

Henry Homeyer '68
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
May 13, 2020
Transcribed by Karen Navarro

JANOWSKI: Hello, my name is Elizabeth Janowski ('21), and I'm here this morning speaking with Mr. Henry Homeyer of the class of 1968, as part of the Dartmouth Vietnam Project, an oral history project that aims to record the testimonies of Dartmouth alumni and members of the Upper Valley community who lived through the Vietnam War era. The date today is May 13th, 2020, and it is currently 10:18 Eastern Time. I'm calling in from my home in Brookfield, Wisconsin, in light of Dartmouth's remote format this spring amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. And Mr. Homeyer is at his home in Cornish Flat, New Hampshire. Mr. Homeyer, first of all, I'd just like to say thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today.

HOMEYER: My pleasure.

JANOWSKI: Great. Well, I think we can head right into our conversation then, and I'll start off with some sort of quick, factual questions. So, first of all, when and where you born?

HOMEYER: April 23rd, 1946, at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts.

JANOWSKI: Okay. So, what was your father's name, and could you spell that for me?

HOMEYER: His name was the same as mine, Henry Nicholas Homeyer, H-o-m-e-y-e-r. He was Junior. My grandfather was also Henry Nicholas Homeyer, so I'm the third technically, though I don't [inaudible] now.

JANOWSKI: Got it, so a line, I see, And what did your father do for a living?

HOMEYER: He graduated from MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] in 1938 with a master's in chemical engineering. And he was one of these extremely brilliant people that had very few people skills, so he worked for many different companies before he finally became a consultant, which worked much better, because as he felt

and he would say over the dinner table, “I’m working with a bunch of idiots.” [laughter] Because nobody was as smart as my dad. He worked on things like the development of Band-Aids and frozen orange juice and freeze dried coffee, but also Silly Putty.

And he built in our basement—he perfected in our basement a silicone rubber valve sheet which went to the moon. When the space rocket was having trouble separating two different sections of the rocket booster, he solved the problem by making a high temperature silicone rubber valve sheet. Don’t ask me any more about it except that I have a couple of these little things put in a drawer, and he was very proud of that.

JANOWSKI: Wow. Yes, that is very impressive. Yeah, and how about your mother? What was her name and what does she do for a living?

HOMEYER: Elfreida Lenat Homeyer. Lenat was her maiden name. Elfreida is E-l-f-r-e-i-d-a Homeyer. She graduated from Simmons College [now Simmons University, Boston, MA] in 1938, and was basically a homemaker until I went to college. When I went to Dartmouth in 1964, she knew she would go nuts if she didn’t have something to do, so she got a job as a social worker. She presented herself at the social work office and said, “I’m here to help you. How do we go about this?” [laughter] and I heard her. And she did that for 14 years, was very successful at it, never lost a case in court about taking a child away from the mother or returning a child to a mother, which had to be approved by a judge. They always listened to her because she was a very sensible person.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. So, your mother was college educated then. I feel like that’s still fairly rare for her time.

HOMEYER: Uh-huh.

JANOWSKI: Was she the first woman in your family to get a college education?

HOMEYER: My father had a sister, Aunty Ruth, and I don’t think she completed college. I think she did a year or two in college, and then became an airline stewardess for a while, and then got married and was a homemaker. I don’t believe she graduated from college.

- JANOWSKI: And did you have any siblings?
- HOMEYER: Yes. I had a sister, Ruth Anne, with an “e” on Anne, who graduated from Wellesley College [Wellesley, MA] three years before me, and we were very close. She passed away at the age of 65 in 2009.
- JANOWSKI: I’m sorry to hear that. So it sounds like there was a pretty large focus on college in your family, from what I’m hearing?
- HOMEYER: Yes. I was trained as a boy scientist. By the age of eight, I had my own chemistry set and did such things as mix up the various chemicals and see what I could do with them and follow the instructions. But other things I didn’t follow the instructions, and I remember very well mixing up some tannic acid and putting little drops with an eyedropper on my mother’s African violets to see how they would react. Well, it burned holes in the African violets, and when my mother noticed these perfectly round holes in the leaves, she said, “Henry, did you do something to my African violets?” And I said, “Yes, I was doing an experiment.” So, she didn’t get mad. She just said, “Well, please don’t do it again.” But, by the time I was eight or nine years old, I was doing herbarium mounts. I was always interested in gardening and in plants. I was doing herbarium mounts and learning the Latin names of plants, you know, pressing them and gluing them onto paper. So, yeah, I guess I was quite a bit advanced compared to other children.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah, it definitely sounds like it. And I can definitely see the inspiration for becoming the gardening guy right from the start, then.
- HOMEYER: Yes.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah, so let’s see here. You told me that you were born in Boston, but I think we talked last week about how you grew up in New Haven, Connecticut?
- HOMEYER: Outside New Haven in the little town of Woodbridge, the bedroom community outside of Yale, yes. In the years before that, we had bounced around pretty much every year. My dad would quit his job and move to another job, and we bounced around New England, and even lived in Florida for six months at one point when he was designing an oil

refinery. But we bought a house in 1954 in Woodbridge and we lived there for a few years, and then my dad said, "Oh, I think we're gonna move to New Jersey now," and my sister, Ruth Anne, who was a very strong-willed young person as well as a woman when she grew up, said, "Well, that's fine. You can go ahead and do that, but I'm not moving. I will live with the neighbor." And my mother took my sister's side and we decided to stay, which was a big deal. Father ran the household. I mean, he was the one that made the decisions if he was the breadwinner, and that's the way he was. But, he stayed, and we all... So I grew up in Woodbridge, Connecticut, yes.

JANOWSKI: What was the reason that your father wanted to move to New Jersey?

HOMEYER: There was an interesting job there.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. Okay. So...

HOMEYER: So he was so [inaudible] and could do so much, people always offered him jobs. They never looked at his people skills. And maybe he was somewhere on the spectrum, I don't know. But, he could not relate to people very well. But he was a fine fellow, and very, very smart.

JANOWSKI: So, I guess tell me a bit about what it was like growing up just outside New Haven then? How would you describe the political or the religious makeup of your neighborhood?

HOMEYER: Interesting question. I only had—we lived in a fairly rural area even though we were close to New Haven, and there was a boy that lived next door, Clarkie Thompson, and he had two older brothers. Clarkie was a year or two older than me, and we did all kinds of things that boys do. We went on hikes, we went swimming in ponds that we weren't supposed to swim in, we played basketball, we played badminton. But there weren't a lot of kids in the neighborhood. Half a mile away there was another boy, two other guys, that we could play basketball with, that we could have 2 on 2 basketball. But, basically my neighborhood was Clarkie Thompson and me.

JANOWSKI: And I guess like did you, growing up in that neighborhood, did you get any sort of semblance for I guess sort of like the political leanings of...

HOMEYER: Sure. My dad was a Republican, sort of a Dwight D. Eisenhower Republican, and my mom the liberal. She was a Democrat, so as they used to joke, their votes canceled each other out. But they still went [inaudible] every time.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, I'd imagine that that could lead to some interesting conversations around the dinner table at home.

HOMEYER: Not so much. My parents were not particularly political. You know, they voted and whatnot, but I'm much more political than they are, were.

JANOWSKI: I see. I was going to ask next if your parents' political leanings rubbed off on you at all or how that shaped you growing up?

HOMEYER: I don't think that my political views were shaped by my parents. They were shaped by the time, by the civil rights movement, by the Vietnam War.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, I think that's interesting. Could you elaborate on that a little bit in terms of, I guess when you were a child, were you tuned in at all to politics or anything like that? Or was that something that developed later on in life?

HOMEYER: It developed when I was at college really. I remember when I was in kindergarten, I had an "I like Ike" button that I wore when President Eisenhower was running for office. And I remember that [President] John F. Kennedy was the best thing to ever come along. But no, it really was after I got to Dartmouth and there were people who were much more political savvy than I that I started to pay attention and started becoming an activist myself, but at a fairly low level. I was always one who was interested in doing things rather than marching. So, for example, when I was at Dartmouth I became involved with the Tucker Foundation, which is the arm of Dartmouth College which is involved in social change. Dean Dey, Charles [F.] Dey, who everybody called "Doc," was a wonderful man. He just passed away, I saw in the newspaper just a few weeks ago.

And I was involved in something called Project Buddy, which was to match up Dartmouth students with kids of low socioeconomic families, usually single moms, who needed a father figure in their life. And I headed that up the first and

second year while I was, I guess it was my junior and senior years. I pretty much ran the program. And this later became the Big Brother, Big Sister [Big Brothers Big Sisters] program which is active at Dartmouth, which is a national program. But we started out as Project Buddy, which was my name for it. And once a week or once every two weeks, except during exam times and vacations, I'd meet with my little buddy, Donald, and we would do things. And it was facilitated by the fact that Dartmouth had cars that we could use through the Tucker Foundation. So I could jump in the car and drive down to Lebanon and meet Donald, and I could pick him up, we could go for a hike or we could go to the movies. It was a very nice program. So that was my sort of first instance of social activism.

I became very aware of the civil rights movement. And when I graduated from college, I had been accepted at Harvard in a master's of education program, but wasn't able to complete that because my draft board said that they were going to draft me and send me to Vietnam if I went to graduate school. And back in the day from—I was at Dartmouth from '64 to '68, you got a deferment if you were in college, but not a deferment if you were in graduate school, unless you were in medical school. And I was a biology major and had planned on going to medical school and then going on and become a child psychiatrist, but in my senior year—and I completed the pre-med program, but in the fall of my senior year when I was filling out an application to Tufts Medical School, it said "write 500 words about something you're interested in," and I started writing about Project Buddy and thinking about working with kids, and I realized that I did not need an MD and a Ph.D. in order to work with kids, and that if I went that route, I was halfway through my education, including grade school. It's a long process to get an MD and go through all that, and then do a Ph.D. on top of that.

