

**University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives
Unit One/Allen Hall Oral History Project
Interviewee: Danny Vogwill, former resident of Unit One
Interviewer: Spenser Bailey, Student Life and Culture Archives
Date: 18 April 2024
Method: Zoom
Length: 2:08:15¹**

Spenser Bailey: Okay, so this is an interview, for the University of Illinois Archives Unit One Oral History Project. My name is Spenser Bailey, and I am an Archives Research Assistant at the University of Illinois Archives. The date today is April 18th, 2024, and I am pleased to be speaking with Danny Vogwill, is that right?

Danny Vogwill: Vogwill, but yeah, it's pretty close.

SB: Ok, great. And we're talking via Zoom, and my location is at the University of Illinois Archives, and Danny is, I'm assuming, where they live. I use he/him pronouns, and we're going to speak today and, so, first of all, Danny, thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today.

DV: Yeah, I'm so excited I came across your email. I was somehow on my U of I email, I was like, "Wait a minute, I have things to say, let me reach back out." So I'm glad you're still doing the project.

SB: Oh, yeah. That was, and I think maybe the reason why that went to your U of I email is because you might have responded to our initial questionnaire a couple of years ago, probably when you were either here or you were using it more frequently. So, I'm glad it worked out that you saw it. And I'll also say before I start asking, pardon me, asking any questions, if at any time you want to take a break, pause, think on something or cycle back just let me know.

DV: Sounds good.

SB: Okay, great. So let's begin then. So, Danny, would you please say your full name for me?

DV: Hi, my name is Danny Vogwill.

SB: Okay, great. And where are you from, Danny?

¹ **Transcriber's Note:** Some "filler" words – "Um," "Mm hm," and others – were not included in this transcription. Additionally, repeated words and phrases were removed when possible. I endeavored to write a transcription as faithful as possible to the conversation between interviewer and interviewee. That said, there may be some errors, so anyone considering citing any part of this interview is encouraged to listen to the relevant part of the conversation and make their own determination of what was said.

DV: I'm born and raised in Chicago, and that's where I am right now.

SB: And when you say Chicago, you mean the city proper, and not the suburbs?

DV: Yes! Oh my God, number one pet peeve at U of I, I want it on the Archive, people who are not from a 606 zip code saying they're from Chicago, and then I go, "Oh my God, what neighborhood or high school did you go to?" and then they say something like, "Lincoln-Way East, Naperville North," I'm like, "No." So yes, I am from the proper.

SB: The answer is always Naperville.

DV: I'm always like, "Do you not think anybody understands of a concept of a suburb?" And they're like, "What about people not from Chicago?" Again.. [laughs].

SB: It's U of I. 70% of the American students are from near Chicago.

DV: Yeah. I don't know.

SB: I grew up in Lemont, so I always say, "Southwest Suburbs. Near Chicago." Maybe if I'm speaking from somebody from Europe, I might say Chicago, but even then.

DV: Yeah.

SB: So what was your early life and your family like growing up?

DV: So, growing up, I had a kind-of nontraditional education path. I went to a fine arts elementary school in Chicago, called Cassell. It's just like the neighborhood school, but it really introduced me to a lot of the arts, and I got involved in a summer program when I was younger that was at my mom's old high school. That was for theater and stuff. I ended up picking up Irish dance as an elective there, and then that really took off in my life, so for the entirety of elementary school, I was a competitive Irish dancer. I went all the way to the World Championships, I competed on national teams, it was my life. So, not much happened in elementary school.

But then, when I was naturally done with that, I moved on to high school, where I went to an agricultural high school in Chicago, called the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. So, a complete 180. I will say not a lot of people that go there, actually, a majority of the people that go there do not want to become farmers. That's not the catch-all for people there. Again, it was a neighborhood school that I wanted to go to, and that really got me involved in Future Farmers of America and they had a huge partnership with the University of Illinois College of ACES. So, pretty much, I think everybody from my high school that ended up also going to U of I went to the College of ACES, except me. So, I again, naturally when that came to an end in high school, I was like, "Okay, I'm done with this," and moved on to something else. Then that's when I came to the University of Illinois, and I originally came in studying biochem, which only lasted a little bit. That did not last long. So, yeah, that's how I ended up at U of I.

SB: And when you started out in this fine arts elementary school and then the high school in agriculture, how did you come to, I'm not super familiar with the way Chicago schools work, did you end up studying in those schools because they were near where you lived, or did you have to apply, or how did that work?

DV: Ugh. So I feel like Chicago high schools and Chicago schools are practically the second level of college. It's so hard to apply and get in and do all these things. The way it works is, for the elementary school, that was just my neighborhood school, I was just going to go there, it was easy, I'm a Chicago Public School kid from the jump, so it was an easy transition. And then when it came to high school, in Chicago, there's different tiers, there's a selective enrollment which are the top schools where you're taking a test, like an entrance exam, your grades are a score, and the standardized tests we were taking – back in the day it was called the ISAT – I don't even know if they use that anymore, but those three scores helped determine whether or not you got into any of those schools.

And then there's another tier below that's magnet schools, so the agricultural high school was a magnet school. I did have to apply, put my name into a lottery system, but for the most part, it was pretty much just, there's a neighborhood lottery, there's a sibling lottery AKA your sibling goes to the school, or just the out-of-district lottery. So they pull from those and then that's how they determine who's in this school. So, that's how I got into ag, because I didn't get into the selective enrollment schools, but, if anything that prepped me for college, because it was literally like applying for college.

SB: That sounds like it may have been stressful at the time, but a good experience in retrospect.

DV: I'm literally the oldest, too, so my parents are like, "We don't know," because they're not from Chicago, they were born in the suburbs and moved to the city, so it's like, "Oh, god, girl," I was really hoping that you at least knew what you were doing. So, lots of navigating that. But then it made it easier when it comes to applying to schools.

SB: And did you want to, you said you didn't test into one of the extra-selective ones...

DV: Oh, I did, I just didn't get in. I did want to go there. The agricultural school, I was very like, "Nooo, I heard you have to shovel poop when you're on detention. I heard that you have to be with the animals," and I'm allergic to animals, so it was just all these rumors, "I don't want to go there!" But then when I ended up going there, it was totally fine and not like people had said it was. So I think it was just me being an annoying 14-year-old.

SB: We've all been there. And you said you're the oldest in your family, if I might ask a bit, with what your folks did and what was, to what extent was education important in your household when you were growing up, or how involved were you and your siblings, or sibling, with the world, and kind of, what was that like growing up for you?

DV: Yeah, I think growing up, especially when it came to education, that was something that my parents instilled in us from a very young age. My mom is a special ed teacher. When she was,

before having kids, she was a seventh-grade teacher at an elementary school, before that she was a special ed teacher and then now she's back as a special ed paraprofessional. So she's like more one-on-one and aid in the room with students. And she's been loving that, so that's what she does.

And my dad is a construction worker. He used to work in the field for a really long time, and then as of one or two years ago, he transitioned into working in the office for the company. Just because he'd literally been there since he dropped out of college. So it's really cool to see them instill that level of, okay, education is extremely important, that was something that they made sure that me and siblings knew. I have two other younger brothers, so I felt like as the oldest, I was setting an example. For clarity, I was definitely the student that was like, I'm getting all A's, I'm in every club, I was very involved. That was just like the type of student that I was, that's how I was raised.

My siblings say that they were like, "Oh, we hated being in your shadow." I was like, "Well, you can step out of it, you can do something different, like you don't have to follow everything that I do," and I think my parents were good about that, and encouraging each of us to do something that we liked while also still maintaining that education is important. My grandma, or my mom's grandma would say, "There's only a few things that you need in life. Good shoes, because if your feet hurt your whole body hurts, education because no one can take it away from you," and that one really stuck with me, and she was like, "Good food." And I was like, "Ok, perfect." The second one was a real wake-up call, I guess, because, yeah, no one can take away the education that you have.

SB: And, if I may ask, just because I'm curious, when you got into Irish dance, and then you said that came from your elementary school experience?

DV: Yeah.

SB: How did you become involved with that? Is there a family tradition of that or is it just something that you picked up and really enjoyed?

DV: It's just something that I picked up and really enjoyed. So we are Irish, and I did have a cousin who Irish danced, and now I'm going to use air quotes, because I feel like there's two different camps. There's the, "Oh, I Irish danced in my church basement," and then "I Irish danced at a competitive level." And I was at the other one. So I think it kind of just started as a passion, I liked to dance, obviously, as a young kid, and then when I went to that theater camp and they offered it as an elective, it's so funny, the other one that I was between was disco dancing, but I was afraid they were going to put me in a big wig, and I was like, "Oh, no, I don't want to wear a wig." Come to find out, Irish dancing has giant wigs, it's literally part of it, luckily, they were only for the girls, but I thought that was funny that they still followed me everywhere.

So it was really cool, I think it definitely did teach me a lot about discipline and probably is the reason why I am really like a star student. Because at the end of the day, if I had dance practice, I was going after school for hours on end. So my homework had to be done, I needed to be on

top of things, I couldn't let things fall behind, because my parents weren't going to let me slip because I had dance, and my dance teachers wouldn't let me slip because I had school. I had to make sure they were both balanced.

SB: So, it seems like when you were growing up, both like you just said, your involvement with dance and you said this application process for high schools, just really all kind of worked together to prepare you for the future?

DV: Yeah, I think it was definitely the biggest push when it comes to self-motivation, and when you get to college, if you have zero self-motivation, you're going to literally drown. So, I think I started to appreciate more of the skills that I was getting from dance in that sense, or more of the life skills that I was getting, because I think in the moment, I was like, "No, I need to do this because my mom's going to be mad if I don't have my homework, or my dance teacher's going to be mad if I don't do this." In retrospect, that pressure that I put on myself helped me be able to maintain a lot of things happening at once.

SB: That makes sense. And if I may ask one more question about your high school. What made you decide that you wanted to go through the process of applying for either the selective tier schools or for the agricultural one where you ended up going? What made you want to choose those things rather than attending whichever school was in your neighborhood and just going with that?

DV: I don't want to drag my neighborhood school or anything, but it is not anywhere near the level that Ag would have offered. I also, quite frankly, it is a little bit closer to my house than the other one. I had my heart on the selective enrollment school, Jones College Prep, they literally, at that point, had just gotten their giant new building, and they had a pool on the 7th floor overlooking the lake. I'm like, "Oh, that's where I need to be." I worked my butt off in elementary school, I know I'll be able to get in. And then it was just one of those things where I had just missed the cutoff or something, and with selective enrollment, you can only select one school that you pretty much want to go to. When you rank them, only your top choice will say yes or no. If you put anything else at second, they won't accept it. So at the end of the day, I think I was really upset about it, but I always say everything happens for a reason and the amount of opportunities and cool things that I did in high school. I don't think I would have ever been able to do if I had gone to Jones. I would have just been lost in the shuffle. So, I think it worked out.

SB: It certainly seems like that, and that was, I feel like, that's a common refrain of things that a lot of people have said. And I had something similar when I was picking colleges, so it's when you're in this stage of life, or maybe life in general, I don't know, such things like that happen.

So when you were at, when you were in high school then, and when it came time; now, was it in your family in your family or just growing up was it assumed that you would attend college, or was it, did you think that you would, or did your parents insist on it, or was it just something that you wanted to do and they were encouraging, or how did that work?

DV: Um, I definitely think my parents were pushing me to go to college. I also think I was very much going to go to college, I was my high school class's valedictorian. I didn't really see a world where I wasn't going to college. I didn't have anything I could turn into a career at that point, and I was 100% not going into the trades. I am so sorry to my father, but I am not physically fit like that! So, there was absolutely no way I was going to be able to do any of that, and I kind of wanted to get away from home. So college was always in the books for me and something that I was thinking about.

SB: And when it did come time, in your junior and senior years of high school, to start thinking about which colleges you might want to attend, which ones to tour, what did that process look like for you?

