thing is, is an important values-establishing thing that I can do as a parent, right?—and as you try to pursue the right thing, what difference between leading and following. And certainly, I did not have a full appreciation of that during my Dartmouth years, and it was only well later in my professional career that I fully developed the leadership understanding and—you know, that I needed to do what I do for a living, right?

CHIN: Mmm.

DO: Had I started earlier, I would have probably understand—understood more of the importance of leadership, of the importance of working with others, leading through others and so forth. And frankly, just maturity, right? But, again, no permanent damage, right? [Both chuckle.]

CHIN: When did you go on the music study abroad program?

DO: That was spring of ’86, I believe, right? Was it—

CHIN: Spring of ’86.

DO: Yes, spring of ’86.

CHIN: Interesting. So that’s sort of when the ROTC [Reserve Officers’ Training Corps] reforms were happening at Dartmouth, so I guess you weren’t there for any of those administrative issues.

DO: I guess that explains why I don’t remember any of that. [Both chuckle.]

CHIN: What was the study abroad like? Was it a large group?

DO: It was a relatively small group. It was, well, about 15 of us. It was the first time it was being offered, so there were certainly kinks that we were still trying to work through, but for me, it was a great experience. I mean, for somebody who loves music, having the opportunity to go to London, attend so many different musical performances—I mean, we had to write a criticism for—for—music criticism class. I think on average, we had to write a criticism a day, which meant we had to attend—

CHIN: Wow.

DO: —a musical performance a day, on average.

CHIN: Which genre were these performances in?

DO: I’m sorry?

CHIN: Which genre of music?

DO: Oh, it’s everything. A lot of classical, of course, so we spent a lot of time on the South Bank. Some opera thrown in there, because those were things that were cheap enough for a poor student to be able to get to. We made it to a few West End performances, musicals and so forth, but those were few and far in between.

CHIN: What kind of music did you listen to in college?

DO: A good bit of classical. Back then, New Age—Windham Hill [Records] was fairly new. And your typical, you know, pop-rock at the time. I loved music from the ’60s and ’70s—‘60s primarily, so I listened to a lot of that. The same music that my children listen to—have to put up with now.

CHIN: [Chuckles.] Do your children like that kind of music too?

DO: Well, my daughter is gaining greater appreciation for it. I mean, she’s certainly—my children love current pop music, as all children—all teenagers do, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: But my children have probably a wider genre exposure than others, simply because—you know, what I like.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Was it difficult taking a break from all of your major requirements that you had to do when you were on the study abroad?

DO: The way I think I planned it was that all of the classes when I was abroad was fulfilling some kind of distributive requirement, right? So I think—and so that was part of it. But then we were just having a lot of fun, right? And so for me, this was my first time really being abroad for any extended period of time. And so it’s—I was soaking it all up.

CHIN: And so the government program in Budapest was the second study abroad that you did?

DO: Yep, yep.

CHIN: How was that like?

DO: That—that was probably—would rank up there as one of the best educational experiences I had at Dartmouth because of the experiential learning that we had. This was before the Iron Curtain fell, right? And so this was the only place in the Soviet bloc where western style economics was taught. So the best students from—from the Soviet bloc countries were

going there to study. But for us—you know, we just spent a lot of time down at the bar every night, buying beers for everybody and just having discussions with everybody there, right? So we bought beers. We got into deep debates and discussions, and that's how we got to—we expanded our horizons and our perspectives by just talking to other people and learning a lot from other people. We traveled extensively throughout the eastern bloc at the time, and it was—it was phenomenal.

CHIN: Did you interact much with the other international students?

DO: We did. I mean, we basically were having beers with them practically every night, and we traveled with some of them.

CHIN: Where else did you travel?

DO: Well, we—this was in Budapest, so we traveled throughout Hungary up to the Czech Republic, eastern—East Germany at the time. Not Czech Republic, Czechoslovakia at the time, and then up to East Germany. Some went south towards Yugoslavia. I did not make it down that way. But then I spent some time traveling through the usual—and Eurailing and backpacking trips somewhere along the way.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What did you do during these trips?

DO: [Chuckles.] Had fun like everybody else.

CHIN: Yeah.

DO: See the world, go to see and do new things. [unintelligible; 1:22:52]—

CHIN: Are there any experiences that particularly stand out to you?

DO: In the middle of nowhere, Czechoslovakia. We were in Prague. And somewhere along the way, someone got the bright idea of, "Well, why don't we go hiking in the High Tatras?" So we said, "Okay, sure. Why not?" at the time. So we just took a train to this town that we were told that's where—if you want to go hiking, that's where you go.

So we got to this town, and of course we got off the train, we looked around. There were no signs, nothing that would give us any indication of where do we start to find a trail to go hiking in the Tatras, right? So we were wandering around, obviously very lost. And then from nowhere, a guy came up, started speaking to us in fluent English, asking us if we were lost, if we needed help and so forth, right? We explained what we wanted to do, and he says, "Oh, I'm going hiking myself." Why don't we come along and so forth.

As it turned out, this guy was a professor—no, he was a professor. He had gone to school at Columbia [University], came home because his mother was sick, and was stuck when the Curtain closed, and he couldn't leave anymore, right? So—and so he continued his studies at home, became a professor, I believe, and so forth, right?