So, I looked at this master's of education at Harvard which would have given me a summer of classes and practical teaching, then a year of classes and then a year of internship. And I said, "Well, maybe I can squeak through that." But I called my draft board in New Haven and I talked to a secretary and I said, "What are the chances that they'll ignore me if I go through with this?" And she said, "Nearly zero. It's the New Haven draft board, they don't like Yalies, they certainly don't like people that go to any Ivy League

school. So, they'll probably pluck you right up." And I said, "Oh, dear." I said, "What if I got a job teaching in Jersey City, New Jersey, in an inner city school?" But at that point, Doc Dey had already approached me saying, "Henry, we'd love to have you go down and teach in Public School number 22. We're gonna have some undergraduates going to spend a term each as teacher aides and learning how to be activists and working in the neighborhood." I said, "Well, let me talk to my draft board." And they said, "Well, probably the board would not..."—this nice person who answered the phone—"probably they wouldn't bother you because they have plenty of cannon fodder to go to Vietnam, and if you're doing something which they consider admirable, then they'd leave you alone." Which they did. I was 1-A, which meant I had passed my physical and was eligible to be drafted and sent to Vietnam. They never called me up and said "it's time to go." So I went to Harvard that summer and did the classes, and then in the fall I went to Jersey City and spent two years there teaching fourth grade in Public School number 22.

JANOWSKI: Okay. Well, I think that gave me a pretty comprehensive view of different things that I'd like to touch on throughout this interview. I think one thing I should mention just for the purposes of transcribing this, the Tucker Foundation I believe now is called the Dartmouth Center for Social Impact.

HOMEYER: Okay, good.

JANOWSKI: I actually do some work for there, too, with the mentorship program for kids in housing communities in the area. So yeah, I'm familiar with the Tucker Foundation. I think it's operating under a new name now. Great. Okay. So, I think—I don't want to backtrack too much, but I did want to ask sort of about your experiences in high school before we get into more of your time at Dartmouth. So, can you tell me a bit about, well, what was the name of the high school you went to?

HOMEYER: Amity Regional High School, that covered three towns: Bethany, Orange and Woodbridge, Connecticut. There were just over a thousand children in my graduating class in 1964. No, excuse me, there were a thousand kids in the—there were 1,200 kids in the high school. There were 335 in my graduating class.

JANOWSKI: Uh-huh, gotcha. Okay, and...

HOMEYER: And it was a brilliant high school. They hired the very best teachers they could get. There were a lot of sons and daughters of Yale professors and doctors and lawyers. And it was a rural area, with exception for one corner of Woodbridge which was what we called “the flats,” which was an area of truck farming, Italian immigrants who were doing truck farming there. But other than that, it was pretty middle class or upper class.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, I definitely assumed that sort of right out of New Haven there would be a lot of families that had affiliations with Yale in some way or the other.

HOMEYER: Yes. So, and I had teachers good enough that when I took the advanced placement and achievement tests, I earned enough credits to bypass my freshman year if I chose to. I did not choose to, but I could have gone through Dartmouth in three years because I had advanced placement credits. And many of the kids... I was in a group—this is going to sound weird, but each student was assigned a group that they were in in junior high school, and my group was a 7-1 FL, which stood for fast learner, but we weren’t supposed to know what FL stood for. But we were the crème de la crème, and there were about 25 of us who they determined from performance and testing were going to all go to Ivy League schools, basically. Or places like MIT. And we did, all of us.

JANOWSKI: Wow. Yeah, that definitely, that sounds like a pretty remarkable cohort.

HOMEYER: And, you know, we were not—we were kept apart from the general population. If you were in one of the other groups, you might take math with one group and then you might take social studies with a different group of students, but we stayed—all our classes were together as a group, and we were extremely competitive.

JANOWSKI: Would you say in high school you I guess sort of developed more in your appreciation and knowledge of biology, and I guess your love of plants at that time?

HOMEYER: Not so much plants, but biology certainly. I loved biology. I had a teacher who was fabulous, and I had two years of biology: freshman biology and then advanced placement

biology, which only had eight people in my class, which was unheard of at that time. And when I was at Dartmouth I skipped Biology I and II, which were the two first courses in biology at the time, and I was actually a lab assistant my sophomore year for the freshman classes. And I had done every dissection, had done everything that was covered in Dartmouth. You know, the first two classes in biology, I had had in high school. So that's pretty remarkable.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, definitely, that is very remarkable.

HOMEYER: And I was a geek. I'll have to admit that I did not have much of a social life, I was not athletically—I was athletically challenged. So I was a geek. Now, it's interesting that I consider myself an athlete as an adult. My reflexes and coordination did not develop until I was probably a junior in college. And I remember it well. I was working one summer in Saxtons River, Vermont, running a summer recreation program for a small town in rural Vermont, and I was shooting baskets with Tony Dambrava, who was another class of '68, and all of a sudden I popped in like 6 jump shots in a row, or 8 out of 10. I looked at Tony and I said, "Oh, yeah, well, I had a contract with the Devil that I worked out last night and now I can play basketball." And we just laughed it off.

But, at that point, all of a sudden, instead of—even though when I was in high school, I used to play basketball all winter outdoors on a little asphalt court with one hoop, and I would take 10 shots and I might get 1 if it was a good day. And all of a sudden, I could sink baskets. I could do a jump shot. I could do a layup. It was really fun to all of a sudden realize that, you know, I am a decent athlete. I'm still at age 73 this winter downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, doing all kinds of outdoor things, kayaking, hiking, and doing them well. So it's fun. But in high school I was a geek.

JANOWSKI: Sorry, I think you mentioned a name of someone in the class of '68 before.

HOMEYER: Yes, Tony Dambrava. He and I ran that recreation program.

JANOWSKI: Would you be able to spell his name for us?

HOMEYER: Dambrava, D-a-m-b-r-a-v-a. And he went by "Tony," but he's I think Latvian or Lithuanian, and though I'm not sure, you

know, ethnically. It might not—it wouldn't show up as "Tony" on the list, and there's only one Dambrava in the class of '68.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, I'm sure we'll be able to identify him based on that.

HOMEYER: So, he had ended up going to Vietnam. He dropped out of school, went to Vietnam, came back and finished up in 1971 or '72. He lives outside of Seattle, Washington now.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I think, just going forward with our interview, mentioning names it would be helpful to spell it, just so our transcriber knows what the name is spelled like.

HOMEYER: Yep.

JANOWSKI: Okay, perfect. All right. So, I think my next question for you, then, would be what drew you to Dartmouth as a high schooler, especially given that you lived in the same city as Yale?

HOMEYER: That's exactly why I went to Dartmouth. I didn't want to—I was accepted at Yale and turned them down. My parents wanted me to go to Yale, but I realized that my parents had been kind and generous and supportive in so many ways, but they were also controlling. And I wanted to lead an independent lifestyle, and I knew that if I went to Yale, my mother would insist on my coming home for Sunday dinner and bringing my dirty clothes, and she would wash them and iron the shirts, and keeping me as a member of the family. I wanted to be a grownup, I wanted to get out and see the world and do things, I wanted to experiment with a social life and drinking beer and doing all the things that Dartmouth is famous for. And I knew that I wouldn't—that it would be much more difficult at Yale. So, I went to Dartmouth.

And the other thing was Dr. [John H.] Copenhaver[, Jr. ('46)] at Dartmouth (that's C-o-p-e-n-h-a-v-e-r)—he's now passed on—was the head of the Biology Department back then, and when I went up to see the college, he heard I was coming, and I was—you know, they recruited me pretty hard because I had perfect scores in both my AP and my achievement tests in biology. I got an 800 and a 5. So he on a Saturday afternoon came into the office, took me around, showed me the labs, talked to me about the possibility of doing independent research or being a lab assistant. He was a

charming, intelligent, wonderful man, and I said, *Wow, if this is what Dartmouth is like, this is cool.*

Oh, Yale offered me a slightly bigger scholarship, and I told the people at Dartmouth—they had called to see if I had made up my decision in April, and I said, “Well, right now I don’t know what to do because I love Dartmouth, but Yale is offering me a better scholarship program.” And they said, “Well, don’t go away. We’ll work something out.” So, I got a Dartmouth Club of New Haven scholarship, the Dartmouth Club of New Haven scholarship to boost up the offer so that it was a better offer than Yale. And then my parents really couldn’t... Because before they were saying, “Well, you gotta go to Yale. It’s cheaper for you to go there. Plus we can wash your clothes, [laughter] have you home for dinner.” And so off I went to Dartmouth.

- JANOWSKI: Yeah. I guess that makes a lot of sense, that proximity to home with Yale University sort of being a deterrent then.
- HOMEYER: Yes.
- JANOWSKI: Gotcha. Okay. I think switching gears a little bit before we move on to you going to college, sort of to situate this moment in time, so in 1963 you would have been a senior in high school, correct?
- HOMEYER: Uh-hum.
- JANOWSKI: Okay. And that was the year that Kennedy was assassinated. Do you—I guess do you remember when, or where you were when you heard the news of that and...
- HOMEYER: Absolutely. I was in high school in class. Actually, I was walking down the hallway in the afternoon, and then word came out that something terrible had happened. We all went, sat down in our classrooms, and they had an intercom system and the principal came on and told us, and we were all just floored.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah. No, I definitely imagine that that was a shocking moment. Do you remember sort of your friends’ reactions to that, your family when you came home from school that day?
- HOMEYER: I think we all cried.