DV: That process was kind of difficult, because I feel like when you're the oldest, navigating high schools, at the end of the day, I was only looking at a limited group in Chicago. But when I'm the oldest and it's my turn to decide where I want to go to college, I was like, "Oh, this is extremely overwhelming." Not only am I picking where I want to go, I now have to pick how I'm going to possibly pay for it, and I need to figure out what I want to study. So I did something that I do not recommend for other people. Do not apply to schools under different majors and then hope that that helps you determine where you want to go! Because that was just probably not the smartest.

I was like, "Oh, I'll do journalism at Northwestern, I'll do biochem at U of I, I'll do economics at UChicago, I'll do this at Yale, no." That opened me up to way too many possibilities of not getting into the different schools and then being stuck in a program or a college, even, at those schools that I didn't want to be in. All of these things were things that I just did not think about, and as the oldest, just were pretty much on trial and error with. But I just started pretty much applying to schools and getting in as many applications as I could before the December deadline. But I think I had applied early action or early decision for U of I, and they'd gotten back to me before I had even finished submitting applications, so I will say, after I had gotten in to a few schools, I did slow down a bit. I was like, "Ok, at least I know I'm going to college." But, it was definitely a weird scatter plot that I did, which I don't recommend.

SB: And you mentioned a few schools that are in an around Chicago, and then also I think I heard you say Yale, were you looking at a particular geographical area, or were you willing to go just about anywhere in the country?

DV: I was willing to go just about anywhere in the country near a major metropolitan area. I was looking at a lot of places around here near Chicago, I did end up applying to Iowa State at one point, just because everyone was getting in there, and I wanted to know that I at least was going to go somewhere. I applied to bunch of other schools in Michigan, just because I love Michigan, like University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, Michigan State. Those... should have looked at the price first. That was one that I was like, "Oh, out-of-state tuition, didn't even think about that." And then I applied for some of the Ivies, and a bunch of schools on the East Coast, just because there's a bunch of cities over there. I pretty much wanted to be near a big metropolitan area or be at a bigger school where there's just a lot of people. Because coming from Chicago, the last thing I wanted to do was be stuck with 10,000 people in the middle of nowhere.

SB: So you were not looking at small, liberal arts schools in small towns or anything like that?

DV: No, I needed a ton of people. At this point, I was like, I had gone to the elementary school where I only had 30 kids in my class, I had gone to high school where I had graduated with 170. I was like, "I need thousands of people. I need to both blend in and then also find other people." Because it was just not in the cards for me to subject myself to that. Because I know me, and I would just, if I didn't find anybody, just stick with myself and not reach out.

SB: So you were looking for that environment, and you kept in mind when picking schools to apply to?

DV: Yep.

SB: And you said when you got in early action or early decision to U of I, but while you were still sending out other applications, and it seems like you continued sending some other apps after you got in here?

DV: Yeah.

SB: What was, when it came down to actually make your decision about where to attend, what were final few choices or what was the process in narrowing down or making the decision to come here?

DV: Yeah. So, once I had gotten back all my decisions, I had gotten into U of I, Iowa State, I had gotten into Michigan State, I was waitlisted at Ann Arbor, I was waitlisted at Northwestern, and then, I think there were probably a few more, but once I had gotten all of those, and then I was kind of like, "Ok, here are my options on where I could go."

My next one was how am I going to pay for this. And I remember I reached out to my older cousin, who had gone to U of I, who had gone through the entire college process and had taken out loans. I was like, "Can you tell me about it?" And I remember sitting down at the table and they were trying to explain these loans to me, and they were telling me the interest and stuff, and then they were showing me the principle that she was owing. And I was just like, "Are you serious?" This immediately ruled out schools. Anything that is already way above a price range that I can even afford, or I'm going to have to take out a significant amount in loans, more than \$10,000, I am not going there. That is just not happening. So that helped me narrow down some stuff, I think that was really eye-opening. And then from there, when it just came down to price, where I feel comfortable, and the amount of people at this school, I was off to U of I!

I also probably was a little bit upset about it at that point. I was also like, "Oh, I have nine to ten other people from my high school going to this school, so worst comes to worst, I at least know ten people I can fall back on, who are here, who know me, we've been together for the last four years, and I'm not going to just be the only person I know at school." Because that's what my other options were going to leave me with, and I was like, "Umm, I think I'm going to just pick

the smartest option here,” and, honestly, in retrospect, it paid off in droves. Because any other school, I would be way more in debt than I am right now.

SB: And had you been to U of I, at all, before you enrolled?

DV: Yeah, our school had like a partnership with the College of ACES, like I said, so I had been down there multiple times. But my only interactions were always with the College of ACES, and I knew that that wasn’t for me. I knew that that wasn’t going to be something I was going to major in or pursue professionally as a career. So, when I was going down there, I’m so sorry to my high school if they see this, I broke off from the tour groups multiple times to just go explore U of I on my own. I knew that I wanted to go there, and I knew that I was maybe going to go there, and this just wasn’t going to be the college that I was going to be at, nor the campus area I was going to be at. So I just ended up walking up towards the Main Quad and stuff, and spent time by myself exploring and I think that really helped, because I was able to see what college life was like, see what the students were doing, kind of almost blend in with the students and see like what it would like to have a day there, where the tours, to me, just felt like I was being shown what they wanted to show me. So I appreciated that, and I definitely was familiar with the campus.

SB: And what were your first impressions of the campus, if you remember from the first time you were down here?

DV: Um, I think my first impressions were, “Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no...” but that was me going to the College of ACES, that was me on a school trip that took way too long, we decided to drive down and back in the same day, so lots of that, just, I think, added to my disdain for this school. But I think it grew on me a lot as I started to visit more. And then, when I started to, one of the big things that helped me actually decide to go to U of I was watching some students’ YouTube vlogs of “What’s a Day in the Life at the University of Illinois?” And I was just like, oh my God, as small as this school is for the fact that it’s only 50,000 people, and that’s probably the most amount of people in the Champaign County, it still seems like a pretty vibrant area, it still seems like there’s a lot of things to do. There was a lot of different types of people at U of I, I didn’t feel like it was just like the state school, sorority frat school I had in my mind. I was like, “Oh, okay, there are other people here that don’t like that type of stuff.” So, I think it grew on me, and my first impression was not my last impression.

SB: There’s a, I want to tell you, because you mentioned splitting off from the tour groups. I interviewed a gentleman who was at Allen in the, I think he got there in the fall of ’84, and he was talking about splitting off from tour groups. And when he went down and toured, his phrasing wasn’t quite as eloquent as yours, but he was more like, “I decided I wasn’t going to do this, and I didn’t like any of that, so I just bailed and found the Red Herring and thought, Wow, I like this.” Jeff was very direct.

DV: [Laughs]

SB: But it’s interesting the way that both of you guys have mentioned that, and heard. And that seems to be kind of a common theme, is that people find their place down here. And

maybe it's confirmation bias, in that the people that I'm speaking with, who want to talk about their time here, are the ones who had good experiences, generally. But, I think that that does seem to be a relatively common refrain in that people come down here and realize that it's either not what they expected, or you mentioned that it's not just the state school, Greek life scene, although if that's your vibe, it's a great place for that too.

DV: Yeah.

SB: And so yeah, you mentioned that you were picking a bunch of different majors when you were applying to colleges. Is there any reason why you decided on biochem at Illinois?

DV: I wish I knew. In retrospect, I feel like I was applying to a bunch of general interests that I had. These were things that I was like, "Oh, I'd love to pursue that." But then, I felt like if the school made the decision for me that I got in for that, I'd [unintelligible], "Ok, that's what I'll pursue." So I picked biochem because I was really interested in the sciences, and at the time, I thought I wanted to be a doctor and go to medical school. Yeah, that's before I ran the numbers and the time, I'd still be in med school if that was the case. So that just really wasn't the path for me, and I remember it wasn't until I got down there for, I think, the freshman student orientation or something, I don't really remember what you guys called it. But we came down and that's kind of where they made us pick our first classes, and then kind of told us about what U of I was going to be about, made us sign up for, God, I forget what they were called. But all the like, the alcohol workshop and then the...

SB: FYCARE and ... what's the other one, FYCARE is the, I think the sexual assault and consent one...

DV: Yes, and the alcohol, ACES or something, for the record this can be snubbed, because I am an RA and that looks bad on my part, but, you know what, it's been years. So anyways, they made us sign up for those, and I remember then they took us to the side and it was the MCB students, the Molecular and Cellular Bio students, and the biochem students. And they were flipping through these classes that we were going to take, and they're like, "Okay guys, you'll take Accelerated Chem 101," I was like, "Accelerated?! I just got here!" "Okay, and then Calc 1, 2, 3, 4, Diff Eq," "Um, excuse you?!" So I think what I didn't realize was that maybe looking at the course catalog would be a good idea when picking majors. I did not do that, as the first born, did not know that was a thing. Yeah, pretty much got shocked at the classes I was going to take, and then was like, "How do I make sure I'm in MCB instead?" And then just kind of moved to that because I thought that was the next general interest that was going to be close enough to what I wanted and still get me the degree I was hoping for to go to med school. But that's not what I graduated in, and we'll talk about that later, because that doesn't come up until junior year.

SB: And so, I just looked it up, it's ACE-IT, was the alcohol one.

DV: Yes, yes.

SB: I should know that myself, I was here as an undergrad and I've lived here for seven years but I guess when you move into grad school and then work here, some things just....

DV: Yeah.

SB: And so you came in, did you actually switch to MCB?

DV: I think I did, but not technically. I was like, "Oh, I'm MCB now." And then I just signed up for MCB courses and told them I was an MCB major, and I don't think it wasn't until I had had an advisory meeting for my second semester, they're like, "You're still labeled under biochem, you shouldn't even be coming to us for an advisor." And I was like, "Listen. I am coming to this school, I am the oldest. I, my parents are no help right now. My mom went to Illinois State, my dad went to Eastern, didn't even finish. They did not know what they were doing." And I was like, I need someone to tell me what to do. So, I think I found a really nice advisor, who was like, "No, you need to go here. This is how you switch your major, this is how you do all this, these are the classes you're going to want to take." So, it was a learning experience. But, I then, I think, officially switched over to MCB probably freshman or sophomore year at some point. But, then I switched it again.

SB: Good advisors are what makes this place run.

DV: Yes, oh my god. And good advisors that actually tell you what you need to do instead of being like, "Well this is going to help," and you come back to them, "That was a dumb idea." They actually are looking to help you get in and get out.

SB: And so, if I might ask, then, when was, what year was your freshman year? When did you start here?

DV: 2018.

SB: And so, okay, so you would have got down here as a freshman in the fall of '18, then?

DV: Yep.

SB: And you'd been on campus before and the like. What were your first impressions of the place as a student? You have a different outlook, you said you changed your views of Illinois, what was your first impression when you got down here for Welcome Week?

DV: As a freshman in Welcome Week, I remember it was a totally different feeling to touring and stuff. I think it was very different when I realized, "Oh, I live here now!" I actually decided to go here, so I think, for me, it was really exploring like, "Okay, let me start looking around, what's around here, what are people doing?" I was going to the Quad, I was making friends, I was very social, which is what I highly recommend people do at the start of freshman year.

Because that's where lots of friends are made and lots of friend groups of people who I still know are friends were made on those days. I was just soaking up every experience, and I

remember even being like, “Oh my god, how is this going to continue when classes start and stuff? This is just a whole another level of socialization.” There were fun things happening, clubs, then there was Quad Day, and I feel like I was loving it but I was also extremely overwhelmed. As somebody that was like, “Oh, I want to do everything.” I couldn’t do everything! So I found myself, okay, now I really need to think I need to narrow down what I want to do or what clubs I want to be in, or who I want to be friends with and stuff. It was really cool, I remember enjoying it a lot.

SB: And what was your dorm?

DV: Allen Hall, Unit One! I was on the fourth floor, which, oh my god, was a mistake! No AC, fourth floor, heat rises, oh my god, I probably lost my freshman 15 in sweat alone. I did not lose it because of anything, I was losing weight up there, not gaining.

SB: And how did you come to pick Allen? Was it a random assignment?