The reason it sticks out in my mind is that this was a highly, highly educated person, who was perfectly content with his circumstances that were less than ideal. It could be far better, far more than what it was, but he was perfectly content with life as it is, right? And the only thing he really wanted or missed from not being in the U.S. was having a foam mat that he could put under his sleeping bag for when he goes camping.

CHIN: Wow.

DO: And so, of course, that's what we sent him when we got home, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: But it was—it just kind of taught me that—it just reiterates the lesson I learned from my parents, which is, you know, just things are the way they are, and it's not about what could have been; it is much more about what do you make out of what's here now to make it better for the future, right? And he was perfectly doing that. And it's just the—and the basic niceties of people, right?—anywhere around the world, because here's a guy who found a bunch of college students and just kind of took us under his care.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What kind of classes were you taking during the gov. program?

DO: The first was Hungarian, which was, for me, completely wasted and lost because I'm a linguistic moron, and so I did not get very far and don't remember much from that class. But then the rest were history and—and government, some economics in there.

CHIN: Mmm. And you also said you did research in the—or a work-study in the Asian—East Asian department?

DO: Asian Studies, right. It's your typical work-study job: filing, copying, that kind of stuff.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Did you have any other involvement with Asian Studies at all?

DO: No, not—not really, not really.

CHIN: Mmm. I was looking in the Dartmouth yearbook at the Dartmouth Asian organization. Were you involved with that society?

DO: No. To be honest, I just don't identify as Asian, right? It's just—for me, it's—I'm first and foremost an American [chuckles], right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And then—to me, it's about inclusive—and I just—the color of anybody's skin just doesn't really factor in, to be honest.

CHIN: Mm-hm. It seems like the Nathan Smith Society was one of the—one of the other important experiences while you were at Dartmouth.

DO: Yes. I mean, I think [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:27:59]—

CHIN: And do you think—

DO: But I used it to try to make it more realistic. Basically, I tried to help the other members really understand what a future in

medicine looks like, right? So I became much more active under my—what I was trying to do.

CHIN: Mm-hm. And so did you become involved with that right when you got to Dartmouth?

DO: I did. I don't know how, but somehow I—I found the group, or they found me.

CHIN: Mm-hm. And aside from being busy with all of your classes and your two majors, what was campus climate like for you kind of just more in general, besides—and I see you weren't really part of a lot of the political protests, but—

DO: Yeah, I just really just had groups of friends, and I just kind of hung out with my friends when I can. I tutored a lot of people in the areas that I knew something about. My good friend, John [B.] Replogle [pronounced REP-low-gull; Class of 1988], who is a Dartmouth trustee now—[Chuckles.] Anytime we get together, he would remind me, and everybody—je tells everybody that the only reason he's doing what he's doing now is because I tutored him and prevented him from failing in calculus,—

CHIN: [Chuckles.]

DO: —which is stretching the truth, but I did spend a good bit of time helping John with his calculus.

CHIN: Did you have a tutoring job on campus, or you just tutored your friends?

DO: I don't remember having a tutoring job. I just—for me, tutoring others was just, for me, a good way of learning. If I have to explain to somebody else something, it means I just have to become clear about it, myself.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: Study groups are always good for that.

CHIN: Yeah.

So we were talking a little bit earlier about the fraternity culture on campus. I was looking at what was happening in the ’80s, and I also read something about a Saigon party. I just thought it was kind of interesting because I’d never seen anything about that before, and there was a big picture about it in the yearbook. Was that a thing that people went to?

DO: I’m sorry, the what party?

CHIN: Saigon party. I think it was 1987. It was at SAE [Sigma Alpha Epsilon].

DO: I—I certainly don’t remember that, nor do I recall it being a big deal.

CHIN: Hmm. That’s interesting. It didn’t seem like it necessarily was, but there was a big picture and, like, there’s a big spread about it in one of the yearbooks that—yeah, I was just wondering if it was or wasn’t a big deal. The yearbook seemed to make it seem that way, so—

But do you feel like there’s a pretty strong alumni connection in your own frat?

DO: I think it’s really about individuals, right? I can’t say I keep up with everybody in my group, right? But one of my best men was in—was in the fraternity and—and so forth.

CHIN: So what was your senior year like at Dartmouth?

DO: My senior year was spent down at Tuck, right? So my senior year was really about classwork down at Tuck with my new—meeting a new group of people down at Tuck, and then everything I did at the college was with my C&G friends and with my Richardson friends.

CHIN: Mmm. So this was 1989 when you were at Tuck?

DO: Nineteen eighty-eight, right? Because this was a 3-2 program [a program option for a dual-degree program at Dartmouth]. My senior year, undergrad, was my first year at Tuck.

CHIN: Mm-hm. And so then the second year—you finished Tuck in 1989.

DO: Right.

CHIN: Ah. I see. So was there a big difference between your life in general being at Tuck versus when you were an undergrad?

DO: No, not really. My first year at Tuck—frankly, I didn't work that hard, to be honest, because by that point in time I—I couldn't really figure out what to do academically, and so it just didn't require much more—what really required much more work (and I didn't have the maturity to do this) was spending time socially with other classmates, study groups and so forth, right? Because by that point in time, I had senioritis. I was there on a mission, which is get the work done, and I wasn't necessarily on the mission of developing the deepest relationships with my Tuck classmates.

And so looking back, I was the youngest in the class, certainly the least experienced because I had no work experience whatsoever, and certainly the most immature because I was the youngest and didn't have the world experiences, the work and life experiences my classmates did. So I think my classmates put up with me, right? My best friend from Tuck also happened to be the oldest person in the class, right? And so we were—he just kind of took me under his wings, I'm sure.