- JANOWSKI: Um, uh-hum. Yeah, no, that's definitely, I mean, that's just one of those very I would say pivotal moments in history. I think also, so the escalation I guess of the Vietnam War wasn't so much. That was more during your time in college than in high school. But, did your friends or your family have any strong opinions towards that at the time?
- HOMEYER: Not in high school, no.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah. So, not really any mention of it, then? I guess it wasn't really...
- HOMEYER: But we were aware of it, but we were one of the few families that did not have a television, so my source of news was basically *The New Haven Register*, the local newspaper. I had a radio in my room, but that was mainly for listening to music. My father did not allow us to listen to rock and roll, only classical music. And he didn't listen to the news on the radio. So I had limited contact at that time with the news.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah, definitely. That's interesting. And I would assume that changed a lot in college, right?
- HOMEYER: What's that? That did change in college, yeah. I became much more political, and sort of paying attention. And, you know, part of that was the class of '68, we all knew that we're coming out. If the Vietnam War was going on, we might be drafted and sent to Vietnam and killed before we ever hit 25 years old. And that's scary. That made the war very personal.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah, definitely.
- HOMEYER: I knew that I could not kill another human being and I knew that if I went to Vietnam I would be asked to do that. So, I wanted to establish my bona fides as a conscientious objector, but I didn't really have any bona fides. You know, I wasn't a Quaker. I didn't have anything to prove that I was anything other than a coward. But, I knew that killing was wrong and I wasn't gonna do it. I wasn't gonna do it. So, when I was in Jersey City later on and was a 1-A, which is meaning I was draftable, every day I went to the post office to pick up my mail, and looking—the first thing I looked at was, was there anything from my draft board? Because if I got a notice saying “you're to report for your pre-induction physical”—no, I've already passed that—you know, if “you're

supposed to Fort Dix,” I had to decide would I flee to Canada? Would I be willing to go to jail? I had to make that decision. And I fortunately never had to make it, but my inclination was to somehow get out of the country if I was told I was going to Vietnam.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I guess, backtracking a little bit again, let’s talk about starting out your time at Dartmouth? So, yeah, I guess you pretty much knew going into Dartmouth then that you would major in biology. You were also a chemistry major, though, right?

HOMEYER: Well, my honors research was a biochemistry topic. There was no biochemistry major at Dartmouth in that era, so you were either a biology major or you were a chemistry major. But, first term freshman year I took organic chemistry, which was really stupid because that’s the class that pre-meds take in order to determine who goes to Ivy League medical school and who goes to state medical schools. The competition was ferocious. But I had already passed freshman biology, freshman chemistry. I wanted to get into my interested area, and so I took organic chemistry. And it was quite a shock because there were people that were a whole lot smarter than me working 10 times harder. Because I wanted to have a social life and goof off and do things that I never did in high school. [laughter]

JANOWSKI: Yeah. No, I’m sure that the competition was very fierce for that. How did you end up doing in the class?

HOMEYER: I got a C+ first term, and maybe a B in the second—it was Chemistry 51, 52. I think maybe I got a B in the second term. But the first term, I was doing horribly because I wasn’t doing the work. And then when the final exam was coming, I stayed up basically for three days and three nights studying and I aced the final. So I got a C+. Otherwise, I would have done worse. But I knew that my scholarship depended on not flunking anything, and I had to get my act together, so I did. I was capable of doing that.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. No, I’m sure that—I think a lot of current students even feel dismay going into Dartmouth the first term. It’s a whole different experience than even kids who did really well in high school. It can definitely come as a shock for people in terms of, I would just say like the rigor and the demands. So, yeah, that’s [inaudible] of that. You talk about wanting to get

more involved in social life during your time at Dartmouth. What were some of your commitments and I guess like social involvements at Dartmouth?

HOMEYER: Well, I was always interested in girls, and I was always trying to get a date for every weekend. And then, sophomore year I rushed a fraternity and joined Sigma Nu, and was in that for sophomore, junior and senior year. And then there was plenty going on there. There were, you know, mixers, and I had serious girlfriends from time to time. But I certainly on the weekends, I managed to spend part of the weekend with some young lady, even though there weren't any on campus during the week. I was definitely interested.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, and that brings up a good point, too, that this was before co-education at Dartmouth.

HOMEYER: Right.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I guess...

HOMEYER: And I met my first wife at an experiment in co-education. That was in the winter term of 1968, so I was a senior. And Gretchen Goodell was going to Mount Holyoke [College, South Hadley, MA] where she was a sophomore or junior. She was a junior. So, I don't know, anyway... no, she was two years behind me. So, I met her. And I had always been opposed to co-education. One of the reasons I liked Dartmouth was that there would be fewer distractions since there wouldn't be any women on campus. But I found out that that wasn't really the case, that there were plenty of distractions at Dartmouth. But I met Gretchen, and we got married in 1970 after I finished my two years in Jersey City and she graduated from Mount Holyoke. But it was at a co-education experiment. It was called "the experiment in co-education," and the dormitories were then called the Wigwams, nice politically incorrect term. They're no longer called the Wigwams, but I don't know what they are called. You know, that experiment in co-education was great. It changed my mind, because I found that having women in the classes made me want to be more articulate, more thoughtful, you know, to excel and basically show off for the girls in the class, [laughter] as they were called at the time.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. No, I think—this is the first I've ever heard of I guess how you would describe it as an experiment in co-education.

Could you elaborate a bit more on how exactly that worked? Was it women from universities in the area would just come to Dartmouth and take classes?

HOMEYER: It was something that was organized by the schools. So we emptied—all the guys in there, there were three dormitories down at the end of Tuck Drive that were called the Wigwams: North, South and Central Wigwams, or maybe they were just “the Wigwams.” Anyway, all those guys had to go live with their buddies somewhere else for a week, and then women from Smith, Mount Holyoke, Vassar, you know, the seven sister schools, signed up and came up in buses, and were assigned rooms in the Wigwams, and they spent a week and went to classes and ate in Thayer Hall, and were, as I say, taking classes and acting just as if they were students here. And, of course, they met lots of interesting Dartmouth guys. And I ended up marrying one.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. Let’s see, I’m just trying to situate, I guess, the location of these Wigwams then. You said they were on...

HOMEYER: If you go down Tuck Drive—if you stand with your back to the library and go down I think it’s called Tuck Drive, you go past the Gile [Hall] and Lord [Hall], and all the way down to the end there were three modern dormitories, two or three, that were called the Wigwams, and now they’re called something else. But, at the time they were called the Wigwams.

JANOWSKI: Interesting. Okay, I was going to hedge my bets on it being Gile, Lord and Streeter Hall that you were talking about. But, maybe you’re talking about the dorms in the River cluster?

HOMEYER: Yes, that would be it, the River cluster.

JANOWSKI: Okay, got it.

HOMEYER: And I think other buildings may have been added on from the original two or three that were there.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, I think there definitely are more—

HOMEYER: There’s always construction going on down there.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, definitely, and I know that there’s construction going on there right now, too.

HOMEYER: Yep.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, so this is interesting, because I'd assumed—it sounds like these students who were getting uprooted basically from their actual dormitories for these women to come up to campus, I'm assuming that this didn't have the best reaction among the Dartmouth student body, without the...

HOMEYER: Oh, we were all excited to have all of these beautiful, smart women showing up in our college, we thought it was great. I'm sure that if you got pushed out of your dorm for a week, you know, you just went and stayed with a buddy somewhere else, maybe you slept on the floor, maybe you had an air mattress, or maybe the college gave you a mattress to put on the floor, I don't know. But, I never heard anybody complain. People in this day and age would complain like hell, I'm sure. [laughter] But there was an adventure. Everything was an adventure. College was an adventure. Co-education was an adventure. And as soon as we went through that, I just said, *Yeah, co-education makes sense. Why did it take us so long to figure it out?*

JANOWSKI: Yeah, definitely. And I know you mentioned before that you were opposed to co-education at first. Can you elaborate a bit more on your reasoning to that?

HOMEYER: I thought it would be a distraction.

JANOWSKI: Oh, okay.

HOMEYER: Yep.

JANOWSKI: And do you think that was roughly the sentiment of your friends and your peers at Dartmouth at the time? Or was there a wide range of views on it?

HOMEYER: Wide range of views. Sure. Yeah, there were people that remained opposed to it no matter what.

JANOWSKI: Got it. Yeah. So I think that also you mentioned a bit about your involvement in student activism at Dartmouth, and I'd be interested in hearing more about how you became politically involved, you're involved as an activist during your time at Dartmouth?

HOMEYER: I wasn't politically involved in the sense of demonstrations or sit-ins. As I said, I became involved working in the community with the Project Buddy. I spent my summers, the last two summers at Dartmouth, running playground programs in small Vermont towns, and found that was a wonderful experience, and it's really one of the reasons I went into—that I wanted to go to Harvard and become an elementary school guidance counselor was that I had done a lot of counseling with kids on the playground and outside of playground times. Again, these were jobs that I got through Dartmouth.

The alumni system is really amazing, or at least it was back then, in terms of connecting people to things that needed to happen. So, there was a Dartmouth alumnus working in Saxtons River, and he contacted the Tucker Foundation and said, "Can you give us a couple of students? Nothing is going on in Saxtons River except kids getting in trouble. We need somebody to come down here and organize some stuff and teach swimming and tennis, and have a playground program, and maybe do a little theater or dance or something." And we did all those things and it was wonderful. I loved working with kids.