DV: Actually, I first, when we had gotten our dates or times to pick our dorms, we were all still in high school. And I remember, this was back before kids used laptops and stuff in high school, and I can’t even believe I’m saying that. I remember I brought my computer to school, and it was just so foreign to me to have it there, and I completely forgot that I had it, that I missed my time for applying to housing. It wasn’t until somebody else said something, so I was like, “Damn it!” I missed my opportunity. I ended up in Oglesby, at FAR, and I remember I was looking like, where FAR was after selecting it and stuff that day, and I was just like, “Oh my God, it literally is far! I don’t think I made the right decision.” So I started to look at other places, all of the Ikenberry was taken, all of the other places were taken, there was just rooms in Unit One at Allen Hall. I was like, “Ok, well, it’s close, it’s near a gym, boom, ok, I’ll take it, whatever.” I don’t think I picked it because I knew anything about the living-learning community, I didn’t know anything about Unit One. I didn’t really, I had heard people mention when I picked that it was like the artsy dorm, but for me, I was like, “Oh, thank God. I’ll take it, honestly.” It’s going to be people that are going to people that I get along with, and people that are going to know how to have a fun time. So I just was like, “You know what, we’ll just see how Allen Hall goes.” And I think it was a little bit miserable with the no AC, but you live and you learn. And it was still a fun time.

SB: So it seems like almost your first motivation for picking Allen was, “Not FAR,” and then it seemed like, “Ok, this is a community that might be good, but also, not FAR.”

DV: Yes, I was like, “Oh my God, it’s closer to classes, it’s closer to the Quad, get me there.” I just need to be closer to what was happening rather than so far away. And now, what I’m looking at was like, okay, what I didn’t realize was that all the buses start at FAR, so when the buses came to Allen, they were full! And so, it really was like, it didn’t really work out for what I thought it was going to be, but I really enjoyed it. And I think for the circumstances, I was glad that I ended up making that random switch to Allen.

SB: But the tradeoff is, you can walk from Allen to the Quad.

DV: Yes, that is the tradeoff, I was like, “Ok, this is totally worth it and totally nice.”

SB: Unless it’s the winter.

DV: Then I’m like, “Um, I actually think I’m going to go on Zoom.”

SB: Wait a minute. You’re, okay, I got to cut in for a minute. When you said, “I can’t believe I’m saying this, but I was in high school before they, before you brought your laptops to school.” I’m two course years older than you are, I got here in 2016. So please don’t say things like that! [Laughs]

DV: I won’t! I won’t be ageist.

SB: I’m just kidding. But yeah, my high school, I think they went with Chromebooks like two years after I left, a year after I left, something like that. Truthfully, I’m kind of glad I missed that.

DV: Yeah, we had them, I remember the teachers used to have those giant carts that they were all plugged in to, and people [unintelligible] them. But it wasn’t like, people did not have personal computers, now my brother is on a personal computer. And I’m like, “Cute, love that for your back and stuff, you don’t have to carry around all the books and everything, but there’s something to be said about writing down things.” I memorize way more if I write it down, and you’re just typing and turning in all of your assignments. I’m like, “Ugh, where do the teachers even teach, like a Google classroom? What?” It just feels weird to me, I don’t know. It feels foreign.

SB: It’s quite odd. So that means if you started in 18, then you would have been here for that deep freeze in January 2019?

DV: Yes, oh my God. I was like, “What is going on?” I’m from Chicago, we’ve had polar vortexes and stuff, but that was just a whole different level. I remember U of I even was on the verge of, “We don’t know if we’re going to cancel class.” And it was Illinois State that cancelled. And I’m like, “If y’all don’t look to your right and start to cancel class, we are going to have big issues.” Please, cancel this, this is insane.

SB: I think they eventually did, if I remember correctly.

DV: Yes, they did, thankfully.

SB: I was glad I had a car that year. Whether or not it was going to start, now, that’s a different story. But, anyway, I’m getting off topic. So, you had picked, you decided on Allen because a.) it wasn’t FAR, and then b.) you thought, “OK, this might be a good place, but it’s not FAR.”

DV: Yeah.

SB: And did you have a random roommate then, or did you know somebody you were going to live with?

DV: I knew somebody I was going to live with. I was very nervous about that, candidly. I'm queer, I did not want to room with somebody that was not going to get along with me. I think when I picked Allen, too, I was like, "Ok, cute, I'm going to be good." There's no way someone's going to come in there and be rude or anything. And I ended up rooming with my friend from high school, who I knew, so it worked out really well in my favor. We became even closer, we weren't super close friends in high school, but, yeah, no, I really lucked out in that case. Because I was very nervous, I was like, "This could end poorly." I've seen the horror stories and I just didn't want to deal with it.

SB: And so this friend from high school, were they also going to be with you in FAR and then you both switched?

DV: Yeah. So we had originally both wanted to room together, and we were going to live at FAR because we were like, "Ok, cute, there's a room open, we just wanted it to be done." We were watching the rooms fill up very quickly, and we didn't want to get stuck anywhere. So then when we had gotten home, we were texting back and forth, and I was like, "Did you look where FAR is? I think it's comically named FAR." And they were like, "Oh, no, I didn't." And we were doing our research, and we're like, "Do you want to hop on Facetime and just pick a new one?" And we were trying our hardest to get anything at Ikenberry, because that's where everyone was like, "That's where people are social!" Oh my God, thank God those were full! I don't think I would have enjoyed my U of I experience had I ended up anywhere near there. Just not my vibe, and it worked out, honestly, for the best. So I always say everything happens for a reason, and I was just glad I got a good roommate, and a good dorm.

SB: Yeah. I feel like when you live with somebody from home, it either works really well or it's a complete disaster.

DV: Yeah. And that's why I went into it with somebody that I was like, "We're not best friends, but we're also decent enough people that we're going to be able to call each other on our BS, and we're going to be able to live together in a way that was productive for the both of us." And I think it made us closer friends at the end of that, so I appreciated it, shoutout to Alfonso!

SB: Yeah, I lived with a high school friend also, and, I mean, yeah, it takes some getting used to from seeing somebody in high school and hanging out with them to actually living with them, but I think for us it worked out. But I remember a couple guys down the hall that were super close friends from home and, I'm honestly surprised they both survived the year. So it sometimes happens. And I lived in, I did live in Nugent, in the Ike, which I think was the Ike dorm that was a little bit less like all of the other ones.

DV: Lucky! Oh my God.

SB: I think because we did, my high school must have ended earlier than yours, because I remember being at home when picking the dorm. I remember there were people cutting classes to go and do that at other schools and stuff.

DV: They were notorious for going deep into June. I'm like, "Are you kidding me?"

SB: Oh, wow, that's really, we were done mid-May.

DV: Yeah. They liked to tack on any of the snow days or cold days that we had at the end of our year. I was like, "I will actually kill you." I will go into school on the cold day rather than you wasting my 80 degree day in the building, thank you. The 80-degree building you don't pay AC for, thank you. So, yeah.

SB: So when you first got here to classes, you've said that you really jumped in with both feet into being social, and exploring things and going to Quad Day. Would you speak a little bit more about those first few weeks here, both when you were, before classes started, because I think since Allen's an LLC, you probably got in a couple days before the rest of campus, which was very nice.

DV: Oh, I loved it! At first, I was like, "Oh, no, I'm moving in before all of my friends. I'm in before all my friends, my stuff is set up, and I'm still doing things on campus. It worked out for the better, but, yeah, that was really cool. I think, I knew welcome week was going to be "The Show" of U of I, this is where they're supposed to really hook us, and get everybody involved, get you into your group or find your people, whatever. And I remember, on Quad Day, I was like, "Ok, I have to not do what I did in high school, this is not the time for me to scatter apply to a ton of different things." This is not my time to become the president of anything. I wanted to just find a club that I was enjoying, I wanted to find a professional club, and I wanted to find a club where I could make a ton of friends. So that was my goal, going into it.

Holy cow, I was so overwhelmed. I got paralysis of choice, everybody was trying to get you to join their club, they're telling me all these cool things. I remember very quickly I found my fun club, October Lovers, oh my God, I'm born in October, I love the fall, I was like, "OK, it's going to be a club where we get to do all these fun things. Sure. Slay." That one was easy. And then I remember when it came to the professional one, this was back when I wanted to go to med school, so it was probably some medical one. I'm sorry to them, I don't remember what their name is. All I do remember, though, was they were like, "Ok, here, you can put your name in, you can apply, we're going to get back to everybody." I got rejected from the RSO! And I was like, "How do you get rejected from a club? Are you kidding me? I have, I went to International Science Fair in high school, and I was valedictorian, I got declined from the med program? This is crazy." So I thought it was honestly hilarious now, in retrospect, because I gave it so much care.

But at the end of the day, the more I saw that club, and I'm not going to say their name, because I'm not going to drag anybody, but, oh my God, thank God I didn't do it. All of the people that ended up being in that club in MCB that I know, told me that there was infighting, told me that people were being rude to each other, they weren't really sharing opportunities, they were more

competing for opportunities. I was like, “Oh my God, no no no No no.” That just did not bode well for me.

So I remember the rest of the first weeks I was making a ton of friends, I still keep in contact with the two girls that I made friends with first, when I got there, Kayla and Ramona. And I remember I was just like, you know what, you just have to make the most of the experience and really suck up all the opportunities. So the first few weeks, I just remember pretty much going balls-to-the-walls and having a fun time. There wasn't anything I was saying no to, there wasn't anybody I wasn't going to hang out with, there was nothing I wasn't going to go try. So I just had a fun time, and I think it definitely opened me up to new experiences because I felt, not sheltered in high school, but I definitely wasn't the party type or the social one. So, really wanted to step out of my comfort zone.

SB: That's what I, whenever I speak to someone who's coming here or someone who's newly here, I try and say, “Try to do as much of that as you possibly can.” Just because you have, when you have that opportunity, I mean, it can be very shocking. Depending on where you come from, or even if you think you're ready for it, when Welcome Week hits, it's like a freight train.

DV: Yeah. And then they're like, “Ok, we're going to go to Sights and Sounds, ok, we're going to do this, ok, we're going to do this, ok, we're going to do this.” They took us everywhere. And we were just, yeah, one after another after another after another. And as the person that would be, I was like, “I have to go! They invited us, we have to go!” The power of the word no, I could have just not gone and it would have been totally fine. No one was checking, no one was counting our heads and anything. So I felt like maybe a little bit of my stress would have been relieved if I just told myself no, but that just wasn't my personality at the time. I was like, if I'm going to do anything here, I know that a lot of stuff that's going to be determined for the next four years will be determined in this first week, two weeks. People who become friends, friend groups, things that start up now, people that will date, will all happen within these few weeks. So you definitely saw a fair share of that, you also saw a fair share of the things fizzle out and burn out. But that's just natural ebbs and flows of relationships, so, yeah, I always recommend to people, and I always told my residents, “Now is the time to get out of your comfort zone and throw yourself into every single thing we're going to do this week! Because the rest of this time, when you get stuck in school or classes or things you're not going to want to do it. And you're going to be bogged down with things, and then when you're like, why is everybody hanging out, why do people already have these friend groups that I'm just not a part of, you're just going to get left in the dust. So make the most of it and find your people!”

SB: You want to know something really crazy about Quad Day?

DV: Yeah.

SB: Quad Day, I don't know, because if I'm doing my math right, your last couple of years would have been during Covid and when it was coming out and stuff. Quad Day has now expanded to the middle of the South Quad!

DB: Oh, wow! That's crazier.

SB: When I was a freshman, it went to Foellinger and, I think, just the frats were behind Foellinger. And I had some friends that were undergrads this year, and they were like, "Hey, we're at Quad Day," I was like, "Oh, good luck, and, wait a minute, are you on the South Quad?" "Oh, yeah, we're on the South Quad!" I was like, "How are there...?"

DV: How are there this many organizations now, literally? So, that's...

SB: They just keep, I mean, it's great, but, yeah. So when you were, when you arrived at Allen, you knew, you had an idea that it was going to be kind of an artsy place, and that the community there might be what you're looking for. What was your first exposure to the Unit One or the Allen-specific programming that wasn't just the general, "Let's go to Sights and Sounds or let's do a floor meeting or something?"