CHIN: Mmm. And did you go home frequently?

DO: He was [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:34;03] at my wedding.

CHIN: Oh, he was in your wedding too?

DO: Yeah.

CHIN: So you kept up with a lot of your friends from Dartmouth, then.

DO: Oh, yeah, yeah. My closest friends to this day are—many of them—from Dartmouth.

CHIN: Did you go home frequently when you were at Dartmouth, to Oklahoma?

DO: No, no, not at all. One, it was expensive. Two, I spent my summers working, mostly in New York, and there's nothing in Oklahoma, right?—in so many ways. Once I escaped, I escaped.

CHIN: Did you ever get homesick?

DO: Well, I guess a few things happened along—along the way. I mean, realistically, the number of times I've been back to Oklahoma since graduation, you can count on two hands. The reason for that is soon after—the day I started working at McKinsey [& Company], I made twice my parents' combined income, right? And soon after that, I just arm-twisted my parents to retire, because I mentioned before: My parents' only objective in life was to make sure that all the kids make it—have a college degree. And by the time I started at—working, we were well onto that path, and my father's health wasn't the greatest, so there was just really no reason for them to continue doing what they were doing when there was an alternative path, so I just basically arm-twisted them to retire. And they always wanted to retire to D.C., and so my parents left D.C.—I mean, left Oklahoma for D.C. I moved to D.C. to make it happen. So I saw my parents very regularly since 1991 since they live in D.C.

After that, my other brother, the brother next to me, went off to Texas to finish his Ph.D., and then he went on to Emory [University] to do his post-doc, and up until very recently, he was up here in—in the New Jersey and Pennsylvania area [unintelligible; 1:36:27] until very recently. I only had one brother back in Oklahoma, right? And so he—and he would come to see us wherever we were. So there was really no reason to go back to Oklahoma.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Why did your parents want to move to D.C. in particular?

DO: Well, there was a larger Vietnamese community there, and they had friends there.

CHIN: So are your parents part of the Vietnamese community in D.C. now?

DO: I'm not sure if you can say that, but they certainly have a lot of friends who are Vietnamese, but I'm just—I don't know if they are really part of the community, if you will. Maybe they are.

CHIN: So do your parents ever talk about missing a sense of community, or is it— another thing of just sort of being in the past.

DO: Yeah, for that, they have their own community now. They have their own group of friends and so forth, and that's their community.

CHIN: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Had they always lived in Saigon prior to moving to the United States?

DO: No, no, they were born in the North, right? And after the French pulled out in 1956, that's when my parents first made - was first uprooted, like millions of others who fled North Vietnam for the South. That was 1956. And then, of course, about 25 years—about 20 years later, when the U.S. pulled out.

CHIN: Mmm. Where in North Vietnam were they?

DO: They were right outside of Hanoi.

CHIN: Mmm. Oh, so they came over after the Geneva Convention[s], then.

DO: Yes, I guess so. I mean, after [the Battle of] Dien Bien Phu, when the French pulled out, there was a mass exodus [unintelligible; 1:38:39] escaping the North, escaping the communist regime, to move to the South.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Yeah, my mother's family actually moved to the South at that time, too. Interesting. Yeah.

So after you graduated from Dartmouth, what did you do the first year out of college?

DO: Right after business school, I went to McKinsey, which is a large consulting firm. [Fred? 1:39:19] McKinsey is part of a group, a small handful of people at the time who knew a little bit about health care and knew a little bit about business, right? And over the course of the next decade helped create, build and lead McKinsey's healthcare practice.

And somewhere along the way, I moved to Korea and ended up spending seven years in Seoul, helping build, lead our practice over there. Then we moved back to the U.S. at that particular time, simply because we had young children at the time. My daughter was about a year and a half; my son was about six months old. And we wanted them growing up close to grandparents, right? And since my parents and my—my in-laws were getting up there in years as well—so that's why we moved back to the U.S.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And so in all, I [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:40:12]—

CHIN: What was it like living in Seoul?

DO: It's—it was fabulous. We loved—my wife and I loved living in Seoul. My wife was a professor of international law at one of the graduate schools there. And McKinsey was highly respected, and we can, you know, get a lot of things done in—in the country, right? So impact wise, we both—and professionally we both loved it there, and we had good friends, and it was fabulous.

CHIN: What is your wife's name?

DO: International law.

CHIN: What was her name?

DO: My wife's name is Lori Rickles. L-o-r-i, Rickles, R-i-c-k-l-e-s.

CHIN: And where did you meet her?

DO: We met in Washington, D.C., while we were both working there.

CHIN: How long did you say you lived in Seoul, again?

DO: Seven years.

CHIN: Seven years. And then after that, you moved back to?

DO: Back to New Jersey.

CHIN: New Jersey.

DO: Right. All of that was with McKinsey over the course of 17 years.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And I left McKinsey simply because I was turning 40 at the time—

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: I was a senior partner in the firm. I didn't want to run McKinsey or an office or a practice, so I was pretty much doing what I would be doing if I had stayed. And for my many friends at McKinsey, it made sense for them because they—to stay, because most of them have a good decade, age wise, on me. But I just couldn't imagine staying, so—and doing only that for the rest of my professional career, so I knew I had to go and do something different.