So, I was doing things rather than protesting. And, you know, I was well aware that there was great inequality between blacks and whites. And, you know, we only I think had seven black guys in our class of 800 or something like that. We had very few minority students in the class of '68. But I was aware of it. And the only political thing that I remember was when George Wallace came up to Dartmouth. He was running for President in 1964, and he came and he—what's now the Rauner Library was at that time Webster Hall, which would seat 1,000 or 2,000, probably 2,000 people. And he had the nerve to come to Dartmouth and try to convince us that he'd be a good President. And George Wallace, as you probably know, was the Governor of Mississippi [Alabama] and a huge racist. And we chased him out of there.

JANOWSKI: Alabama.

HOMEYER: Huh?

JANOWSKI: I was just going to say, I think Alabama? [both talk at the same time]

- HOMEYER: Okay, could be. Anyway, yeah, he was a dreadful human being, and we shouted him down and chased him out. He never got to finish his talk. That was the most political thing I did. And then, later on there were people that were doing sit-ins at the president's office and so forth. And I wore a black arm band at graduation, as did most of us, to sympathize with those who had died in Vietnam. But, no, it was not, for me it was not about organizing a political movement; it was about going out and getting something done. And I realized if I went to Jersey City, I could teach some kids to read, and give them some hope. So I did.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah. And you mentioned sort of like these protests and sit-ins that happened on campus. Would you say that there was a political divide in terms of people on campus who were opposed to the war versus supportive of it? Or would you say that...
- HOMEYER: Oh, yes, absolutely. There was still ROTC, Reserve Officer Training Corps, or whatever the "C" stands for. And, so there were guys in uniform going to classes and pro-military, and there were guys that were radical leftists, and there were a lot of people like me who was just sort of in the middle, trying to get my degree and not going to the march in Washington or becoming a Freedom Rider or any of that. So...
- JANOWSKI: Yeah, and I think that's interesting you bring up the ROTC, because I am aware—I think 1969, so after you graduated, there was a pretty famous sit-in in Parkhurst Hall, where a bunch of students, I think roughly a hundred of them, were protesting the presence of ROTC on campus. So I don't know if you noticed during your time at Dartmouth sort of like an anti-ROTC sentiment among—
- HOMEYER: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that was clearly, you know, a group of people. And, you know, I didn't grow my hair long and I didn't wear flowered shirts. I was just sort of an Ivy League guy going to school and doing his thing, and my commitment was to getting a degree and then going out and doing good in the world. When I was in college I thought probably the best thing I could do would become the head of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington, DC, by the time I was 35 years old. I didn't know how I was going to get there, but it seemed like that would control policy, that would make change on a national level. But of course, things didn't work out that way.

- JANOWSKI: Yeah. One other thing that I kind of wanted to touch on was, earlier you had said that at home you were only allowed to listen to classical music, not rock and roll or anything like that. Did that change in college?
- HOMEYER: Oh, yeah.
- JANOWSKI: Were you into rock and roll and all that stuff? Okay.
- HOMEYER: You know, being in a fraternity, there's a jukebox and playing loud music, and my junior year I became the social chairman, and I hired bands out of Boston that were all black with seven piece bands, nine piece bands, a lot of brass horns, black guys who played the guitar and played rock and roll. Boy, we knew how to boogie back then. We had fun. And I was a good wheeler-dealer. I've always been a good wheeler-dealer. So, I would buy a band for \$1,000 out of Boston, and I would have it for Saturday night at my house, and I would sell it to Bones Gate or Beta Theta Pi for \$400 or \$450 for Friday night, and I'd sell it to another house for Sunday afternoon for \$400. So, you know, if I got \$850 coming in from two other houses, my house only had to pay \$150 out of the \$1,000. And that's about what we paid for a three day gig for a seven piece band out of Boston.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah, that's interesting. I guess I never really thought of the whole economy of bringing bands up. But that's interesting, for sure. And I guess, in terms of you mentioned you would bring up like an all black band, I'm kind of interested in hearing about more of like the racial relations at Dartmouth, too, in terms of, I know you said that the minority makeup of your class...
- HOMEYER: Very small.
- JANOWSKI: I mean, it wasn't a very diverse class. Yeah.
- HOMEYER: But, Motown was *the* music, you know. That was what we all loved. So I was getting Motown bands out of Boston. It was fun. You know, it was great. I mean, there were white bands as well, but the bands that I remember best, you know, there was a great band out of Boston that I brought up. But then there were also local bands with guys who attended Dartmouth, but played bass guitar or keyboards or whatever, drums, and they'd put together bands, and they were a lot

cheaper. But for something like Winter Carnival, I wanted something out of Boston.

JANOWSKI: Right. Yeah. Let's see, I'm trying to think if there's any other questions kicking out to me about Dartmouth. I guess, so in terms of the Peace Corps, I know that you did not go to the Peace Corps until a few years after graduation, but did you have any friends or did you know anyone who was pretty set on joining the Peace Corps after graduating?

HOMEYER: I did not. I got an application when I was in Jersey City, particularly after my first year, which was a very rough year teaching. I mean, teaching in the ghetto when you don't know how to teach, and I didn't because Dartmouth did not have any education classes available to us at that time—there was no Education Department. My first year was a rough year that I really—it was very stressful, because I didn't know how to—it took me a while to learn how to get discipline in the classroom, and I had a lot of idealism, but I didn't have a lot of practical skills and I had to learn on the job.

I had a wonderful mentor by the name of Barbara Barnes. I think at the time she was Barbara Ragle, and she later became Dartmouth's Dean of Students for a year or two. But, she was an educator and worked with a non-profit. She lives in Norwich, Vermont. And she was a good advisor to me when I was in Jersey City and very helpful, actually came in and sat in on my classroom, because my school administration was so overwhelmed with just surviving with 2,000 kids in a city block by city block four story high brick schoolhouse, that I never had any help from the administration in terms of how to teach. But Barbara would come down from time to time and give me practical—she'd sit in on my class and give me practical advice, and that was really wonderful.

JANOWSKI: Well, I'd definitely love to dive into that more in a second. I think first, though, I'd like to backtrack a little bit and talk about, I guess you as a senior at Dartmouth and the attitudes of your friends and peers towards graduation. I think as you mentioned, the draft was on people's minds at that point.

HOMEYER: It was looming over us like a black cloud. We were all scared silly, except for the ROTC guys, and they were looking forward to going off and joining the military, being officers.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I mean, what was that like for all you guys graduating in '68? Were there people putting plans in place or how they would, I guess, get out of the draft, or what their post-graduation plans were? Was that affected at all by it?

HOMEYER: Of course it was. We were like, imagine somebody had a box of a dozen squirrels and they opened the box of squirrels on the Cross Bronx Expressway at rush hour and dumped them onto the highway. They would be running in every different direction and thinking they were going to get run over by a bus instantaneously. Some of them would make it to the curb and many of them would not. And that's the way we felt. We felt like squirrels on the Cross Bronx Expressway.

JANOWSKI: Hum. Yeah. So...

HOMEYER: And I've never used that metaphor, it just came to me now, but it really was. We didn't know what we were doing, where we were going to go. Yes, we'd make plans, you'd get into graduate school and you'd get drafted. The great thing was about the Vietnam War, they had a draft in 1970. I mean, they had a lottery in 1970. So, you knew whether you were going to get drafted or not. According to your birthdate, they pulled out—they had 366 ping pong balls, each with a number on it, and each number was assigned to a day of the year. And when they pulled the balls out, they announced the day of the year. My number came up number 252. And I knew after that that I'd never have to worry about going to Vietnam. I had a high number and they would probably use a third of the people that were eligible, so numbers 1 through 120 would be drafted, and the rest of us were home free.

JANOWSKI: Did you have any friends from Dartmouth who did end up getting drafted?

HOMEYER: Yeah. Tony Dambrava who worked with me in Saxtons River, Vermont, went to Vietnam, and survived it. He got wounded, made it home. There was another guy who went to Vietnam and did not come back, but I can't think of his name off the top of my head. We weren't real close, but I knew him.

JANOWSKI: Was that, does Bill Smoyer ring a bell by any chance?

HOMEYER: Yeah. Yeah.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, I'm aware of him. I'm pretty sure he was another member of the class of '68, who I think was the first Dartmouth student to be killed in battle. Yeah. I guess, was there any sort of alumni reaction to that, or did the class of '68 sort of come together around that in any way?

HOMEYER: No. Not that I knew of. We had all dispersed. We were the squirrels that made it across the highway, if we were alive and well.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. Okay, well, I think this would be a good time to sort of move in, then, to your time post-graduation from Dartmouth. So could you tell me a bit about your immediate post-graduation plans? You mentioned Harvard education school.

HOMEYER: Right, so that was just for the summer. Then in the fall I went to Jersey City. I arrived in Jersey City a few days before our school started, and I had no place to live. Dartmouth had found me a black family that would let me live in their living room, and there was a cot in the living room and a table I could use as a desk, and there was a bathroom downstairs that I could use. And they were nice people, Mr. and Mrs. Gaither, G-a-i-t-h-e-r. And Mr. Gaither ran the local liquor store just down the street. I lived on Pacific Avenue, two blocks from school.

And of the 80 teachers at PS-22, I was the only one that lived in the neighborhood. Well, no, that's not true, because [Forrester] "Woody" Lee, L-e-e-, a class of '68, was also there with me, and he and his wife Deborah lived upstairs on the third floor and with the Gaithers. So there were two of us. Woody had actually been very active in civil rights stuff and marches and whatnot his senior year. He did not graduate with the class; he graduated later. But he went to Jersey City as someone who had not completed and gotten his degree with the class. Wonderful fellow, and successful in life.

So I arrived there, and I started teaching, and there were five undergraduates in that first program with undergraduates through the Tucker Foundation, and I was the unofficial advisor to them. Woody was actually, I think, in charge of the

program down there as a paid person, but I was just unofficially an advisor and hung out with the guys and it was fun having some Dartmouth students down there. But, as I said, I didn't know how to keep discipline in my classroom, I didn't know how to organize a lesson plan, I didn't know anything. Learned on the job.