DV: Yeah. I remember they, we're all getting moved in, and everyone's getting to meet each other, everyone's talking on the floor and stuff. And they kind of called us down to the main lounge, and I remember sitting there, and looking at everybody, and I was just like, "Oh my God, these are all the people that live in this building?" I had just never seen that many people who were expressing themselves in different ways, people were dressing how they wanted, people were doing whatever they wanted, it was a wide mix of social groups and people and dynamics. I was just like, "Oh my God, ok, I'm where I need to be. This is going to be a fun time." Because when I was looking at other dorms or, honestly, what I had in my mind of what does a U of I student look like, it was not the people sitting in the room. And that was very comforting to me, because I was like, "Oh my God, if this is just the freshman that are here for this LLC move-in in my dorm, there are more people that are going to not be like what I thought this school was going to be like." So I took a lot of solace in that.

It was very cool to hear from the RAs about what Unit One was doing, again, I didn't really go in knowing that Unit One was an LLC, so when they're like, "Oh, we have guest speakers, we're doing events, and, oh, we have a pottery art studio in the basement. We have a darkroom if you'd like. Oh, do you want to be in our PizzaFM radio show?" I was like, "Oh, there's a radio station downstairs?" So they just start telling us about all of these cool things that Allen was doing, I was like, "Oh my God, I wish I knew all these things coming into it, I'm so glad that I'm actually here." This is the program that I'm looking for, so it was really cool to just hear about all the stuff they were doing, and it really felt like Allen was actually a community.

One thing that really stuck out to me, and I don't think other dorms did it, we had these things called *Allen Notes*, which were kind of like our agenda or what things were happening throughout the dorm in that week. And it just was an easy way for all of us to be like, "Oh, do you guys want to go the pottery workshop that they're doing on Wednesday night? Oh, it looks like Big Brother's this week, do you guys want to go the finale party or something?" It was very cool to see that the community would come and support other adventures or other workshops within the LLC. So I just remember falling in love with Allen from the jump, and being like, "Ok, I think I found a good place to start college. Because I was very nervous about coming to this and not fitting into the standard, heteronormative culture that I was pinning on U of I.

So I was glad I was wrong!

SB: And so it seems like you've mentioned, you picked Allen because it wasn't FAR and it seemed interesting. But based on what you've just said, it seems like if you had known more about Allen beforehand, you would have picked it anyway just for Allen?

DV: Yes.

SB: And when you arrived, you found, "Ok, this is working out," even though you hadn't quite planned it that way?

DV: Yeah. I think it was definitely something that like, I think when you're looking at what dorm you want to pick, and it was, "Oh, Allen Hall has no AC, it's massive," I think it was probably one of the biggest dorms, had the most rooms of any of the other dorms at the time. Definitely one of the biggest, and it just was like, I was like, "Why is nobody picking Allen? If people aren't picking Allen then that's a reason." And I let my subconscious think all of these things. I was like, "OK, of course Ikenberry filled up, because that was going to be where all those other people wanted to go. And of course PAR filled up because they had the stir fry and the nice dorms and all that other cool stuff." And I think I'm glad that the circumstances worked out the way that they did, and I'm glad that I ended up at Allen, because I think you're right, if I had known all that stuff at the jump, it may have just been easier for me to be like, "Boop, I'm going to Allen from the jump."

SB: And you mentioned that you had an LLC orientation, so you were hearing about these things that, this programming, and finding out that, "Wow, this is really going to work out." Do you remember the first programming, Allen-specific programming event, that you went to?

DV: I think it was definitely either an Allen mixer that they hosted for freshmen or something, but the first program or club that I remember joining and going to, was, "I was like, OK, I 100% have to be on hall council. I need to be on ABOA." It was called ABOA, Allen Hall something Board of, whatever, but it was pretty much our hall council that decided what events were happening or how things were going to be funded. It was my RA, Lattrell, love him, who put me onto really joining it and saw that I had ideas for what the community could do or different community events that we could have and really pushed me to want to join that. And he also kind of hinted at the fact that, "Hey, if you join this, I know you're interested about being an RA, this is a 100% way of being in face with the RD who picks whether or not you become an RA. So if you do well, that would be a great place to go." And I was like, "Ok, cute!"

So Allen Hall, like, [unintelligible]-council was definitely the first thing that I remember joining. But I definitely attended a bunch of their welcome events, or intro events, to what is PizzaFM, or what is the pottery class, or what is that, because I was just like, "Ok, if this is free, to access to me, literally in my basement, I'd be stupid not to go and try things out." So I was willing to put on a ton of different hats.

SB: And this is as a freshman! So you're getting involved with these program ideas, and bouncing things off and joining the council right away?

DV: Yeah! I remember it was like we were trying to come up with an idea for what we could do as a big hall event, and we had thrown around the idea of resurrecting this Allen-prom that we, I guess other people had done. And we were throwing around a bunch of ideas, and I think that's when I initially threw out, "Oh, what if we host an event like Big Brother, where we have people compete and stuff and then host a giant finale party?" And I kind of said it as a joke, and my roommate was also there, and was like, "Well, I'm going to back up Danny on this, because I competed in their Survivor games that they've hosted in high school, and it would be good! I don't know, I think it'd be worth it!" So I think it was motivation from my RA to be like, no, I really do think you should do this. And I think, I remember I came up against so many roadblocks with it, because it was just like, I wasn't an RA, and I needed to order stuff for this. So then I had to go through the RAs, and I remember being like, "I am so sorry, I love you guys, I know that your job is hard now, having been on the other side of it." But I was like, "Please, you're making it harder that I have to go through you to order something, to order from the RD, to order from the specific buyer to then hopefully get to me in time for my event." And I remember literally the first day of the event we didn't even have the stuff we needed. But yeah, it was cool, I feel like I really got pushed into program planning and helping build the community, really from my RA.

SB: And you had said, that's great, and you had said that you were interested in being an RA?

DV: Yeah!

SB: Where did that come from? Was it, had you thought that that might be a cool thing to do before you got there, or was it arriving on campus and seeing a little more about what RAs actually do that made you more interested?

DV: It was a strictly financial decision for me. I was somebody that had to pay for my own schooling, and after looking at the price of attendance for the first year, and then looking at what I would be paying for apartments in the area, I was like, "Oh, you're charging rent equivalent to a 606 zip, and we are in Champaign, Illinois. If you don't get off, I cannot believe them." So it was an immediate like, I, financially, need to be an RA. And I was like, "I have the skills and it's going to be pretty much just doing what I am kind of already doing as a freshman, but I get paid for it and I have my own room?" It was a no-brainer in my book. But it was definitely out of financial necessity.

SB: Mm hm. But it seemed like it wasn't like, you figured that it wouldn't be a chore for you? That, OK, you're doing this out of financial necessity, but you think you're going to enjoy it and get something out of it too?

DV: Emphasis on "think" it wasn't going to be a chore. The Housing Department and me, whew. It was a chore.

SB: Everyone's interactions with the Housing Department are like that.

DV: Oh my God.

SB: Maybe I'll have to redact that. Well, I don't live on campus anymore, so it's fine.

DV: [Laughs] Yeah, I said what I said, and I'll say it to their face!

SB: Oh, ok. That's always, I'm glad to have as many hot takes as people are willing to provide on these interviews. Because with the idea of, this is, I'm starting to lose track now. This is either number six or number seven that I've done for Allen. I probably should have told you that beforehand. We have two perspectives from guys who were there in the early '70s, one gentleman who was actually in the first Unit One class, which was really cool.

DV: Wow.

SB: It was great to have his perspective on how it came about for that. Then a couple from the '80s, did you, was Laura Haber the director when you were there?

DV: Yep!

SB: So, she was actually my first interview back in October.

DV: Oh, of course! I was going to say, Laura has to be interviewed. She was Unit One's heart.

SB: She, really, yeah. And hearing about, moving through, she actually never lived in Allen, I don't know if you knew that.

DV: Hmm. I didn't.

SB: She got involved with, I think the big thing in the '80s was the anti-apartheid movement. Of course, a lot of things like that have always come out of Allen. At least since Unit One got established. I think that's how she got interested in it.

DV: Nice.

SB: I think you're number six. No, maybe it's seven, I don't know, I'm losing it.

DV: [Unintelligible]

SB: It's good, it's really good, and I'm glad that it's worked out in this way, where I've actually been moving through the decades chronologically with people that I've met. So it's been cool hearing about how Allen, both as the Unit One program... and, did people, when you were there, did people kind of use Allen and Unit One interchangeably? Because Unit One is the whole dorm.

DV: Oh, we only called it Allen, I don't think anybody called it Unit One.

SB: Oh, really?

DV: "We live in Allen." "Oh, I lived in Allen." "I live in Allen." I always called it Allen. I don't think anybody really called it Unit One except for people that were in Allen. Because then, it was also one of those things, other LLCs, it was like, "Ok, this floor is the Innovations LLC." Or "Oh, this wing is the Innovations LLC." Everything at Allen was Unit One, so people just dropped it and called it Allen.

SB: That's been kind of a back-and-forth thing. Because it didn't start out as the whole dorm in the early '70s. I think at first it was just one floor, then it moved up. But it seems like it's been pretty constant for 20 or 30 years even, of being the entire dorm. Which, like you said, is not the norm for the LLCs on campus.

DV: Yeah.

SB: And before I forget, I want to tell you this. Do you know why the LLC part is called Unit One?

DV: Honestly, they did tell us, but I forgot.

SB: Oh, they did tell you? Ok. Because some people haven't known that. And it was because the original idea would be that there would be Unit Two, and Unit Three, and stuff, when the LLCs were first tried. And I guess it didn't stick in the early '70s.

DV: Yeah.

SB: So that's why. And I always remember wondering that. "Why is it called *Unit One*?" Wouldn't it be better to be the FAA LLC or something like that? But it stuck.

DV: That's funny. Yeah, I remember they told us about it but I forgot it, so yeah, that sounds about right.

SB: And just to ask a little bit about the physical space in Allen. You mentioned no AC, and I'll report to you they still don't have AC, although it's reportedly coming next year.

DV: Ok.

SB: Not that it's beneficial to you, of course. What was it like as a, just as a, take the Unit One and the programming out for a moment. What was Allen Hall like as a dorm to live in?

DV: This is where my interview turns ... I'm so sorry, Allen. It was not good. I remember we, that start of the year from at least August to October of 2018, we sweat so much. It was so hot.

It was so unbearable, I spent very little time in my room. And honestly, it may have worked out, because we didn't spend all of our time in our room and the only place that did have AC was the main lounge or the basement. So people would make their way there, and that's where people were interacting and socializing.

And I will say, oh my God, I'm so sorry, love. The bathrooms, I can't. I didn't enjoy that part of it. That was just something I knew already coming into it I wasn't going to enjoy. It was gross, living with a bunch of boys was even grosser! And I just, I was not loving that part of it. I definitely will say that there were good parts about Allen, the proximity to the Quad, the amount of program that it had, the amount of people that were there. And that made it very easy, as a freshman, to have a very social and active freshman year and build those relationships for the future. But in terms of comfort of living and actually, the dorm, it was like a running joke, every time I told people, "I live in Allen," they're like, "Oh, God, so sorry. Good luck, love." But it ended up, obviously the heat wasn't a problem for most of the time, but, yeah, it was definitely an experience. When it came to sophomore year when I was an RA there, I think it got, not that it got worse, but I think I was more exhausted about it. As an RA, now I'm like the person in charge of the floor. And I remember my residents, sophomore year, on record, they smelled. They needed serious hygiene help. And it was a mess. And luckily I was on the second floor at that point. But I think living alone made it a little bit easier, because I was able to just have my window open or do whatever I wanted or found ways around it or had been living in Allen so long I found ways around stuff. But my sophomore year there was a bat that got out in the building, and I was the RA that had to deal with that. There were flying roaches at one point, that I had to deal with. It wasn't the most glamorous by any means, we weren't like Wassaja or Nugent or anything. But, you know, we made due, and I think it built character.