So from McKinsey, I went first to Lenovo [Group Ltd.], where I led strategy and M&A [mergers and acquisitions] for Lenovo as part of the management team that integrated Lenovo's acquisition of the IBM [International Business Machines Corporation]—the IBM PC business. I did that for about two and a half, three years.

After that, I went to Tyco Electronics [Ltd., now TE Connectivity], where I also led strategy and M&A for Tyco Electronics as part of a team that created Tyco Electronics, after Tyco de-merged and created the three companies.

From there, I went on to Merck [& Co., Inc., LLC], where I was chief strategy officer for Merck.

After Merck, I actually had tried to retire to free up the time to build a nonprofit to help autistic teenagers make the transition to adulthood. By this time, I spent a decade working in different organizations, philanthropic organizations focused on autism, because our son was diagnosed with autism soon after we arrived back in the U.S. And this was something that needed to be done. No one was doing it. I knew what needed to be done. I had the means and the ability to go do it, and I figured that—my wife and I—over the course of a dinner conversation, we figured that if we didn't go off and do it, nobody else would. So that's why I decided to retire from Merck and go and build this.

But as soon as my friends from Samsung [Group] heard that I was leaving Merck, they made one more push to get me to Samsung, and this time I really couldn't say no because I always do what I can to help a friend, right? My good friend is the son who will inherit all of the group, become the next chairman of Samsung, and he's trying to make a lot of changes in Samsung, and he needed the help, and that's why my retirement was cut short. That's why I lead the global strategy group for Samsung now. It was really to help a friend—

CHIN: Mmm.

DO: —with changes at Samsung.

CHIN: What is your friend's name at Samsung?

DO: His name is Jay [Jay Y. (Jae-yung)] Lee. [Transcriber's note: Four days after this interview, he was given a five-year jail sentence for bribery. Source: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-samsung-lee/samsung-leader-jay-y-lee-given-five-year-jail-sentence-for-bribery-idUSKCN1B41VC]

CHIN: Is he a Dartmouth student as well?

DO: No, he was not. He was not. I met him when I was living in Korea. Samsung was my client. And that's how I met him.

CHIN: And so you're also part of a lot of organizations at Dartmouth: the Dartmouth Alumni Council, for example.

DO: As I mentioned before, I am who I am today because of Dartmouth, right? So over the years, I have tried to do everything I can to give back and to serve, right? So Dartmouth is one of my top three philanthropic focus, if you will, right?—so dollars wise, we take care of Dartmouth. It's—it's in our estate plannings: in our Will, for example.

I served on the MBA Board at Tuck for about six years, and likewise on the Alumni Council; it's been about five or six years now. And frankly, anything I'm asked to do, I do.

CHIN: Were you at all involved with the Dartmouth Entrepreneurial Network?

DO: I helped launch the DEN, yes. I'm also a serial entrepreneur, having started, for example—in all of my jobs I have been responsible for the corporate VC [venture capital] fund for the companies, right? In addition to that, I have started companies on my own, right? So my first biotech company I started for my brother. We worked in a very rare field of orphan disease, and we were very lucky, very—and so forth, so we sold the company. And, frankly, that is why I can afford to retire and go and do all the things I do philanthropically and so forth.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And it's because of that—I mean, I spent a lot of time working with CEOs, working with entrepreneurs, coaching start-up CEOs and so forth, right? So to me, supporting the DEN was a—a natural thing to do. You know, I [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:46:52]—

CHIN: What was it like returning—

DO: All right, go ahead.

CHIN: It's okay. I was just going to ask another question, so—

DO: I also supported stuff going on at the medical school, right?—around autism-related research, right?—because of my particular focus. And Dartmouth is trying to get a thing

started there, so that was a natural thing for me to support there as well.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What is it like returning—

DO: [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:47:20].

CHIN: —to Dartmouth when you—

DO: Go ahead. Ask your question.

CHIN: When you come—when you come back to Dartmouth for Alumni Council Meetings, for example, what is that like?

DO: I always—I mean, I always love coming back. I mean, over the years I've come back to campus a lot, right?—because—at McKinsey, for example, I was responsible for recruiting—Dartmouth recruiting for—and Tuck recruiting. So I kept—over the years, I've come back. I've hired a lot of Dartmouth undergrads as well as Tuck grads. So it's always good to come back to see how the college continues to change. In many ways, the students—the sense of vibrancy and so forth of an undergraduate institution continues to be the same, if not get better, right? So frankly, it just kind of keeps you young, right? I always love coming back.

I like the changes that I—that have taken place on campus. More change still is needed, right? But those things take time, and—yeah, it takes more money and funding and so forth, but those things will come in time.

CHIN: What sorts of things do you like that have changed?

DO: I like the fact that the social options on campus have diversified somewhat, where the fraternities and sororities are no longer the only option. We are still far, far from where we want to be or where I think we need to be, and still I believe it's doing good things to move us in the right direction on that. It's probably going to take another decade or two to kind of build all the social options in Hanover, in and around Hanover, for the students of the future. I'm not saying that the Greek system is bad. I believe in the Greek system. I think it's needed, but it shouldn't be the only option,

right? And so we need to create alternatives options out there for everyone.

I like what's going on now with the interdisciplinary studies and the fact that different Dartmouth departments are working more and more together. It started under Jim [Yong] Kim [17th Dartmouth president], and Phil [current Dartmouth president Philip J. "Phil" Hanlon] has really turbocharged it. So I think that's all good, right?