JANOWSKI: I guess I'm kind of interested in how you ended up in Jersey City? Was it just that was where the Dartmouth program through the Tucker Foundation had connections?

HOMEYER: Yes. Doc Dey asked me if I would be interested in going to Jersey City. He said, "I couldn't pay you, Henry, but we'll help you to find housing and, you know, we'd like to have you there." So I said, "Okay, sounds good to me."

JANOWSKI: I guess, so what did exactly you end up teaching while you were at the school? And could you—what was the name of the school again?

HOMEYER: Public School number 22. PS-22. I taught fourth grade. I taught everything. And in my first year class I had students who were eight or nine years old, which is the appropriate age for a fourth grader; I had Keith Hackerson, who was 13 years old and who was just a half inch shorter than I am. I'm 5'11½". He was 5'11". He'd stayed back four times. He had been in school for eight years; he was in the fourth grade. There was nothing wrong with Keith. He wasn't the brightest bulb on the string, but he didn't come to school. So my first job was, *how do I convince Keith to show up at school?* Because the year before he'd showed up maybe 22 times out of 180 days. I got him to come most of the time. And that was a challenge for me. And I wanted to teach him to read. He was 13 years old and couldn't read a word. He was dyslexic, but we didn't have that term back then. I had a number of boys in the class that were dyslexic and could not read, and I taught them to read. That was a good thing.

JANOWSKI: Wow. I mean, that's no small feat, just working from the ground up teaching someone to read. I think in our conversation we had last week, you talked about some films that you had made, some instructional films.

HOMEYER: My first year there, this woman I referred to, Barbara Barnes, or Barbara Ragle, her three daughters had raised money in Norwich through bake sales and car washes to get all my

kids in Jersey City—I had 25 or 28 kids in my class that first year—little black-and-white cameras and film, and we went out and we took pictures in the neighborhood, and just pasted them on a paper and wrote things as a language arts program. And then, based on that experience, I applied to the State of New Jersey for a creative teachers grant, and I got one, a \$1,000 grant to get the equipment and film to make sound movies. And that was my second year was working with that equipment.

But, it was, because I was doing things like this, I was very threatening to the administration of the school. It was a racist administration, all white. The principal had been a shop teacher back in the '40s or '50s or something, and had made it—worked up to the principal, and he was not interested in education. He was interested in discipline and just cranking the kids through and try to keep them in school, but he was not somebody that I related to at all. So, when I got this grant from the State of New Jersey, his immediate response was outrage. “How dare you do this without consulting me?” And my response was, “Well, you’re not doing anything anyway, so I had to do it on my own, because you would have put a block in the road.” So I wasn’t a very popular teacher with the administration, and so they tried to say that I had to get the—everything had to go out to bid through their competitive bidding process, which was the old boy system and politically involved and stuff. I said, “No, it’s \$1,000, and the city laws say that this does not have to go out to bid.” But they still held up my actually getting the equipment, so instead of getting it in the fall, I got it in the spring, so I didn’t get a chance to do very much with it.

But, it was still an exciting time. This was Super 8 [Super 8mm] film. This is before videos, before anything you could do. There were no cell phones that you could make videos with. There was nothing. So this was Super 8 film that had to be sent off and developed, and you tied the camera to a tape recorder, a reel-to-reel tape recorder, and when you turned on the camera, it would turn on the tape recorder so you could do sound movies that were pretty close to sound movies. The sound was a little bit off from the movie sometimes. But, anyway, it was an exciting time.

But everything I did was a struggle when it came to the administration. So after two years teaching there, I said, “Well, how about a third year?” And Mr. Wilson said, “Well,

we get a lot of students coming out of Jersey City State Teachers College and St. Peter's College in Jersey City that are fully qualified, and you are not fully qualified," because although I was going to night school and summer school, I did not have my teaching credential. So he said, "Well, we'll let you know after Labor Day if we have any positions for you." And I said, "Oh, okay, well, I don't think you want me to come back for a third year." He said, "No, no, no, just we have to go with the best possible, and you're not that because you're not certified." So, I took the hint and did not apply to be a third year teacher in Jersey City. Instead, I came up here to the Upper Valley and was offered the job of the teaching principal of the Plainfield Elementary School in Plainfield, New Hampshire, which was great fun and much, much easier than trying to teach in Jersey City.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I think, going back to your strained relationship with the administration, I'd be interested in hearing more about why that any film prompted, I guess, the response that it did from the administration. What was I guess the content of them or the focus of them?

HOMEYER: Oh, we were just—there was nothing political about them. The only thing political was that I used the Black Panthers as teacher aides. They volunteered to come in and help. If we were going out in the neighborhood to film, you've got 25 kids, they can all be going in different directions, you need some more adults, and there were no teacher aides, other than the Dartmouth undergraduates, but they were all assigned to different teachers, and I needed some adult eyes to help do things. And I lived upstairs and over one apartment from the Black Panther office, and had gotten to know the Panthers and was friendly with the Panthers, and they were very political.

So, you know, I would have somebody coming to help me out on an afternoon, and everybody had to stop by the office and get a slip that allowed you to go to the classroom. So, one of the Panthers would come, and they wouldn't say, "May I please have a slip to go to Mr. Homeyer's room?" You know, Wayne would walk up to the desk and say, "Hey, tell Wilson I'm going up to Homeyer's room, all right?" [laughter] and go up to my room. They didn't like that kind of stuff. I was a troublemaker in their eyes.

I'll tell you another funny story. The first week I was in the school, I said, "Well, where's the school library?" "Oh, it's just down the hall from you on the second floor." And I said, "Okay. How do I bring my kids in? It seems to be locked." And he said, "Oh, no, the kids can't go in the library." "Well, why not?" "Well, because they'd steal the books obviously." [laughter] He said, "You can go in and take out some books and bring them to your classroom, but you're responsible for making sure they don't get stolen or damaged." That was the attitude of the school: *if you let kids touch the books, they're gonna steal them*. It was not a nice place. It was a tough two years.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I guess I'm a bit interested now in hearing about how you first got connected with members of the Black Panther organization?

HOMEYER: Well, I lived upstairs and over one, and I'm a friendly guy, you know? A few guys coming and going, stop and chat with them. And they knew right away that I was there for the right reasons. They put word out on the street, "Don't touch Homeyer." And only two or three times in my two years there did I get into a situation where I felt in danger, and each time it was like out of a comic book. This black guy who I'd never seen before would materialize, he's wearing a black beret and a black leather jacket, it's 10:00 at night and I'm walking down the street, and some guy's pulled a knife on me. A guy comes out of the shadows, said, "You leave him alone. He's with us." And they did.

One time I was taking my kids down from the second floor to go home, and I'd walked them down the stairs and an eighth grader, a big guy, started knocking my kids down the stairs. So I got into a confrontation with him, and I said, "I'm taking you to the principal." He said, "You're gonna have to drag me there, buddy, because I'm as big as you are and you ain't every gonna make it." Out of nowhere, a Black Panther showed up, took the guy aside and said, he said, "Mr. Homeyer, you leave him to us, we'll take care of him." I said, "Fine." [laughter] I was in over my head.

And the Black Panthers were wonderful people. And I was able to—my second year there had been a conflict between the Panthers and the police. The police believed that somebody had gone by the local precinct office and fired a few shots through the windows. We don't know who did that,

but they decided it was the Panthers. So, one night somebody set up a machine gun across the street from my apartment and started firing bullets through the... No, no, okay. No, somebody threw a fire bomb against the bordered up windows of the Black Panther office, and I got on the phone and I called the secretary of the Panthers. I had her phone number. And I said, "You've gotta get your people in here, because the fire department has come now and they've kicked open the door and they're hosing down your files and knocking over your desks and trashing the place." So, all the Panthers in the city came in and chased the police and the fire people out of the office. And then they had a big meeting, and all of a sudden somebody set up machine guns across the street and they cut the office in half at about waist level with machine guns through the plywood. But as soon as the machine guns started to shoot, the guys all dropped, and women, dropped to the floor. The treasurer was Clara Vincent. I remember her name now. She was there.

So, nobody got killed, but it was a very scary time, and I remember crawling under my bed when the machine guns started to shoot. I knew what was going on. And machine guns don't sound like they do on TV. They sound different when you're there. But I literally crawled under my bed and waited it out. But the Panthers were very grateful to me for letting them know that their office was being trashed. These were exciting times. But, you know, Friday night I'd play cards with the guys, and I never smoked dope, but they would smoke dope and I would drink some wine and we'd play cards and get rowdy, you know. It was fun.

And it was a view into another part of the world. I've always been curious what makes people tick, how does the world work? You know, I came from a sheltered background, and all of a sudden I was playing a card game called Tunk with a bunch of black guys from Jersey City who had never gone through high school, but were caring, hard-working people trying to do things in their community. It was a real experience.

JANOWSKI:

Yeah. Wow. So, I'm just figuring that, I mean, you talked about this event, but I'm sure that having the Black Panther Party involved in your classroom, I'm assuming the administration at the school you worked at was predominantly white or all white?

HOMEYER: Predominantly white, yes.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. So, I'm just assuming that you probably, I mean, didn't go over that great with members of your school's administration?

HOMEYER: No.

JANOWSKI: Yeah.