SB: It's a bonding experience. If your dorm sucks, and like you said, if the rooms are hotter than all hell, then the incentive is to go out and do things elsewhere.

DV: And meet new people! So, it worked out.

SB: I think you're not, I think one of my other interviewees might have mentioned that as well. Because of course, if Allen didn't have AC in 2018, it most definitely didn't have it in the '80s or the '70s. I think somebody else also said, "Well, it was so hot out... and so we just went to go and do things." The incentive of staying in your room is not really there when your room is 80 degrees.

DV: Yeah. It works out.

SB: I want to ask – what was the arrangement, was there a gender distribution of, was Allen, at the point you were there, I know it's co-ed, was it co-ed by floor, or co-ed by room, or how was it arranged in that way?

DV: It was co-ed on the floor, but it was co-ed by, it was divided by wing, if that's a way to describe it, it'd be like, "This half of the floor is all the boys, this half of the floor is all the girls." Now, there was definitely, I think on the, is it One North, I think it might have been the first floor north side, that was *anybody*. Anybody could be in any room, any bed, anything. It was kind of

supposed to be a safe space for queer and gender-nonconforming students, and, honestly, it worked out. I think One North had, it was never a problem. It wasn't like there was a plethora of couples moving in there to have a room for themselves. That definitely was a theme for some people, but for the most part, it was there to offer a space for those people. But, it was divided by wing.

SB: And that worked out?

DV: Um, yeah. Definitely not ideal for me, I'm not somebody that gets along with a ton of guys, that's not really my MO. And as somebody that was non-binary, it just really wasn't something that, I didn't really care, I had my own room, and I don't mind. I was just, literally, kind of their boss, but for the most part, it was totally fine, and Allen was the type that's like, everyone was welcoming and stuff. Boys would walk over to the girls' side and girls would walk over to the boys' side, and people would talk, and it wasn't weird at all. I think it just was how they divided it up.

SB: That makes sense. And if I may ask, you identified as non-binary, were you non-binary when you were, did you know that already when you were in college, or is that something that you came out and figured out when you were there?

DV: I definitely think probably being in Allen helped me with that. Just because I was meeting a bunch of other people, I didn't really know what that meant, what those terms meant. It wasn't really big back in 2016 and stuff, people didn't really talk about it. So I think I, having being exposed to that, I was like, "Oh, that makes sense. That's kind of how I feel. Wow, I can't believe there's something to describe that. LOL, thank you." It wasn't really something I came to terms with when I was at Allen, I think that really came to terms like maybe junior or senior year. That's when I came out, that was after the pandemic and stuff. So before then, I think it was just like Allen was really helpful for me to step out of my comfort zone, meet new people, have these new experiences. Meet people I probably wouldn't have met had I lived in the Ikenberry Commons or stuff, so I definitely took a lot of those lessons and I appreciated meeting people that I don't think I was going to meet in college. Those people helped me a lot more than I think they know.

SB: That's really great. So it seems like you were not identifying as non-binary at the time when you lived in Allen, but your experiences there might have helped you along to eventually coming out or understanding more about that part of your identity, which you kind of, you said it was a process.

DV: Yeah! Because I was already out as gay, I had been, I was going to say, "I've been that my whole life," but that's a weird way to put it. But I feel like it was something that had always been a part of my personality and stuff. I knew that coming into it, but having met more queer people who had more queer experience and had all of these different terms and stuff. At first, I was like, "Oh my god, I didn't even know what this was! Am I a bad gay?" I didn't know any of this. I feel like it was definitely a learning experience and I appreciated, like I said at the start, having a diverse group of people to both live and learn from. Living-Learning Community! Look at how that works! [Laughs]

SB: If I may add in, it was, even in the very first year, it was, it had that already. Eventually we'll get these interviews on some kind of portal where they can be seen and I'll definitely point you to the one that I think you might find the most interesting. But the person, the gentleman who I met who was in the very first cohort, he told me he came out as gay later in life. And he said that he kind of wasn't hip to that, wasn't ready for it yet when he was in college. But he said something very similar. He said that this community that was there, he said, "I wasn't ready for that yet, but knowing that it was there was good."

DV: Aww, I feel that. [Unintelligible]

SB: And that's in 1972. So, a very different time, but even right off the bat, Allen kind of had that going for it already.

DV: That's great. That's great to hear that that's been the case. Because I think people need that at U of I.

SB: It's great for their, even if you're in another dorm, it can work out, that having that in your home or right close by is really nice.

DV: Yeah.

SB: And so, when you're there at Allen, you're joining the Hall Council, and you mentioned getting this Big Brother event going. Would you speak a little bit more about that, or how it, you said you had the idea?

DV: Yes.

SB: How did it go about, putting that into place or bringing it from a suggestion to actually coming into fruition and having it be successful?

DV: Feel free to cut me off, because I probably could talk forever about this.

SB: Go for it!

DV: I've always been a reality TV fav. I think it was *Survivor* that really got me into it, back in 2010. Actually it was probably *Total Drama Island*, I don't even know if that's going to date me. But *Total Drama Island* was like pretty much a cartoon spinoff of *Survivor*, my parents were like, "Oh my God, you'd love this show *Survivor*!" So I then got really into that, and then I remember I'd thrown around the idea a lot, like, "Oh, what if I had a *Survivor* birthday party or something?" And one of my friends goes, "Danny, you don't have to have it be your birthday to throw a party. Like you could just do this whenever you want." And then it kind of just snowballed from there.

Since 2012, I've been hosting my own versions with my friends of *Survivor* and then now *Big Brother* with college. And by the time I'd gotten to college, I already had eight seasons under my belt of *Survivor*, and my friend who was my roommate, Alphonso, had competed and even won one of the seasons. So when we were on Hall Council and I threw out the idea of like, "Oh, what if we like host a *Big Brother* and then we host a giant finale party, and like we could make it a thing." He was like, "Oh, no, this needs to happen. Like I've competed in their *Survivors*, this is something that's like they're really passionate about, and something that would be great for the community."

So I kind of just started from there, got the approval from hall council, and started to just recruit students in Allen Hall to compete. I was really banking on their being at least some other *Big Brother* fans or anybody I could pull on that least knew what they were doing. So I got a bunch of people interested, who were reaching out to me to be on Season 1. And I reached out to the my first friends that I ever made at Allen, Kayla and Ramona, I was like, "Hey you girls, you need to be on this! I don't know if you've ever watched this show or anything, but I think you'd do really well. All you pretty much do is compete in challenges and eliminate people, and it's going to be for an entire week. So would you be into it?"

Once I had gotten the cast and stuff, I think that's where I kind of was like, "OK, I can actually pull this off. Like I've gotten 16 people to say yes, I need to make sure that this goes well." And then we had our first hiccup. On the first ever day of *Big Brother* I went downstairs to go get all of the materials that I had planned out for all the challenges and stuff. And the RD at the time literally looks me dead in the face and goes, "Oh, we didn't order any of that." And I go, "You're actually joking... you're actually joking me right now. You don't have any of this right now?" And they're like, "No, it still hasn't shipped or anything." And I'm like, well, candidly, "When did you place the order?" They tell me everything, so I ended up going behind the front desk and I just pulled a bunch of stuff to create challenges and things. And then, the first season went really well, people really enjoyed it. For context, I hosted *Big Brother* over an entire week, Monday to Friday, from 7:00PM to like 11:00PM. I pretty much just told all the people, "Hey, at 7:00PM, you come and you meet in the Main Lounge, we're going to do a certain amount of challenges, nominations, and eliminations each week, and then, like, the next day you'll come in and if you're still in the game, come the next day. And then by the end we'll be down to the final 2 and you guys will vote for a winner."

So Season 1 went really well, and actually, Kayla and Ramona, my first two every friends were the final two. Ramona, to this day, I'm putting it on the archive record, she was robbed. She was robbed! She played so well, and from there, it kind of just snowballed. I ended up hosting five seasons across the time that I was there. I did like one each semester, so freshman year, freshman year, sophomore, sophomore, and then COVID hit and I stopped. I did the 5th one my senior year, first semester. Because that's when we could start to have events and stuff again. So it became my little passion project, definitely is the reason why I got hired to be an RA, there's, I don't know any other freshman that hosted like a five day long event with a finale afterparty and everything.

It was a lot. I had to get all of the challenge materials, make sure the game ran smoothly and all this. And then only finally got around to my sophomore year, that's when I started to film

episodes for it. I have episodes and stuff edited through of like what happened and like who got eliminated and what's going on in the game. And it was set to the music and everything! So I don't know if I can share my screen, but I did bring one of the videos because I wanted to show you. It doesn't have, I will send you the link and you can just....

SB: Oh, yeah, that would be great to see! And I'll say, I don't know, I don't really do acquisitions or decisions about acquisitions, but just speaking from me, I think it would be great, so you have those recordings?

DV: Yeah. So I recorded all of them, and then I was like editing them into episodes so these are two of the episodes from our 5th and final season. And these are probably the better of the edits. But I used to just clip the things, the videos together, and do a little voiceover...

SB: [audio interruption]

DV: [Laughs] ... talk about what's happening in the game. It was a good way for, I think, other people that were not at the game to kind of understand what was happening. It was also kind of my way to interest other people to join in future seasons, and get people to come to the finale party, because then the people in the game could be like, "Oh, look, this is what's happening in the game, this is what I did..." But it was so funny, I remember, at first, I just thought this was going to be something fun people would do on the weeknights, they would come, they would do it, they would leave. Then, as the seasons start to progress, I'm getting calls and text messages from other people going, "Danny, there are people in the Allen Hall dining hall right now, they're strategizing about Big Brother, what is going on, I'm seeing alliances meet and stuff." I was like, "Oh my God, who's meeting, what are they doing, I wanted all the gossip." And it was just so cool to see them like, these people who probably would not have been friends or not had met each other, now all on this cast together, playing these games. And seeing them like, "Oh, we had a meeting today in my room to discuss strategy or something." I was like, "Oh my God, please record it, please let me know what happened, what's going on, who are you in alliance with..."

So it was cool to see them all make friends and really get into it, because I feel like for a lot of people, especially when I'm hosting these *Survivor* games or these *Big Brother* games, not a lot of them are fans of the show, or have watched the show. But they really get into it, and that's all I can ask for. If you're going to get invested and compete like you're actually on the show, especially when there's not really a prize for this, I couldn't give a prize as an RA, it was just cool. And now a lot of those people that have competed are lifelong friends that I've had, and I still keep in contact with them, so it was definitely one of the coolest things I did at Allen Hall.

I will say I came up with a lot of roadblocks with it. I will say I had a few people in the hall that I don't think liked *Big Brother*. There were a lot of people who thought I was creating unnecessary drama. They thought I was creating, like, an event that really wasn't at all beneficial for students or student life, and I had to consistently defend myself. I was like, "One, never has my game caused drama that has leaked out into people's personal lives. Only once have I had people cry about things." And then I like, "Okay, it's a game, and talked to them and made sure everything was good and stuff." But it really just came from, I think, people maybe

not understanding what *Big Brother* was, and taking that idea that I'm hosting a reality show and filming these people and it's going to cause all this drama and maybe some subconscious bias they had about reality TV.

But for the most part, I think I made more friendships and connected more people in the dorms than would have been through another club. These people spent excessive amounts of time with each other, building these relationships, meeting up before to strategize, who are you going to cut at what time, how do you manage these relationships. And on top of that, I was like, they have to balance their schoolwork and stuff with this. I don't know whether they just didn't like it for those reasons, but I always encouraged everybody, "If you think you have a problem with Allen Hall *Big Brother*, you think you have a problem with the way I'm running these things, well, I've invited every single one of you to my finale parties and you've not come. So you can't make a comment about things you don't know about."