And I think the sense of intellectualism and academic pursuit have gotten much higher than what it used to be under my experience. Back in my days, somebody doing an honors thesis was a—you were considered a little strange, right? [Both chuckle.] Because it took a lot of time and effort, and the academic pursuits associated with that versus now. I think undergraduate research is just a fairly standard, normal practice. That's [what? 1:50:25] I would say probably the majority of students engage in.

CHIN: Mm-hm. I did want to ask you about your honors thesis, actually.

DO: It was in—

CHIN: Can you give me [unintelligible; 1:50:41]? Yeah.

DO: It was in neural cell biology, if you will. I was trying to really understand what makes neurons work. If you think about it, why is it that a single idea in the brain will lead your toes or far-flung places, muscles in the body act, right? And so what is it that triggers all of this? And so that's what I was really trying to understand, or one aspect of it, something that's called slow axonal—vestibular axonal transport, which is how do neural transmitters get from one side of a nerve cell to another side of the nerve cell to trigger and propagate the nerve signal.

CHIN: Hmm. Were you working with a professor?

DO: Yes, Roger [D.] Sloboda. I think he is still there. I have not spoken to Roger in ages. I have to look him up, now that you mention that.

CHIN: [Chuckles.] And so you're writing a thesis in—which year would this have been?

DO: Nineteen eighty-seven, my junior year, because, remember, I was off to Tuck the following year, so I did my—everything was early and compressed.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

So the study abroad in London and government. Was that the same—was that both junior year or sophomore year, then?

DO: It was 1986. It was probably—if I recall correctly, that may have been the fall of my junior year, whereas the spring of my sophomore year was the London music FSP, if I remember correctly. Again, it's ancient—it's ancient history.

CHIN: [Chuckles.]

So when you were doing performances with the Handel Society, did that sort of break up the rhythm with all of the other professional societies that you were a part of on campus?

DO: Well, the Handel Society was actually—it was relatively low intensity, right? You just basically have to learn the music. You get together once a week on a Sunday night to—to rehearse, and then you have I think two performances a year, right? So it was—the terms I was not there, I missed out on that performance, and so forth.

CHIN: Hmm. Are you involved—

DO: It was low intensity fun.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Are you involved with music now?

DO: No, not really, not really. It's all about priorities.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: I'm much more involved with my children's music: my daughter's dance and things like that.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What are your children's names?

DO: Stephanie [Do] and Benjamin Do].

CHIN: Do you talk to them about your experiences at Dartmouth often?

DO: Some. I mean, my—the children come back—they've been going to Dartmouth ever since they were very young, starting with reunions and so on. And they've grown up with my Dartmouth friends' children, right? So we would—we—long ago, we started a tradition of getting together Memorial Day weekend, right? So one of my roommates, Tim Mitchell—I'm sorry, [Timothy J.] "Tim" Connors is his name—so I spent summers living with his family when I was living in New York. He's from Long Island. And so over the years, it's just become one big family. Like, our parents would get together and do things without us even knowing. Our siblings would get together and do things without us knowing and stuff like that, right? So over the years, it's just become one big happy family. And through that, long ago, we started a tradition of getting together every Memorial Day weekend for a lobster bake and whatever, right? And that just kind of continues, and our kids—that's how they met. That's how they get together every year, and that's—and so on.

CHIN: Mmm. And do you talk to them about moving to Oklahoma at all?

DO: Nope, nope. I'm sure there will be a time and a place, but right now, it just hasn't been a priority.

CHIN: Mm-hm. And so right now you're living in New Jersey?

DO: I am.

CHIN: And do you travel quite a bit, though, for work?

DO: I do. I mean, I travel to Seoul every other week.

CHIN: Mmm. Do you enjoy the traveling?

DO: Which is totally insane. I mean, I do understand that everybody understands that traveling to Seoul every other week is totally insane, right? But it's just something that has to be done for the time being.

CHIN: Mm-hm. And when was the last time that you went back to Vietnam?

DO: Sometime last year, for work. I mean, Samsung is the single-largest foreign investor in Vietnam. We're now the largest company in Vietnam, having surpassed the local oil company, right? I think half of the world's Samsung phones are made in Vietnam. And so in many ways, Vietnam is a bit of a headache for me because of our country risk and profile there.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Do you ever go with your wife and children?

DO: My wife and I certainly have been there, but not with our children yet. They want to go. I want to take them. But it's just—it's just a question of time. Last year, it was higher priority for us to go to Cambodia because of our philanthropic activities in Cambodia, so that's where we went last year.

CHIN: What sorts of philanthropic activities?

DO: Well, I'm—I serve on the board of an organization called Caring for Cambodia, and we are probably by far the largest supporter of the organization, right? Now we run 21 schools in Cambodia. We educate, feed, clothe 6,600 children in the Siem Reap area. And my wife and I put in place a program to send back all of our teachers for—all of our teachers that so desire—to go back to get a college degree. We would pay for their degree, and we'll give them a year's worth of salary as a bonus when they finish and they pass the basic English proficiency exam. And so last year, the first 23 teachers finished their degree, and as the timing worked out with the kids' spring break—so we went back—we took them over, partly to help them understand that this is actually how most of the world lives and also to kind of celebrate the accomplishments of the teachers.

CHIN: Hmm.

DO: Our schools [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:58:45].