HOMEYER: No, I was considered radical because I lived in the neighborhood and I hung out with the Black Panthers, simple as that. And I wasn't afraid. When I had—the way I finally established discipline in my classroom was largely being willing to walk down to the projects and go in the projects after school and meet with the mother or father, or the parents together, but most families were run by single moms. And they were not used to seeing—you know, normally how it happened if a kid misbehaved and was having trouble, the teacher would send home a note saying “you must come to school so I can tell you about your child and how bad he has been.” And I sent a note home and said, “I'm worried about your kid's progress in school and we need to meet. We can meet at your home or at my home or at school. What would you like?” And every single one said “my home.” So, I would go down there and meet with parents, and then the parents became on my side, and all I had to do was say, “Belinda, if you keep this up this afternoon, I'm gonna send a note home to your mother,” and Belinda would say, “Oh, okay. I'll be better.” [laughter]

And speaking of Belinda, Belinda Lee was in my first year class, and she was a girl with a tested IQ in the 130s, and could read on grade level and was sweet as could be. She was one of eight children. And that's another thing that I did that was threatening to the school. Through my Dartmouth connections, and I don't remember exactly how it went, somebody heard that I was teaching in Jersey City in inner city, so somebody from NBC's network called me up and said, “Bill Cosby is gonna do a special in a few months and wants to get a bunch of kids from different social and economic backgrounds who are talented and clever. He's gonna give them a Super 8 camera and five rolls of film. We want them to make some simple movies around a theme, and you're not allowed to be there when they film, you're not

allowed to tell them how to do it; you just explain the equipment and the basic concept. Do you have somebody who would be good for that?" I immediately thought of Belinda Lee, because she was so bright.

And out of I guess they got the 25 kids around the country, and eight were asked to go to Hollywood, and Belinda was one of the ones asked to go there. And back in the day, Bill Cosby was a hero to the black world. He was a television host and just a wonderful guy, despite what happened later in life. So, NBC called me up and said, "Okay, Mr. Homeyer, Belinda has been chosen to go to Hollywood. Can she go?" And I said, "Well, I'll have to talk to her mother." He said, "Well, you'll take her out there." And I said, "No, I won't. That's not at all appropriate for me to be escorting an eight-year-old girl to Hollywood. Her mother's gonna go."

So I worked it out with the mother and they got somebody else to look after the other kids, and Mrs. Lee and Belinda went to Hollywood, and Belinda was the star of the show. She and Bill Cosby came on to open the show, skipping rope together, and they showed her movies. And all the kids in Jersey City in Public School 22 knew that Belinda Lee was going to go be on TV with Bill Cosby, but a lot of them still didn't believe it. They said, "Oh, no, she's just gonna go visit her aunties in South Carolina. She's not really going to Hollywood." But, everybody was watching TV that night and Belinda Lee came out, and Jersey City was turned upside down. Here was this black kid on national television. And she was such a star. And it was a wonderful thing.

And again, that established, helped establish my relationship with the black community in Jersey City and with the students, and not with the administration, because the administration didn't like having Jersey City shown for what it is. I mean, her theme was "things that are beautiful, things that make me happy" in the ghetto, except she didn't say in the ghetto, just "in my..." you know, it was in her environment. So she started out with a film of a grandmother sitting in the projects with her grandbaby in the sun, and she was on asphalt, there's no grass, there are broken bottles everywhere. But the grandmother and the baby were having such a good time. It was a beautiful moment. It was a beautiful moment. So, she had that kind of sensitivity. But the administration did not like that.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. No, that's definitely, that's a remarkable story. Do you remember what year that was when Belinda got featured on the Bill Cosby show or Bill Cosby shows?

HOMEYER: That would have been early 1969, because I started in the fall of '68 and this was in the spring of '69 or late winter of '69. There's a sad ending to the story. 30 years after I was teaching in Jersey City, the alumni magazine asked me would I like to write a story about this, about my time in Jersey City, and I said "sure." So I went back to Jersey City to try to find some of my students, and I started tracking them down. And of the eight kids whose names I could just pick out of my head, one of them was Belinda Lee, and I went to find her and she was already dead. She made it to college. She wanted to be a schoolteacher. She made it to college. She died of leukemia in her junior year.

JANOWSKI: Wow. Yeah, that's really terrible.

HOMEYER: But out of the 16 kids whose names I came up with, I believe 8 or 9 were dead, mostly from AIDS or violence.

JANOWSKI: That's awful.

HOMEYER: So, the alumni magazine paid me for the article handsomely, but they did not run it because it was too grim. It was just too grim.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. No, that is terrible to hear.

HOMEYER: But I did meet up and sit down with some of my students three years later. I spent quite a bit of time with Donna Hemphill, who was one of my favorites, who had been at that point a heroin addict for over 20 years, but she was alive, and just as funny and lovely and clever as she had been as an eight-year-old.

JANOWSKI: Have you—so you mentioned that your third year, then, teaching, or they didn't want you to come back for a third year?

HOMEYER: They said I wasn't qualified and I would have to compete for a job, and they let me know after Labor Day. But of course, school starts two days after Labor Day, so that was saying they didn't have a job for me. So then I came up to New Hampshire and was teaching principal in Plainfield.

JANOWSKI: So, what year was that when you came to New Hampshire?

HOMEYER: 1970. And we're speaking to me in Cornish Flat in the house that I bought in 1970. I'm still here.

JANOWSKI: Ah, okay. So then, I want to move more into your time with the Peace Corps, then, because I feel like [both talk at the same time]

HOMEYER: Right, we're running out of time.

JANOWSKI: I mean, we definitely—I wouldn't feel pressured by the time constraints too much. But, I think it would be good to sort of move into that topic. I am aware that, so you started serving in the Peace Corps in 1973, is that correct?

HOMEYER: Yes. Because '70 to '72 I was teaching in Plainfield, New Hampshire; I bought the house in Cornish Flat where I am today. And then, at the end of the two years, my wife Gretchen and I set off to hitchhike around the world in a year. That was our plan. We went to Europe. We bought one-way tickets to London. We hitchhiked around and camping out through England, France, Scotland, Wales, Spain, Germany, and worked the grape harvest in France in the fall, then went south to Italy, down to Palermo on Sicily and took a boat to Tunis, hitchhiked from Tunis to Algiers, and from Algiers straight across the Sahara Desert, arriving in Cameroon by Christmas of 1972. So, that was quite the adventure.

But, my sister Ruth Anne was living in Cameroon. Her husband was Canadian. And they had invited us to come visit. That's why we started this whole adventure. We got there, we had three months' visas, fell in love with Cameroon, and applied to the Peace Corps in country. That took us almost a year to get accepted and all the paperwork done and so forth and become official volunteers, and then we were three years as Peace Corps volunteers. We ran a handicraft cooperative in Bamenda, Northwest Province. Bamenda is spelled B-a-m-e-n-d-a, which is between—it's not too far from Nigeria on the western side of Cameroon. It was an English speaking province. And we had a fabulous experience helping to take a failed handicraft cooperative, set up an export marketing system, train people to run it, train people to produce things according to export

specifications, and it was a huge success, huge success. And we had a great time doing it.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. So, it sounds like your process leading up to joining the Peace Corps was a bit non-traditional, I'd say, in comparison to some other people who, I guess, went through training in the States before going into the Peace Corps.

HOMEYER: Right. When I was in Jersey City that first year, I think I started to say but I got sidetracked, I got a Peace Corps application, looked at it and decided not to fill it out because I didn't want somebody else figuring out where I was going to go and what I was going to do, which was the case at the time. So, when we were in Cameroon, we met other Peace Corps volunteers, we saw this handicraft cooperative which was defunct and bankrupt, and we said, "There are wonderful crafts in this province. Why don't we work with these people and see if we can set up a way to market their stuff?" And we did.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. So, did you then receive any sort of—what was the training process like for...

HOMEYER: I didn't get any training. By the time we were accepted, we spoke the trade language, which was called Pidgin, P-i-d-g-I-n, Pidgin English, which was about half English with some German and Portugese mixed in and tribal languages. And it's a tonal language. But we were functional in that. We knew the culture. We had actually done a small collection of artifacts and writing a teacher's guide for what's now the Montshire Museum in Norwich [VT]. It was then called the Center for Educational Training. And anyway, we had gotten deeply into the culture before we became volunteers, and spent a lot of time... Gretchen was an amateur—well, we were both amateur anthropologists and we were deep into the culture of learning how people did things and why they did them and what they meant and what were the traditional values and so forth. So, by the time we got into the Peace Corps, we did not need any training.

And you can see, most of what I've learned to do in my life I've taught myself, whether it's being a schoolteacher or a principal or a Peace Corps volunteer, or a garden writer. You know, I've just taught myself for whatever needed to happen.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. No, I was going to ask about the language barrier and overcoming that, and interacting with the people there, but it sounds like you picked up on that pretty quickly.

HOMEYER: Yes.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I guess, so you were there for three years then until 1976, is that correct?

HOMEYER: We arrived by Christmas of '72 and we left middle of '76. So, three-and-a-half, almost four years.

JANOWSKI: And, so throughout your time in Cameroon, were you basically just doing, working with the handicraft collective for the whole time? Were there other projects or was that your main focus?

HOMEYER: That was our focus. Our total focus was making this cooperative a viable entity. And 23 years after leaving there, I went back on a visit and found that the cooperative was still functioning. And that felt real good. And it had changed, but it was still successful, which is almost unheard of. Aid projects are so often good when the money's there or the personnel is there from outside to help make it work. But, when everything stops, and it has to depend on its own circumstances, it doesn't work. But that particular thing had good people, and I am in touch today with my counterpart from all those years ago, Moses Susung, S-u-s-u-n-g. I got an email from him last week. I've been able to call him on his cell phone. It's really amazing. The technology has changed so much. When I was in Cameroon, it took three weeks to three months to get a letter from the States to Cameroon. And I once got a *New Yorker*—I subscribed to the *New Yorker* all my adult life—I got a *New Yorker* that was a year old that had come sea mail to Cameroon. [laughter] And I was looking at it and I went, "This is June, but it's the wrong year." And I realized that's how long it had taken to get there. And now, I can call up Moses on his cell phone.