And I remember, I will say this because this did happen, I was supposed to host a sixth season. There was supposed to be Allen Hall *Big Brother* 6, it was obviously something I was very passionate about. But my junior and senior year, I was an RA at ISR, so I had ended up moving to a new dorm to be an RA, that was also because it was a new construction and they had AC. And I'm sorry, if I was going to be an RA, I don't think I could have done it at Allen Hall anymore. But since it was an Allen Hall thing, I continued to host Season 5 at Allen Hall, and I remember my boss at the time for the RA job pretty much told me I was doing a disservice to my community by not hosting an event within the community that I worked. To which I said, "Well, I've cast students from ISR and there's a bunch of people here from this community that are over there. And, second, I told you I needed to do it at Allen Hall because of the space that Allen Hall has." The main lounge is perfect. It was big enough that I could host the things, they had the chairs to host *Big Brother*, and they had enough extra rooms where if students wanted to strategize and stuff, I could send them off to the computer lab or to the 151, the fact I pulled that number out of my butt, I don't even know how. But, they had the space for it, and I remember my boss was like, "Well, you're not doing it for this community, so I'm not approving the budget for your sixth season or something." And I was like, "Oh, that's funny, I thought you would have mentioned this earlier, and I invited you, again, to the finale party to see what this looked like or what Allen Hall *Big Brother* was all about." And, I don't know, they really got it in their head that I wasn't doing my job for my community, when I had multiple community members and fellow RAs on the Season 5 cast.

So it sucked that it didn't get approved for a sixth season, and I just didn't have the budget or time at that point to, like, dedicate to just do it myself. So, definitely came up to my fair share of roadblocks when it came to *Big Brother*, but that will forever be one of my favorite things I'd ever done. And I hope that, at least other people at Allen Hall see it in the, like, old Facebook group or reminisce about it or talk about it. Because that's what my goal was with it.

SB: Well and now it's going in the Archives!

DV: Yay! Woo-hoo! Oh my God.

SB: So, if I might ask then, when you're putting on this programming, as a freshman, so you're not even an RA at this point, what involvement, if any, did you have in some of the rest of Allen's programming as an attendee and not as the person organizing? Did you see the guests-in-residence or did you attend lectures or anything like that?

DV: Yeah, I definitely was involved in a lot of other activities. I would always, religiously, read the *Allen Notes* and see what workshops or what speakers they had coming to the community, because I wanted to be involved and I wanted to go to these events. So it also, kind of, helped me to see, like, "Ok, what other people are attending these events, so I can poach them to be on my next season of *Big Brother*? Or, who is involved, and who likes to talk with other people or who's doing what in the community and who's someone that you should get involved with because they are really active?" So I just used it as an opportunity to get to know more people. I was really, my favorite events would probably have been some of the guests-in-residence. I really enjoyed going down and having those conversations with them. It felt like of like a discussion section but, like, a smaller one without any of the homework, so I loved that. And it was cool to see the types of people that they got to come and be the guests-in-residence. One day, you're like, "Oh, we're talking with a muralist. And the next day we're talking with a civil rights activist." It just was like, I think, it amplified and kind of demonstrated what Unit One was really all about. And it was cool to see the community come together in ways that I don't think other dorms would have. I don't think other dorms would have hosted a *Big Brother* competition. I don't think other dorms would have had all their other smaller clubs that they had. They wouldn't have had a radio station where people were hosting their own radio shows and stuff. Allen Hall was a really unique experience, and I think everyone just had to find their niche.

SB: This is your first year, so you're still figuring out who you are, but you're already dipping your toe into this programming. And you've said that you did become an RA...

DV: Yeah.

SB: ... and you'd said that you had wanted to do that. And you got on the board, which seemed to be a good way to have a stepping stone. What was the process like of applying to be an RA, and were you able to apply to be one in Allen, or did they just kind of send you wherever and you happened to be in Allen?

DV: Yeah, so the application process was pretty simple. You were just kind of like filling out why you thought you'd be a good RA, where you'd lived, things you you'd been doing on campus, things you were going to be involved in in the future. I remember it being very straightforward, and I definitely leaned on my RA for advice. He knew that I wanted to be an RA, he thought I'd make a great RA, and I think he was somebody that really motivated me to get that first step of applying and stuff. So I remember the application was fine, and I remember going in for the interview, and I knew I had the job the minute I told them about *Big Brother*. The minute I went on that tangent the way I did with you and started just yapping about my Season 1, and I'm like, "Ok, and then Ramona was in the final two, and she didn't win because she was the one that eliminated everybody else because she was so good at challenges, blah blah blah." I'm just telling them all about this, and they're like, "Wow, that is so cool. I can't

believe you've been doing programming as a freshman and stuff." So I walked out of the interview very confident. But it wasn't the time of thing where you like, "Oh, I want to be an RA in-, or I want to work at blank." The only way to do that was if you applied to specifically be an LLC RA or something, it was something specific, like you had to go through another application process. I didn't want to do that. I also knew I was going to get picked at Allen, because I was talking with the RD and I just had that programming. I was like, "If I don't get selected there, I will be selected as an RA somewhere else, and that's all that I cared about." So, when I got the offer letter and it said Allen Hall, I was like, "Ok, I'm not surprised, but I'm very happy." So I got to do then Season Two and Season Three right after that. Oh, and Four, so that was really cool. And definitely one of the highlights, I think, from my application. Because, again, who is hosting events in their dorm as a freshman, and especially a big five-day long event?

SB: They'd have been foolish not to hire you at that point, really.

DV: Literally! I was like, "I'm editing episodes for this thing!" And they're like, "There's episodes?" Yes!

SB: What was it like, then, so it would have been your sophomore that you were an RA at Allen. What was it like moving from being a resident to being an RA? And you said that a constant was that you were still working with *Big Brother*, you were still doing that programming.

DV: Yeah.

SB: What was it like aside from the whole benefit of having your own room? What was it like with those added responsibilities of being an RA?

DV: I think it was definitely a change for me. I definitely saw, I was already somebody that was like a, I'm not going to say a big name, but I knew, people knew of me because I was doing these things. When I was an RA, I was like, "Ok, now I feel like I have to put on a different layer of responsibility" and I wanted to make sure that these freshmen that were coming in after me had the same fun experience that I did. And honestly, that freshman class of 2019, I feel like I have more friends from that class that I still keep in contact today, because they've just been, they did *Big Brother*, and they've done my *Survivors* and stuff, and I just kept in contact with them. But it was really cool to see also the transition onto the RA staff, because I had obviously been close with my RA, and he had other friends that I knew were going to end up being my coworkers, because they came back for another year.

But I will say, I think there was a learning curve with the RA role. Just because I don't really want to get into it, and I don't want to speak on it for anybody, there was an incident that happened literally, probably honestly maybe a week or two into our year, that was really bad. And definitely left a mark on the community and the staff, and it may also have divided the staff. I remember lots of fighting, lots of, just, different opinions on the thing and it just, it really turned for the worst. But it was very different seeing what went on behind the scenes. Because when I'd hosted this freshman year, with *Big Brother*, I had to go through all these hoops with

the RAs, and I don't think I gave them enough grace with like, "Wait, why isn't this ordered?" Oh my God! Being an RA, I was like, "No wonder this stuff isn't ordered. I have to do this and this and this and this form, and then I have to rent out this card and then I have to go do this, and it was just so much red tape. Honestly, I was glad that I got to be the person that had to jump through all of it, because I know me, I would get it done."

But, yeah, it was very different than being an RA, and I think maybe had stuff gone differently at the start, it would have been a little different. But I think the team really just got off to a rocky start, and then we lost our RD, who decided to move on to a different career. And then COVID hit. And it was just like double, triple whammy on top of all this stuff and it was just kind of, maybe, a rocky start to the RA job and a rocky start to the sophomore year. But made the most of it, and still got two more seasons of *Big Brother* out, so, you know, things still happened.

SB: So did you get your fourth season done before the Rona [COVID] hit?

DV: Yes! My fourth season was literally filmed January, late January of 2020. So I remember filming it and editing and posting it all and then literally like a few weeks later in that semester, I'm taking an MCB exam, we get out of the exam, and the school's like, "We're going on an extra-long spring break." ... we thought. So....!

SB: Oh yes we did.

DV: ... that's when that happened. The RA job got crazy after that, we can talk about that if you want, but, oof, that was a time.

SB: Yeah. I believe it. This is, I'm keen to hear about that a little bit, because this is the first time I've spoken with somebody who was also a student during COVID. So I'm usually telling people about what that was like, and so you, you were, that would have been your sophomore year?

DV: Yep. Second semester sophomore year.

SB: Second semester sophomore year. So what, if I might ask, just, for posterity and this is something that we need to start recording, because that's such a huge event for us, for people who are about our age, what was your first reaction or what was, I guess, that one week, March 9th through March 12th of 2020, what was that like for you, having, at least for me it was like a progression of, "Wow, this is a thing out in the West, and huh, maybe we should start thinking about it" and three days later, it's like, "Oh, here it is." What was that like from your experience?

DV: Yeah. I think, honestly, I kind of lucked out being in MCB, because I was with some of probably the smarter people about what was happening in the situation. And we had kind of been clued in on what was happening with COVID-19 a little bit earlier. We talked about it, we were like, "Oh, look, there's something crazy happening in China. This is a disease that started here..." They were telling us all about this cool stuff, or not cool stuff, but they were telling us

about all of these things that were happening and explaining it. “Oh, woah, it’s crazy to actually see that there’s this, what we thought was an epidemic, turned out to be a pandemic.”

And I think we had kind of, not not taken it seriously, but just kind of talked about it as a real-world thing that was happening. And I remember that week leading up to it, there were inklings of other schools being like, “Oh, we’re going to close. Ooh, it’s getting worse. What’s going on? Are we going to get an extended spring break?” And there was almost like a, not to sound farce or anything, there was a joy in the air, people being like, “Oh my God, we get more time off!” We were not thinking long-term. We’re like, “Oh, this is going to be here, and we’re going to come back. It’s not going to be anything crazy.” But it wasn’t until that March 13th where I feel like I started to see everybody on campus not showing signs of panic, but signs of concern and signs of “Oh, what’s going to happen?” and everyone was talking about it. I was like, “Oh, if we’re not just talking about this in class as an example of something that’s happening in the world, this might be bigger than we thought.” And actually I was in in an exam while all this stuff was happening, with the school deciding whether or not they were going to close, it wasn’t until we got out of the exam that all of our friends turned to each other and we’re like, “Oh my God guys, the school just said we got the next week off. We’re not even going to be here.” So we didn’t even really think too much about it.

And I remember, I think it was that night, too, that we had our weekly RA meeting, and I remember going into it being like, “I have actually no idea what is about to happen.” And this was on the cusp or at the same time of our boss being like, “Yeah, I’m leaving, to go start another job.” So sorry for him. But, yeah, I remember it being kind of a mix of, “Is this real?” and also like, “What is happening right now?” I didn’t know what their plan was. They kind of told us as RAs we could stay if we wanted, we could go, they’re like, “We don’t really know right now. Okay, now the school’s closing, what is that going to mean for all the students?” And you can imagine us as the RAs getting bombarded with messages, because these students, who are they going to reach out to but us? And I’m like, “I am in the same boat as you, I am a student too!” I’m literally a year older than you. I don’t even know what I’m going to do.

So it was a lot of mass chaos. I just remember one thing that really stuck out, the RA job was pretty much just like, “Okay, you guys can decide whether or not you want to stay. If you stay we’ll give you an extra \$200.00 on your monthly payment or whatever.” I read that as, “If you don’t stay, you don’t get paid.” Turns out, if you left, you still got paid your monthly whatever, you just didn’t get the extra money. So whatever, I ended up staying. And then that was crazy on its own, because all these students are like, “How can I get my stuff, where’s my stuff, I don’t have my stuff, I didn’t leave with all my stuff.” I’m like, “Ok, well, I don’t know what to say.” So they kind of just shuffled us all around, and then at one point the school made a decision, I don’t even know if it was the right thing. They wanted to consolidate everybody into the same dorm, so they moved people that were still there all into the same dorm. Moved all of us into the dorms, I ended up in that grad housing dorm over near, it’s not Bromley...

SB: Sherman.