CHIN: How did you initially get—

DO: All right, go ahead.

CHIN: Go ahead.

DO: Our schools have been designated as the model school system for Cambodia by the Ministry of Education, and we've given them our playbooks for how do we run the schools, if you will, right? I mean, I got started in this because Lenovo's CEO's wife—right? So while I was at Lenovo, I met Jamie [C. Amelio]. Jamie started Caring for Cambodia, right? So Lenovo—the senior leadership team of Lenovo made a trip to Cambodia probably in the first two or three years of CFC's existence, and I just thought that they were doing fabulous work, right? And to me, it's all about investing in the next generation's education, right? As you can tell from my own background and everything I try to do at Dartmouth, it's only natural that I would extend that and do it with other organizations that focuses on education for the next generation, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And the work that CFC does is so phenomenal. And all of it is done on a shoestring budget, and we're able to do that on an average of $180 per student per year. I'm able to send all of those teachers back for a college degree for roughly the same amount as it takes to endow one scholarship at Dartmouth.

CHIN: Wow. Does it ever get complicated to have—to be doing philanthropic activities both abroad and in the United States, both for primary and secondary education?

DO: Well, I don't know if it's—what do you mean by "complicated"? It is what it is. You just do it because it needs to be done, you believe in it and you can do something about it, and I think that's what makes the world a better place, is those who—who believe and are in a position to do things, go and do, regardless—

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: In fact, I think you need to do the things that *are* difficult, right?—because if it's not, somebody else would have already done it.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

I'm looking back at—going back quite a while to Oklahoma. I wanted to ask you more about your high school activities. Besides doing research, you said you also wrote for the newspaper?

DO: Yeah. So I was photography editor first and foremost, for the newspaper and the yearbook and over the years, you know, spent a lot of time editing pictures and newspapers.

CHIN: Mm-hm. So you did photography. You were doing research. What were the other activities that you did?

DO: I guess my major activities during high school was journalism. It was just photography. I did some writing. I was editor of the paper and yearbook.

CHIN: As a writer, was there something—

DO: [cross-talk; unintelligible; 2:02:33].

CHIN: —in particular?

DO: No, not at all. I wasn't very good.

CHIN: So you wrote about many things, then, or, like, a wide variety of topics.

DO: I didn't write—let me put it this way: I didn't write much. [Laughs.] Let me rephrase. I edited. Let me put it—probably a better way of putting it.

CHIN: Mmm.

DO: That's why—I mean, partly from that experience, what I observed from my C&G friends, one of my hiring philosophy

now when I go to a campus, when I go to Dartmouth, I will always try to interview and hire the editor of the daily paper [*Dartmouth Daily D*, or *The D*]—

CHIN: Mmm. I see.

DO: —because that person, more often than not, has figured out how to multitask, juggle a lot of things, lead a group of people and, more often than not, tend to be excellent writers themselves and good academically, exactly the profile of somebody I want to have on my team, regardless of what that team is.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Is there a reason that you didn't write for the paper at Dartmouth?

DO: I was too busy doing other things. [Chuckles.]

CHIN: Yeah [chuckles], I can imagine. But you decided—did you ever miss writing for the paper then? It seems like it was important in high school, maybe.

DO: There was a time and a place for everything, right? And I think it's just—it eventually becomes a prioritization of what else you want to do at the time.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: My application for medical school was essentially laid out to be a newspaper article written in third person, right? And the only reason I remember that is because the dean of admissions at Sanford Medical School remembered that and mentioned it to me as part of my interview.

CHIN: So it was written as sort of a newspaper article?

DO: Yeah, yeah, exactly. If you think about most applications, right?—you're given a topic, and then most people would just kind of dive in and write in whatever form or tense they're comfortable in. And I just kind used my journalism background, and instead of writing a typical essay, I wrote a story.

CHIN: Wow, that's so creative [cross-talk; 2:05:19].

DO: [unintelligible; 2:05:19] worked out. I think it's only possible back then because all papers were still done on paper, right? So I could literally cut and paste on paper. Nowadays everything is online, so I think it's a bit more challenging.

CHIN: Mmm. Oh, so it was actually in the form of a newspaper.

DO: It was. It literally was a newspaper—

CHIN: Oh. Uh-huh.

DO: —article.

CHIN: Did you have any other memories that you wanted to share about Dartmouth or coming to the United States that you didn't mention yet?

DO: I think in the context of the Dartmouth Vietnam Project, the reason I mentioned this to—during a meeting is that for the vast, vast majority of Dartmouth alums, the perspective on Vietnam is that of a vet, as a protester, as a foreigner, right? But I think there is still a small group of Dartmouth alums who have the experience and the perspective of essentially being a Vietnamese who lived through that experience, right? And I think the project would not be complete if you didn't seek out some of those individuals. There may not be many of them, but there certainly are some.

I recall that my—one of my graduations—I don't recall if it's in '88, when I graduated from Dartmouth, or in '89, when I graduated from Tuck. My parents took note that there was another Vietnamese student who graduated from the medical school. And so it can't be that difficult to track down, in '88 or '89, a Vietnamese graduate of Dartmouth medical school, right? And he would have been roughly my age and so forth, so would have had similar experiences, right? So it's probably a person worth tracking down.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Did you know any other Vietnamese students at Dartmouth?