JANOWSKI: That is pretty—I mean, that's remarkable.

HOMEYER: One of the things I did, and I just want to digress for a moment, because it's off topic a little bit, but when we finished as volunteers, there was a part of Cameroon that really intrigued us because we had heard about it, it was called the Mamfe Oversight, M-a-m-f-e, Mamfe Oversight, and

it was the area between Nigeria and Cameroon. And there was a stepping off point in the grasslands where we lived, which was elevation 5,000 feet, that went down to, there was a trail that went down to sea level in the jungle along the Cross River. And it was an eight day trek. And we were told that people were living there the way they had since time immemorial. And we had to see it.

So we set off with three friends and us, that was five of us, and we hired four head carriers, porters, that carried not only our clothes, but food, because there was no food for sale in there. Money had no value. It was a trade economy, so we had to bring trade goods for things we needed and to, when we spent a night in a village, we would then present the chiefs with gifts. But we walked for eight days through the jungle, or from the grasslands down into the jungle in an area where clothing was, for women it consisted just of a little waistband with something covering their privates, and for men they might have a pair of shorts and a shirt, the kind donated to the Salvation Army. But, it was, there was no electricity, no running water, which is true in most villages in Cameroon at the time. But the thing that had struck us most was that there was no money, and money had no value. You could not buy anything.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I think one dimension of it that I'd like to go into a bit more is just sort of the culture shock aspect and how, what was that like for you? How did you feel adjusting to Cameroon's culture when you first got there and throughout the years you were there?

HOMEYER: It's funny, when we came across the Sahara Desert, all of North Africa was totally foreign to me. The alphabet was Arabic, the language—French was somewhat useful, but not so much, and I spoke some French. But when we got across the Saharan down into the country of Niger, I felt like I'd gone back to Jersey City because all these little kids had black faces and looked like my kids in Jersey City. Of course, during slave times their ancestors had been taken to America. So, for me having been a minority in Jersey City for two years made me feel very comfortable in black Africa right from the git-go. In North Africa I was not comfortable. Black Africa I was. And I didn't have any cultural adjustment.

The biggest cultural adjustment was coming back to America after almost 10 years overseas, and a simple thing like going

into a big grocery store was mindboggling because there were so many choices and so much stuff, and so much stuff I'd never seen before. You know, when I left, you couldn't scan the groceries with a scanner and have it come up on the thing. Everything was mechanical. I came back and technology had leaped forward. I came back in 1982. I left in '72. So I had missed 10 years of American culture and life. And paved roads, roads that you could traverse at any season, not—in mud season in Cameroon, you couldn't get places sometimes because the roads were so bad.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I think you also brought up an interesting point with your story about the *New Yorker* and receiving that a year after its publication. Yeah, I think... So, during your time in Mali, then if you were there from—or not Mali, Cameroon from '72 to '76, the Vietnam War ended while you were there. How did you hear about the news of that, or did you hear about the news of that?

HOMEYER: Yes. We could get BBC on the radio there, British Broadcasting Company, so we had news.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. Do you remember hearing about the fall of Saigon, and do you remember what your reaction was to that at the time?

HOMEYER: I don't remember. I was so much involved in my life there that that was so far away and so distant to what was my daily life that... I was glad that the Vietnam War was over. I was sad that it ended the way that it did. I wished it could have been a negotiated settlement that was better than just having us cut and run. That was a shame. I felt ashamed that we had left many people behind, the Vietnamese people who had helped just the way, you know, in Iraq we have left behind translators and truck drivers, Iraqis that should have been given visas to the United States, but didn't get them. Yeah, it was...

But I don't have a lot of strong memories about the particular events in the fall of Saigon, so again, no television. I've lived my whole life without television. I don't have a television today. So, I have a computer and I can get things that would be television, but because I grew up without a television, I don't feel a—I'm not programmed into it. I don't feel a need to watch television. We did not go to the movies often as a

child, maybe once or twice a year. So I'm not focused in on the screen.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, I think this could also be a good point to move on then to your work which the Peace Corps in Mali, which you started in 1977?

HOMEYER: That's correct.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. Would you be willing to tell us a bit about how you got involved there and what prompted that transition?

HOMEYER: After we finished the Peace Corps, we went to Bangui, B-a-n-g-u-i, Central Africa, where we had a five week contract with USAID, the United States Agency for International Development, which is our branch of the State Department which gives foreign assistance. We had gotten a job to see if CAE, as it was at the time, Central African Empire—it was not a republic at the time; it is now—could have a handicraft cooperative like the one that we did, could it be replicated there? So we went there and decided it could not, for lots of reasons that aren't relevant to our discussion here.

But anyway, from there we came back to visit friends in Cameroon. That's actually when we did the trek to the Mamfe Overside, that eight day walk through the jungle. And then, we went to visit friends in what was then Dahomey, which became Benin while we were there, or just before we arrived. And traveled around West Africa visiting friends, doing things for a few months, and then I took a job with USAID in Mauritania, a three or four month thing supervising the program that donated grain to the drought stricken country of Mauritania. Traveled around the Sahara in an AID Land Rover with a driver and translator, driver/translator, while Gretchen went back to the States and checked out a job offer in the States that she was interested in.

The director of USAID, who shall remain nameless, offered me a long term contract there, and I accepted it on a handshake. We went back to the States to visit family and so forth, and while I was in the States, that director changed his mind and broke his word and said, "No, I need a Ph.D. to do this job. I can't have you, Henry." I was so mad, I bought a car—we were out in Ohio visiting friends—I bought a used Datsun sedan for \$600 and drove it across from Ohio to

Washington, DC, with the idea of confronting this fellow who had broken his word. To me, my word is my honor. I can't—if you shake hands on a deal, the deal is done. And this guy, I confronted him and he said, “Well, I guess my handshake isn't worth much.” And I said, “I don't know how you can look at yourself in the mirror,” and left.

But I had friends over in the Peace Corps building, so I went over to visit there and saw a woman who I knew from Cameroon who was now in the office that hired Peace Corps country directors, and she said, “Well, Henry, why don't you and Gretchen apply to be Peace Corps country directors? You could do it as the first married couple to be joint directors?” And I said, “Oh, that's interesting.” So we did that, and Gretchen decided—she had been accepted at Columbia University Ph.D. program in anthropology—she decided that she wanted to do that, and we decided that we could make the marriage work and have me in Mali and Gretchen in New York, although that didn't turn out to work out very well and we got divorced later, or while I was in Mali, just after I got out of Mali. So I got hired to be the director of Peace Corps for Mali, based in Bamako, B-a-m-a-k-o. And I spent from late '77 to early '82 as the country director there.

JANOWSKI: Now, as the country director then, what does that all entail in your words? That sounds like a pretty large task.

HOMEYER: It was. It was a million dollar a year budget and I had a big staff and I was responsible for the health and safety of 62 volunteers when I arrived, and I had three associate directors. And I was in over my head, but I learned how to do it as I went along. I got better at it. There was no staff training, maybe a day or two of orientation in Washington.

JANOWSKI: So, what sort of projects did you [both talk at the same time]

HOMEYER: We had three basic programs. We had an education program with students teaching English in high schools. We had a health component which was new, trying to set up village health communities that would teach some basic hygiene and maternal skills, and sort of basic things that a village health worker can do to help people survive. So, a lot of babies died of dehydration. They get diarrhea. It's a hot climate. If they didn't get rehydrated, they'd die. And that's a very simple thing to prevent, so that we were training village

health workers. So we had a small rural development program. I had a guy who was teaching villagers how to make a windmill that you could make with bicycle parts and things you could get in the market to pump water. We had an appropriate technology program, teaching how to do all kinds of things from food preservation by solar means, fruit preservation, you know, like drying mangoes, how to make charcoal better so you don't waste the energy from your trees. So there were a lot of exciting programs.

But I was stuck in the capital much of the time doing paperwork and making decisions and so forth. So it was not my favorite job. I would have much—I think being a Peace Corps volunteer was much more fun than being a Peace Corps country director. And you know, I was less than a year out of the Peace Corps and I was a director of a major program, and as I said, I was over my head.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, definitely.

HOMEYER: You know, I was in my 30s, and most Peace Corps country directors were 50.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I think one other thing I'm interested in is if the roots of your interest, your passion in gardening, did that materialize at all during your Peace Corps work, either in Cameroon or Mali, in terms of I guess like agricultural projects or something like that?

HOMEYER: Well, I've always been a gardener my whole life. My grandfather on the maternal side, John Lenat, L-e-n-a-t, was a fabulous organic gardener starting back in the '40s when organic gardening was just sort of being defined. So, I gardened with him starting at age two or three helping out in the garden, and when I was in Cameroon I had a vegetable garden, when I was in Mali I had a vegetable garden. I've always been interested in growing and in plants. I didn't have anything to do with gardening in my job in Cameroon. In Mali, yes, I had some rural development components, but again, I was mainly in the office, and I had an associate director who did the actual hands on things. And we did teach gardening skills and composting skills and so forth. But, people knew a lot already anyway. They knew how to survive in their climates better than we did. But, certain things we could bring in.