DV: Yes, Sherman, thank you. I was there for a little bit, that was actually the nicest room I ever stayed in, but, yeah, there was, I just remember kind of taking it day by day. And it was really

chaotic, and it was also chaotic because I was dealing with my part-time job that I had at the chemistry lab telling me I couldn't have my job. I had the RA job telling me that I didn't know what was going to happen. I had residents down my throat asking what was going to happen. I had my classes I didn't even know what was going to happen with. And I had to, my life and my health to deal with. So I was just kind of very, very, very overwhelmed and I just remember trying to take it day by day, because I didn't have any idea what we were looking at, or what was going to even happen or even what was going to come. So...

SB: Nobody did.

DV: Crazy time. And I remember, I will always remember us weirdly jumping for joy, excited that we got more time off, and then it just developed into, "Oh, we're not coming back the rest of the year. And oh, my whole junior year is going to be virtual. Ok, cute." This is not what I had in mind when they said I was going to college.

SB: I remember thinking that it was going to be, I remember, I think, going home for spring break. So I was still here, I was a senior at the time. I remember going home and thinking, "Ok, we're going to get an extra week off, then we come back to campus and just do class online and can still go to the libraries and stuff. That was what I was thinking would be."

And there it was. But I'm, so you actually returned to campus after spring break?

DV: Yep. I returned because I thought, well, first I got laid off, not laid off, but like I didn't have any working hours at my chemistry lab at the Chem Annex. And I was like, "Ok, well, I still need to make money. I still need to pay for school." And also, I was like, "Do I want to be at home with my two younger brothers while I'm trying to, at the time, do organic chemistry, genetics, and a bunch of other courses?" Ummm, no. So I decided to come back, I thought it was financially a better decision, didn't realize I still was going to get paid if I didn't come. But I ended up staying, and I had another RA friend that had stayed who was also in a lot of my classes. So a majority of the time was spent with literally just the two of us, doing work, maybe getting food at the dining hall, which was only to-go, and really just a weird time. I don't know, it was really hard to navigate at the start. I think even professors were trying to get the hang of it. I was like, "Why am I watching a two hour lecture for my one hour class?" That's not how this is going to work, just because I'm at home. But, yeah, it was really strange. It was like the weirdest time ever, looking back on it, even weirder that I still was an RA and still stayed on campus. I still can't believe that. So I think it worked out for the better, I was able to finish the semester off, I was able to focus on my school and stuff. Made the money that I needed to make, and went on my merry way to the summer.

SB: And if I might ask, you said you were still taking these biology courses. So you were still an MCB major at this point?

DV: Yes. This I will say. COVID was my absolutely last straw with MCB. I got to the point in the degree where I felt like, "Oh my god, this is so granularly specific, why are we talking about sodium pumps, I'm sorry, this just isn't what I thought it was going to be." It got really deep,

and I was staring down the barrel of Physics 101, Physics 102, still had to do another math course. I hadn't even taken biochemistry yet, so I was like, "You know what, I don't think I'm going to go to medical school." I'd already had in my head, especially coming into sophomore year, medical school probably wasn't for me. And I wanted to go into conveying healthcare research to the public. "[Unintelligible] see how my job literally got destroyed by the public." And I was like, "You know what, maybe that, maybe all of this isn't something that I wanted to do." So my junior year, first semester, I ended up switching to Interdisciplinary Health Sciences through the College of Applied Health Sciences, and I had a degree in Diversity of Health Sciences. So kind of just like a more general health and science degree that I wanted. Was probably the best decision I had made, because then I was spending less time stressing about courses and stressing about all these things, and I was able to actually enjoy my last few years, and enjoy what I wanted to out of it.

And also the classes were more in line with what I actually wanted to learn. I wasn't really there for the intense levels of science, I kind of wanted to, I love science, but I wanted to find a way to convey health research or health information to people who didn't love science. So, we'll see.

SB: And when you, so when you got back for your junior year, because we were open, you were here on campus?

DV: Yeah.

SB: You'd said you were moved as an RA to ISR. Was that a choice that you made, or was that just somewhere they assigned you to?

DV: Oh, that was an active choice. I made sure, I put, not like I didn't get to choose, but I made extra extra effort to get to know the RD at ISR. I was buddy-buddy with her, she was friends with our RD at Allen, and I always dropped hints to him that I wanted to move there. They were like, building that building, or renovating ISR at the time that all of this was going down. So I was like, "It's going to be a new build! This is what I'm looking for." I wanted an upgrade, I wanted AC, so I put in a lot of extra effort to make sure that when they did pick people, I got picked to go there.

SB: And you were picked to move?

DV: Yep.

SB: So after you moved to ISR, now that was the COVID year, as we call it, that virtual year. Were you, you're doing your programming or whatever you could do for ISR, did you stay involved in any Allen events or had you really pivoted mostly to your new position?

DV: I pivoted mostly to my new position. I thought about bringing some of the Allen Hall *Big Brother* and doing that again, but it just wasn't feasible my junior year to host a large event like that. I think most of the programming events that we were even doing weren't really like large events. They were either Zoom fun, Zoom things or fun smaller group activities that you could

do in an outdoor setting. I remember programming took a major, major, major hit during COVID for RAs. So, candidly, I don't remember specifically any events that I created or did that were large enough to talk about now, because it was kind of just like, we were going through the motions and learning as we went, because we really just didn't have a rulebook on how to be an RA and create community in a time when you can't convene. So, it was different, but yeah, when I moved to ISR Townsend, I didn't really do anything with Allen until my first semester senior year, when I came back to host Season Five.

SB: And had you, when you weren't doing anything with Allen, were you not attending, probably they were done on Zoom, lectures and artists-in-residence and the like? You weren't involved in any of that that year, really?

DV: No. My schedule and stuff also picked up. During COVID since I was not working at the Chem Annex, I did, I picked up another job because I needed to pay for school. So I had a remote job at the time, that was soaking up a lot of my work. Because if I wasn't doing school, RA, that job, or eventually then working back at the Chem Annex, it was like I just didn't really have time to do any guest lectures or fun stuff like that. So, sadly, that was, didn't really attend any of those.

SB: And also, I don't think I've asked this yet, in your first two years when you were living in Allen, did you take any of the classes, or were there classes, offered in the building at that time?

DV: There were. I remember there were classes that had certain discussions sections or stuff, like in classrooms in the basement. I just never really got into those sections, and I don't know if any of the classes were really ones that I, were required for my major or anything. So I think I never really opted for having any classes. I think the only class that I really pushed to have in there was maybe my EPOL 199, which is the RA class you have to take. I ended up not getting to it just because the seats and stuff filled up really quickly, when it was time for registration. But that was always an option and I did like that that was there. I know a lot of other students definitely took advantage of having classes literally where you could roll out of bed and they multiple times said, "These are classes you can roll out of bed and go downstairs to class for." I was like, "Ok, love how you advertise it that way but [unintelligible.]"

SB: So you didn't happen to take any, but it was a good thing and you saw other people benefit from...

DV: ... oh, yes, yes, yes. The fact that I couldn't get in spoke to how much people actually enjoyed them and wanted to get into those classes. But I just don't think that the classes really lined up for both my major or finding time to get into those classes. So, but definitely something that I think people used a lot. And I'm surprised other dorms didn't have...

SB: Yeah, Nugent did. Nugent had one that everyone that was in the LLC had to take. It was, but my first year was the first year of the Honors LLC, so they didn't know what in the hell they were doing. Which was kind of cool, because you got to do whatever you wanted.

DV: Yeah.

SB: But that's a different story. And you mentioned, also, that there was the darkroom down in the basement and other spaces. Were those in Ground Floor North?

DV: Those were actually in Ground Floor South. So Ground Floor North was all, it was a smelly boy's dorm, oh my God, that was actually where it smelled the worst, because that was the basement. But, no, it was all in One South. They had, that was where the PizzaFM was, they had the, Laura's office was down there, that's where the darkroom, pottery studio, and our, I don't want to say RA office, but like RA craft closet, craft room. Stuff where you could get things to build your bulletin boards and stuff. So, yeah, loved that place.

SB: It was, and I'll add for you, that the, as a constant since the '70s, that that Ground Floor, whether it was north or south, was always where the facilities and spaces for Allen were.

DV: Yep.

SB: And if I might ask, just speaking a little more, and how are we doing on time? I don't want to go over your scheduling today and if you do need to head out at any point just let me know and we can always continue speaking.

DV: Yeah, no, I'm good. I blocked out this time and I don't mind, my company thinks I'm busy. So, I don't care...

SB: Well, you are busy, so that's fine. And I won't tell them.

DV: I'm enjoying talking with you, so that's fine.

SB: Well, great. It's been really, it's great getting this perspective. I'm really keen to get your perspective on COVID, because we've done, another unit of the Archives has done, kind of an oral history project in response to the admins and the University-level people about the COVID response. But I don't think we've, I don't want to say neglected, but we haven't really gotten that student perspective yet. And since our unit of the Archives is the Student Life and Culture Archives, that's something that I've been mulling over.

DV: Yeah.

SB: Because, I mean it was just the, probably the biggest disruption in campus and the community since World War II.

DV: Yes! [Unintelligible] not been around for that I'm going to grant that, but sure.

SB: Probably either since World War II or maybe since the Vietnam protests in the late '60s and early '70s, but even then, campus still functioned, it was just these things that

were going on. In World War II, actually some of my personal work involves speaking with surviving World War II veterans, so they've had a couple of, mentioned things about here.

DV: Wow.

SB: That was interesting. But I'm digressing rapidly. In your first couple of years, you're getting involved with Allen, you're obviously having these classes, you're making decisions about your major and how you want to proceed with that. And you had said that you got involved with October Lover's, and you looked into this medical RSO. What was it like, what was the rest of campus like? It seems like you're very social, so you probably weren't limited just to Allen in your social life and your life on campus. What other things were you interested in and what were your hangout spots on campus when you weren't in class or weren't in Allen?

DV: Yeah, I definitely think, from transitioning from high school to college, I took a lot of that, like, go-getter attitude that I had to really get involved and do things. So October Lover's was always just a fun club that literally only met once, didn't even meet. It was just once on the month, in the October, wait, LOL, tripping over all my words. It would only meet in October, and you would go and just do all these fun things that I probably was already going to do on my own. One of my favorite places at the University of Illinois will forever and always be Curtis Apple Orchard. Oh my God, that was so fun going there. It's so cute, that's such a small town thing that I thought was so cute and I loved going literally every fall. So that was one of the places I always looked forward to and definitely missed it these past few falls.

But in terms of main hangout areas, I would hangout a lot, especially in Urbana, I felt like I definitely gravitated more towards a house party scene more than the bars. It was just not my MO, those aren't really the people I was really getting along with. I think having found that community, especially since a lot of people from Allen end up going to those events, it was like, "Ok, cool, this is a different way to enjoy my time in college that other people probably, I didn't think about." This wasn't something that I had contributed to what I thought U of I was going to be. So that was very refreshing to learn about.

I also enjoyed hanging out, there was this tree over near the Chem Annex, I would always sling my hammock up at. Since I worked there, it was very easy to just hang out there. I loved being on the Quad, I loved being near people, since I was really social, it was one of those things, where if people saw me, they'd be like, "Oh my God, hey Danny!" and I'd be like, "Oh my God, hey!" It was just cool to run into people, people you wouldn't even have seen. I loved that the place is very walkable. That's one of my biggest things I miss about college. But in terms of other places that I would hang out, I really, oh my God, I loved the Japan House and Japan Gardens. Those are gorgeous, great place to walk around at. I was really big on if I was really stressed out or had a lot of hats I was putting on, I could always be like, "Ok, the great way to destress is put in headphones and just go for a walk."