DO: Not—no, no. And like I mentioned before, I—I just—I just don't identify myself necessarily as being Vietnamese or Asian, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And I certainly have raised my children in a manner that the color of a person's skin, their ethnic background just doesn't matter, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: We take people for who they are, and then we celebrate the diversity that—that everybody—that comes with embracing everyone.

CHIN: It's interesting, though, that despite this, you also say that there is sort of a lack of perspective or at least maybe the diversity in the way Dartmouth alumni perceive the memory of the Vietnam War?

DO: No, I'm—I'm actually mak- —my point is, like, we have to embrace all points of view, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And unless you speak out all points of view, you don't have that diversity of thought or perspective, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And I think that—my biggest concern—my biggest concern for Dartmouth and for other college campuses right now is really about whether we are still able to maintain, seek and celebrate the diversity of perspectives, right? And I think this is where—if we can't do it on a college campus, we are all going to be in trouble in the next generation, right? And unfortunately—I'm going to make a political statement now: Unfortunately, politics have just gotten to a point where it's so bipolar—it's polarizing—that there's no middle anymore. There is no ability to essentially consider a different point of view, embrace, accept another point of view, even if it's diametrically opposed to what you believe in, right? But I believe that's what a democracy really needs, and I believe

that if you want to move society forward, you need diversity and diversity of thought, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And if we're losing it on a college campus, the next generation is definitely going to suffer.

CHIN: When you were a student at Dartmouth, do you feel like there is a strong diversity of thought in comparison to what you've seen in recent years?

DO: Well, we started the conversation by having a discussion about the different protest movements, the different protests and so forth that were going on when I was there, right? And I think that was just part of what goes on on a college campus, right? And it's about the thought; it's not about the people. It's not about the person.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And I think unfortunately—I think right now it's just getting more difficult to have a discussion about the thought without getting personal, right?

CHIN: Mmm.

DO: We go on personal attacks very quickly when we disagree with somebody, whereas I'm perfectly fine to have a conversation with someone I just—I disagree with, but I'll still respect that person's—that person, right? And I may or may not like the thought, but the fact that that person has the thought has to be accepted.

CHIN: Mm-hm. And are you seeing this sort of change in political discourse specifically on college campuses, or, like, more in general?

DO: No, no, it's everywhere. It's—it's general. But what grieves me about Dartmouth or what is happening at Dartmouth—I mean, I'll give you one example, right? The appointment of—oh, what's his name, as dean of the faculty?

CHIN: Oh, yes, Dean [N. Bruce] Duthu [pronounced DOO-TOO; Class of 1980]?

DO: Yeah, Duthu. I don't know Dean Duthu. I don't know him. I have no idea what he believes in, doesn't believe in and so forth, right? But the fact that we've appointed our first Native American as a dean of the faculty at Dartmouth is probably something that we should feel proud of and celebrate. But instead of doing that, what happened is that we basically went on—we attacked him as a person for his personal beliefs and the thoughts that he shared, right? And I believe that those thoughts—you may disagree with them, but those are thoughts that are shared by others out there. So at least at a minimum, we should give it the merit—or the benefit of acknowledgment and acceptance, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: But we didn't do that. That's what troubles me.

CHIN: Was that something that troubled you as an undergrad?

DO: No, it didn't because frankly I was young and immature and didn't know better.

CHIN: Mmm. You were going to say something?

DO: In my time, the issue of—yeah, the issue during my time was apartheid, right? I disagreed with apartheid, but I just—like I said, I was too busy, and frankly I was too young to know better to actually voice an opinion and to take a leadership role in one way or another, right? And I think I—I see this playing out now, and it's just—it's not playing out in a manner that I believe will move the college forward, if it's—if we don't change it, right?

And, of course, I know Phil absolutely believes and celebrates the whole notion of diversity of thought. Absolutely. And I think the question is how far that pervades on campus. [Phone rings.]

Excuse me a second. The phone is going to ring until someone picks up. Okay, that's good.

CHIN: Okay. What was that you last said?

DO: Now I forgot what I just said.

CHIN: [Chuckles.] About President Hanlon [cross-talk; 2:14:34].

DO: Oh, Phil absolutely—yes, that's right. President Hanlon absolutely believes that we need to celebrate diversity of thought on campus, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: But the question really is how far is that spreading on campus amongst faculty, students, staff in today's polarized political environment? And I just fear that it's safer to be quiet than it is to really discuss and debate, right? And when we are not debating or using other means to attack and so forth, through social media and so forth—and innuendos.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What about what you were saying in regards to personal attacks, too, instead of maybe having more thought-based discourse, as you were saying?

DO: Yeah, I think we need to discuss the merits of the thought, the merits of the idea without attacking the person, right? I mean, I'll give you an example that just happen- —I mean, it's just—it's rather sad, that's happened this week. My good friend and former boss was—is Ken [Kenneth C.] Frazier—Frazier, who's the CEO of Merck. And when Ken resigned from President [Donald J.] Trump's business advisory council on Monday because of the responses to what happened in Charlottesville [Virginia] over the weekend, right?—

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: —of course he was attacked, right? But the attack is not necessarily because of what he believed in or didn't believe in and so forth; but he was attacked personally, right? And that is absolutely not called for, right? And that's playing out every single day now nationally, and I fear that it's taking more and more roots on college campuses and elsewhere. Everywhere.

CHIN: Hmm. Not just specifically Dartmouth, everywhere.