- JANOWSKI: Yeah. So, let's see, I'm trying to think if I have any other questions about your time as Peace Corps country director in Mali. Yeah, I mean, I guess what sort of—you finished your work as country director in 1982, correct?
- HOMEYER: Correct.
- JANOWSKI: And what sort of prompted you to I guess leave that position and come back to the States?
- HOMEYER: Well, for one thing, there's a five year statute of limitations. You can't be a Peace Corps country director for longer than five years. So, my time was running out. And my marriage was falling apart, and the family was far away, and I decided it was time to come back. I'd been gone for 10 years, from '72 to '82, and almost to the day. I left on July 1st, '72, and got back in July of '82.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah, I mean, I'd imagine being away from the US for so long, did it ever start to feel isolating while you were in Mali, or even in Cameroon, just away from your friends and your home?
- HOMEYER: Well, I had friends, I made a home. When I was in Cameroon I had lots of friends, and I had some great friends in Mali. Wherever I am is home. But, just ready to come back to the United States.
- JANOWSKI: Yeah. So I guess, well, tell me a bit about coming back to the States then? So you moved right back into Cornish Flat, New Hampshire?
- HOMEYER: I did. But not with Gretchen. We had separated and got divorced. And, so that was a tough time for me. But, I got reestablished here. And I didn't know how to make a living in the States. I did not want to go back to teaching elementary school. I wanted to be a writer, but I didn't know how to go about making a living as a writer. I had written a children's book at the end of my time in Mali, based on a story I told in Saxtons River in the summer of '66. And it was a story about a boy and a mountain lion, and it's a fantasy adventure for kids grades 4, 5, 6, a chapter book, they say. So it was that tale that I told in Saxtons River a little bit every afternoon at the end of the day, we'd sit down, I'd tell a story. And I had invented a character named Wobar, who was born with a mustache and it never fell out, and he had certain magical

powers that Harry Potter later picked up on. [laughter] And I thought, “This is gonna be a bestseller and I’ll just go from there. I’m gonna write kids’ books.”

But I didn’t know how to present a book to a publisher. I mean, I just mailed it in to Simon & Schuster and said, “Here it is. You gotta love it.” [laughter] And three months later I got a form letter saying, “Thank you. It doesn’t fit our needs at the present time.” But, you know, when I first sent it in, I literally stayed home for a couple of weeks thinking they’d read it right away and call me up. I gave them my phone number, I said, “Call me up.” [laughter] I was so dumb.

But, I met someone and we got married, and I started off looking for something that would give me, you know, that would utilize my skills as an administrator. And there’s an organization, a non-profit in Lebanon, New Hampshire, called The LISTEN Center. LISTEN is actually an acronym for Lebanon in Service to Each Neighbor. And they have a used clothing store and they do budget counseling and emergency relief and all kinds of things. And I took the job as the director of that, but it was not a good fit. I stayed there just under a year.

JANOWSKI: When was that?

HOMEYER: That was in ’84. You know, I had saved enough money from Mali to—as a Peace Corps director you’re well paid, so I took a year off, essentially. And then I got the job at the LISTEN Center, did that for a year. And then I worked on the town road crew for a while, I worked in a cow farm in a dairy barn for a while, just doing whatever needed to be done to pay some bills. And then I decided, *Okay, I’m gonna start a new career.* I looked at all the different things I could do and I said, *I’m gonna learn a trade. I’m gonna become an electrician.* So I went to night school and got a job as an apprentice, and got my license, and then I got my master’s license right away, and I started my own business.

For 14 years I was an electrician. And towards the end of that when I was getting fully bored, I started writing gardening articles for the local newspaper, the *Valley News*. And that was fun. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed the feedback I got from people that read it and I found that, as a former schoolteacher and Peace Corps volunteer, I loved teaching people things. So, I started writing—I got an offer to do a

book. In actually my first year of writing for the *Valley News*, the University Press of New England asked if I thought there was a book in it, and I said, “Oh, yeah, we can do this.”

So then I started out writing once a month, and then I was writing every week for the *Valley News*, and then I spent one winter going around and visiting editors all over New England trying to find people that would take my column as a self-syndicated column, and I did it. And I was able to build up enough newspapers that I can make a living doing it, and I stopped being an electrician. And that’s what I’ve been doing for the last 20 years, 22 years. Since 1998 I’ve been writing a gardening column. Around 2000, I got into the *New York Times* for a while when they were still using freelancers. I did, I don’t know, eight or nine articles one year. And that really helped my career in terms of giving me credibility when I was trying to sell my newspaper to a local paper. And I’m still doing it.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I mean, that’s a really interesting I guess route to getting to your place as a gardening writer. It kind of sounds like you’ve been a jack of all trades. Yeah.

HOMEYER: So now I’ve got five books under my belt, none of them self-published, all done with reputable publishers: four gardening books plus *Wobar* [*and the Quest for the Magic Calumet*], the kids’ book. But it took me 43 years to get *Wobar* published from the time I told the story to the time it came out, and that’s what I’m proudest of. [laughter]

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I mean, your gardening column, so you started that in 1998.

HOMEYER: Yeah, November ’98.

JANOWSKI: And, I mean, I think it’s just kind of hard for me to visualize that leap from I guess like working as an electrician to all of a sudden having a gardening column. Did that just come up one day or...

HOMEYER: I was driving to work, I was going to rewire a house in Lebanon. I was driving to work and I noticed that it was fall and people weren’t cleaning up their gardens. They didn’t even take their wheelbarrows out of the rain. They just stopped gardening in the vegetable garden, and I said, when I got to the thing, I got on the phone—this is before cell

phones, although I don't have a cell phone—but, I borrowed a phone, you know, a house line, and I called the *Valley News*, my local paper, and I said, "Here's who I am and I want to write an article about how to put your garden to bed. Are you interested?" And the features editor said, "Well, maybe." And I said, "Okay, what's the procedure?" She said, "Well, write it and send it to me. Email it to me." So I had to learn how to use email. I didn't know how to do it at the time. But I did, and I sent it to her, and I said, "Okay, so now if you run this, will you pay me?" And she said, "Yep." I said, "How much?" She said, "\$65." And I said, "Okay, it's a deal."

And after the first one ran, I liked the feedback from my friends and neighbors, and so I called up the features editor, I said, "Well, how about if I write an article this month? Would you use that?" She said, "Well, if we like it, we'll use it." So I wrote something about, I don't know, holiday gifts for the gardener, and she used it, and that was fun. So the first six months I was doing one a month, and then I got that offer from University Press of New England and I started writing once a week, and then I started selling the column to other newspapers, and I got in the *New York Times*, and it all worked out.

So now my column goes from the *Providence Journal* in Providence, Rhode Island, all the way up to northern New Hampshire and northern Vermont. I was in a few named papers for a while. But you know, every time there's an economic setback, newspapers lose their advertising and they have to drop the freelancers first. So, you know, I've lost some papers right now. I lost papers in 2008 after the recovery after the 2008 depression, and then I got some newspapers, or the same newspapers back that had dropped me. And I just go with the flow.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. No, I think that's the best way to be.

HOMEYER: Yeah. And I'd say that Dartmouth was a real good education that taught me flexibility and how to teach myself things. Part of it's my innate abilities, but it's also having had a good classical education that makes you self-confident enough to say, "I can do that." And I've done that all my life.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, I mean, I guess that also brings up the question, like what's your relationship with Dartmouth right now? Do you ever go back and visit since you're living in New Hampshire?

HOMEYER: Oh, of course. I live 18 miles south of Dartmouth, and before the COVID-19 thing came, my partner and I would go up to Hanover to go to the movies or go to the Hopkins Center and see a show, usher in the Hopkins Center. You know, we're up there all the time. That's one of the reasons I live in this part of the world is because Dartmouth has such great opportunities for community members and for people who are alumni. You know, if you're an alumnus, you can use the Baker[-Berry] Library for free. It's a world class library.

JANOWSKI: It definitely is, yeah. I'm definitely missing that right now being off campus.

HOMEYER: Right. I think I've told you my story, Elizabeth. I don't have anything else I need to tell you. Unless you have a question or two to finish up, we've run over two hours now, or just two hours with the technical delays at the beginning. So we've talked for two hours and I'm pretty well talked out.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. I definitely don't want to take up too much more of your time. And I think we have done a pretty good job of going through everything that I was planning on going through. Yeah, I mean, I guess we could sort of finish this off with how are you doing right now? I know that the pandemic and everything is kind of thrown a wrench in everyone's plans.

HOMEYER: It has, but, you know, I have a beautiful house, a beautiful garden. I'm looking out the back window and I can see robins digging for worms in my vegetable garden. I want to get out there and dig in the dirt, too. My partner, Cindy Heath, H-e-a-t-h, and I plan to get married. We had wanted to get married June 20th of this year, but our friends from out of state wouldn't be able to come and, you know, you can't get more than 10 people together, so on and so forth. So we're putting it off until September, but even then it may not happen because of the COVID thing, we don't know. I think that in September we'll get married one way or another and have a party at a later year if that is necessary. But, my lifestyle has not changed too much with the pandemic, except that I've got now five of my dozen newspapers have lost the ability to pay. But, you know, my house is paid for, my car is paid for. I don't have a lot of expenses. I grow a lot of my own food. I'm pretty independent.

JANOWSKI: Yeah. No, congratulations on your upcoming wedding. That's exciting. And I'm sorry that it got delayed by all this craziness right now.

HOMEYER: Well, that's the way life is. We get thrown curveballs sometimes.

JANOWSKI: Yeah, for sure. All right, well, I think that's a good note to end on. I'm definitely very thankful that you were willing to speak to me this morning and I think this is a really fascinating conversation.

HOMEYER: Well, thank you. And I look forward to being able to, I guess get a printed transcript of it at some point that I can then, when I'm dead and gone, leave for my grandchildren and others. My stepson Josh would probably like to have a copy of this, because it is a nice interview. You did a very good job, Elizabeth. Thank you.

JANOWSKI: Thank you.

[End of Interview.]