DO: It's everywhere. It is certainly—I fear everywhere. And in many ways, I think many of us have an idealized view that Dartmouth is able to insulate itself and is a better place than everywhere, right? And I fear that that is no longer true.

CHIN: No longer true?

DO: I fear that frankly the sense of specialness that makes Dartmouth a step above and beyond the average college campus, the average place—I fear that's disappearing, particularly about this diversity of thought issue.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

So I just have one last question about—you said that your children expressed an interest in going to Vietnam. I'm just wondering if they had any, like, historical sort of reasons or just wanting to travel.

DO: Well, I think they—for my daughter specifically, it's just wanting to see where we came from, right? So where parents and grandparents came from, because we do talk about it at times, right?

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And for her, it's also more travel. I mean, she has stamps in her passport from five continents, and she's already figured out or has figured out a scheme to get the remaining two.

CHIN: [Chuckles.] So you do talk about it at times.

DO: Sure.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What is that like for you and for them, if I may ask?

DO: Well, for them it's just a concept, right? And they haven't been there and seen it. I—I just believe you don't know the world until you've gone out there to see it first-hand, experience it first-hand, right? And that is certainly a set of values that I've tried to pass on to my children, right? I just believe you don't know what you don't know, so you have to

go out there. You have to interact with people to help you ask the right questions. You have to go out there to experience the things that you don't know, right? And that's why we travel so much as a family. That's why, you know, we go out of our way to speak and experience new things with the children, right?

So for Stephanie, Vietnam is one of those places, one of those things she doesn't know. She has, you know, cursory understanding or cursory exposure, but she hasn't experienced it, hasn't seen it for herself. And so for her, this is one of those places where she wants to go.

CHIN: And what about your son?

DO: Well, my son—remember, my son is autistic.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: And so the similar [set-up box? set of thoughts? 2:20:08] may or may not resonate, right? Right now, I think it's—we are working on our son for a series of different challenges and—and exciting endeavors, right? For him, he's trying to figure—he's convinced he's going to go to college and it's just about the things he needs to do to get to college, right?—the social things and so on. And he loves food, so—and so for him, it's experiencing the world through foods.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Does he—do you cook with your children?

DO: Absolutely.

CHIN: Do you still make a lot of French food?

DO: Especially my son. We do. We have a house in France, so we—the kids spend much of the summer in France. We have a fair bit of French food. And my son has gotten to a point where he is just making up stuff, right?—some of which at first glance sounds weird, but when you actually go and make it and taste it, it's actually pretty phenomenal.

CHIN: Mmm. Where in France do you stay?

DO: We have a place in Provence. It's right outside of Saint-Rémy[-de Provence]. It's a modest place. It is in a farming village, if you will. But we love it there.

CHIN: Mmm. Does your mother cook a lot of French food?

DO: She does. She makes a lot of different kinds of food, but a lot of French and a lot of Vietnamese food.

CHIN: Mm-hm. It's interesting that I think, you know, exploring the world through food, as you said—was food sort of like a—is that an important part of traveling for you as well, of, like, experiencing the world through food?

DO: Sure. Love food.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Do you cook Vietnamese food ever?

DO: Sometimes, sometimes. As my daughter would say, I make better Vietnamese fried rice than my mom does, but she still makes better pho [pronouncing it FA] than I do.

CHIN: Mm-hm. Well, that takes such a long time to make.

DO: It does.

CHIN: Yeah. And so your last visit to Vietnam, not for business but with your family—what sorts of—where did—where did you go?

DO: My last visit not for work would have been—that's been probably a decade now, with my parents and my wife, and we were just trav- —we traveled a bit in—in Hanoi and traveled a bit in Saigon. And that's when, as we were driving around Saigon, or in and around Saigon—that's when I saw my father just light up, seeing the things that he built still in use.

CHIN: Mm-hm. So you went to see both Hanoi and Saigon.

DO: Yeah, [cross-talk; unintelligible; 2:23:35]. Yeah, and we spent a little bit of time in Nha Trang and Đà Lạt. Beautiful places.

CHIN: Mm-hm. What did you do when you were there?

DO: The usual touristy things.

CHIN: Mmm. Such as?

DO: Food. Went to the usual sites. then, you know, walked around a lot.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: See things, talk to people.

CHIN: What were some of the usual sites?

DO: You know, it's—in Nha Trang it's going to the beaches, beautiful beaches. In Đà Lạt—you know, Đà Lạt was a—it started as a retreat for the French nationals that were there, right? So beautiful French architecture. I think we stayed in the main hotel that used to serve the French community back then, and then just kind of went around to different markets. And I just don't remember these different places.

What I do for a living, I just go where I'm told, right? Unfortunately, I'm just handled all the time.

CHIN: Mm-hm.

DO: There is a—I show up. There is a driver or whatever, and I just go along for the ride.

CHIN: Yep. Cool, so—

DO: When I'm on vacation, I'm perfectly happy for somebody else to make the plans.

CHIN: Yeah. Great. So is there anything else that you wanted to add?

DO: Nope. I think we've covered, I would say, my long and boring life.

CHIN: [Chuckles.]

DO: And literally this is hopefully more to try to add a bit of texture or context to the—to the Dartmouth Vietnam Project, right?—more than anything else.

CHIN: Yes, definitely. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me. I know you're very, very busy. I really appreciate your time.

DO: You are most welcome. And good luck.

CHIN: Thank you.

[End of interview.]