And I would walk all around the little houses in Urbana, because I think, oh my God, it's just so beautiful there, I would love to retire there for the fact that their landscaping is so pretty. The

houses are old, it was just everything I'd been looking for, and I just loved hanging out in little downtown Urbana. There was like a lot of shops there, a lot of restaurants, and on campus... my favorite places to hang out, well, one, my friend's apartment, they had a really nice one over Fat Sandwich. And there was this food truck, Mo's Burritos, that was so good. I still think about it, it was just parked out there. I have fond memories of that. And, where else, did I frequent a lot? I feel like I was all around. I really liked biking around the area, too. And, ooh, recently I really love the Siebel Center for Design, that, I think, finished either my junior or senior year at some point. They host the Circular Fashion Expo there that I've attended a bunch of times. I'm going down again next weekend for that, so it's super fun and I think that speaks to the community of people that were built there and just the community of people that I really got along with. I loved my time there and I loved pretty much anything that involved Urbana.

SB: And I get the sense, I have a sense of what your answer is going to be, but I always feel like I need to ask, with student life and culture. Did you ever think about rushing a social fraternity?

DV: No. I actually physically went out of my way to come up with fake frat names, so, "My name's Dylan, I'm really excited to join the frat" I would tell every single frat guy this, so, that way, any time anybody would see me and they'd be like, "Oh my God, Dylan!", I'd be like, "Ok." Put a new hat on that's not me, and it's also like the subculture of they didn't like letting guys into the frat parties, so if I fake was rushing, then I was able to get in. But I quickly, after freshman year, had moved on from that because that was just not the scene or the people that I liked interacting with. So, yeah, no, never really considered rushing any of those. And I also never really considered or wanted to rush any of the professional ones. I thought that, from my perspective, it felt a lot less professionally supportive and a lot more professionally competitive. I saw a lot of people competing with their peers and talking badly about their peers or not sharing information because they weren't involved in the same professional fraternities. Or they were benefitting from test banks and things like this. It just really wasn't what I was hoping they'd be. I wanted, if it was going to be professional, "Oh, we're going to help each other find different opportunities, or we're going to share different information with each other." And that just wasn't the case. I stayed far away from anything that said sorority or fraternity.

SB: Except for, of course, everyone who's a freshman is always rushing to get into the parties. If someone asks if you're rushing, you say yes.

DV: Yes, and that was Dylan! Dylan was always rushing.

SB: Dylan was rushing... I think I might still have a couple of random numbers from fraternity social chairs in my phone.

DV: Oh my God. I felt so bad, you have to do that in order to just get in or survive or something, but I remember at one point, one of them hit me up and was like, "Hey, we're watching the big football game" or something, and I was like, "Oh, this is so funny, I don't remember which fraternity guy this is, but I kind of want to respond and say I'm not a big soccer fan." [Laughs] I didn't want to get involved or make it any worse for me, so I just kind of ignored it. But yeah, you just have to play their game.

SB: Well, that's part of the experience of being here. And it might not have turned out to be your vibe, but maybe in another reality it might have and you would have figured it out that way. That's, I like to say that I figured, "I'm coming to the Big U, I should at least think about it." So I did, for about an hour, and then realized that I was just going to be fake rushing for a while. Yeah, it's interesting to have that perspective. And at some point, I'm going to find somebody who lived in Allen and decided that the Allen scene isn't for me, and then rushed a fraternity, and I'm going to get their perspective. Just because I think that would be awesome.

DV: Yeah! The juxtaposition there, it's crazy.

SB: I don't know where I'm going to find that person, because they're not going to be in the Allen Hall Facebook group, but we'll see where it ends up going. But it's a good perspective to have. And since I work for the Library, I'd be remiss in not asking this. Did you use the Library a lot, and did you have a favorite branch library or branch library that you went to?

DV: Yeah, I used the libraries a lot. I'm a longtime Chicago Public Library cardholder, and I was very keen on the libraries here at U of I. I think I, don't quote me on this, but aren't we the second biggest library compared to Harvard in terms of the schools' library systems? I thought that was really cool. I used to go a lot to the UGL, RIP, but that just was a lot more of a social library, I feel like. People went there, but you didn't need to focus. But when I wanted to get stuff done, I was going to the Main Library, I was just finding a tiny table somewhere, a spot somewhere that I was just going to be left alone. I also really liked, at one point, I went to the Math Library in Altgeld, excuse me, that was the golden ticket once I found that. I was like, "Oh my God, this is silent and no one's even here all the time. Sign me up." So I really liked that library, and then I think the ACES Library was one that I also really liked, because it was really big and it had a lot of windows and they also, the rooms you can rent out, that's where I would do a lot of big group projects or big planning for events and stuff. Because they had the whiteboards, the big circular window, the big table, and not a lot of people went to the College of ACES Library if you weren't in the College of ACES, so the rooms were often open, which I appreciated. Where [unintelligible] UGL you were fighting tooth and nail to get 30 minutes in one of those rooms.

SB: Oh, yeah, ACES is very underrated, why, I don't know. Maybe now not so much that that UGL isn't there any longer, but, yeah. And so, if I might, we've kind of been moving in a loose chronology here, so your senior year, things are starting to open back up. If I'm right, that was 21-22, so we're still wearing masks, but things are opening up, we've got in-person classes. What was it like to have your last year after having had the full COVID experience? You're still an RA in ISR?

DV: Yep.

SB: So, what was that like, you mentioned that you did go back to Allen to do that Season Five of *Big Brother*? So how did that come about? You said that your junior year you were not really involved in Allen, how did you end up going back there to do that?

DV: Yeah. So once things started to open back up my senior year, I was very very happy about it. I think I want to give a lot of credit to, honestly, U of I for creating that spit test and the Illini app or whatever. Oh my God, that was way ahead of its time and definitely put us in a way better spot to feel more confident in going back to an in-person class without this risk of being infected by people who obviously didn't care about it. Because there was a real big divide politically about people, whether or not they wanted to adhere to policies or not. But, for the most part, the school did an amazing job with it. I was very proud of them for that. And when it had started to open back up I was like, "This is direct response from the work that had been put in by the school to get us to this point." So, I was living! Any chance I got to go back in-person for a class I was excited for.

I remember, I'm big on clothes and fashion and stuff, and I was like, "Oh my God, this is my chance to finally show off more than just the top of my outfit." I was like, "Finally! People get to see people in-person." So I thought it was really refreshing. It also brought a lot of people back to campus. I had had some friends that maybe for our junior year stayed fully remote for their classes, didn't feel confident in coming back to the school for stuff like that, and since it was remote, they had the ability to just not be there. So, I think the fact that it was my senior year, the fact that it had started to open back up, I was like, "Okay, thank you!" I was very afraid about finishing out my college and my only experience is going to be as a freshman and sophomore for a little bit.

So I was excited, and with that, we like were talking obviously about programming again, as RAs, I was excited to host events again and that's when Allen Hall *Big Brother*, I was like, "I'm doing this again." I had already had plans in the works when COVID had started for a fifth season, like it was going to be that spring semester. It just did not work out, and then when it came back around, I kind of just told my boss, I was like, "Hey, this is going to kind of sound unconventional, but I'm hosting my *Big Brother* game again, but I am hosting it in Allen. I want to tell you, I was really going to try and host it in the new ISR dining hall, it just really doesn't feel like we have the amount of space and there's a lot of people there. So I can't really rent out an entire room for the thing without displacing a bunch of people. So I think I'm going to have to host the event back in Allen." And my RD bite back about it. They were like, "No, you're doing a disservice to your community, you're not doing the job that you were assigned to do." And I'm like, "Ok, well, I've invited you to the finale parties, you know that I needed the space," but whatever.

So I continued on with it, and I hosted another season. I had a good mix of people that were from ISR and other people who were from Allen and people who were from other dorms. Because I made sure to go out of my way to go and find other cast members to be a part of this next season. So my fifth season was all newbies except two returning players that I masqueraded as newbies. And it went really well. And I am probably the most proud of those episodes, and that's the ones that I sent you, because I really started to get a hand of how to edit them and what to include in them and what the game really needs in order to run. Because a lot of that comes

with trial and error. I didn't, I'd hosted *Survivor*, but I'd never hosted *Big Brother*, so I kind of got involved back with that, hosting events. And I think that's where the contention with my RD comes in, where they were like saying that I should be hosting more events in the dorm, because I will say I did put a ton of energy into Allen Hall *Big Brother*, that was my biggest event as an RA, and the biggest thing I'd be putting on any year. And then when they saw that compared to, "Oh, Danny's hosting a pizza party or Danny's doing their community floor meeting and it ends in an hour," they were like, "Well, you're not putting in effort to the other ones." So I'm like, "What do you want me to do, throw an entire circus for the welcome week party? I don't know what you want from me."

So it was definitely difficult to navigate both of those, but I kind of just came into it with the intention of, OK, this is, if it's going to open up and this is going to be my last year of college, I need to make the most of it. So I did the things I wanted to do and apologized later. Like hosting *Big Brother* or going and doing what I wanted in classes or switching my major or doing all of these fun things that I didn't do the other years. So I really just tried to make the most of the last time that I had there. And I don't have a lot of regrets from it. I'm happy that I was able to host another season and get more people to experience *Big Brother* and also bring back something that was a real big [unintelligible] at the community before COVID. So definitely excited to see another season come out from it.

SB: So you were in your last year, to what extent were you thinking about your future post-graduation, or, if I might as, after you did graduate, what profession are you in or where did you go after you graduated and how does your U of I experience reflect on that?

DV: Yeah, so I, when I graduated, I was applying for a bunch of jobs, but I had already still had that remote job that I had for my junior year. So they had offered me an internship, in-person, in New York, and when I graduated, I was pretty much like, "Oh, I'm going to move to New York and I'm going to live there and work there in-person." So I continued to work for them and I ended up going to New York and when I was there, it just really wasn't for me. I knew New York was one, way too expensive, two, way bigger than I expected, three, way more different than what I thought, compared to Chicago. So it just really wasn't a fit for me and I remember telling them, I was like, "Hey, I don't want this to impact my full-time employment or anything or if that was going to be the case, because they kind of alluded to the fact that if I came into this internship that it would transition into a full-time role. They said, "Oh, no, no, no, don't even worry about it." My boss was literally in Chicago too, so I was like, "Okay, cute."

So I moved back to Chicago, whatever, they never ended up offering me the full-time job and I ended up still working close to, if not full-time hours there. And then it wasn't what my degree was in, I work in digital marketing for a startup, so it's definitely not something that I was very keen on, but it was something that, one, helped me graduate and have something to help start paying off my schooling and two, was something that just came naturally to me. So I have still worked there and I'm applying for new jobs, but in more of a healthcare field, because I do want to transition back to what I have my degree in in Health Sciences. But, you know, just finding it difficult with people being like, "Oh, you don't have the work experience." "Oh, I do have work experience, it's obviously not in this field," but just trying to convey to them transferrable skills and stuff.

And I did actually reach out recently back to my old advisor from the College of Health Sciences, who helped me at the start and stuff and was like, “Hey, I’m looking to transition back to healthcare. If you know anybody that’s hiring or any of the companies in this certain interests, I’d love to, or any even other alumni that are working in this field. Let me know.” So still waiting to hear back from her, she’s a very busy person. But, you know, I definitely made the most of my last moments there at U of I. And I’m happy with all the things that I did. I think it was just after school, transitioning to that job, not really something I thought I was going to be in. But, you know, the world works in mysterious ways.

SB: And then, like you said, you’re reaching out to an advisor. So you are still drawing on your time at U of I. And you’re still bringing that back, and, you know, has your experiences and the things that you did at Unit One and Allen Hall, has that been something that you’ve referred to as you’ve been moving throughout the beginnings of your career? Perhaps thinking about how you were able to manage things and apply those skills?

DV: Yeah, I always bring up, when people are like, “Tell us about something on your resume, or tell us something about you that’s not on your resume.” I always go back to, “Oh, *Big Brother*, or oh, *Survivor*,” because I don’t get paid for these things. This is all out of my own money and my own passion, and I always use as an example, if I am able to create an entire reality show with these people, manage it, while still going to school, while maintaining all these jobs, while maintaining my grade point average and everything. And that speaks to the type of worker and the type of person that I am. So I always reference that type of stuff, and they’re always like, “That’s so crazy that you were a freshman doing all these programming things in your dorm, or hosting a whole reality show that you’re editing episodes for, and you weren’t getting paid!”

I think people find that to be endearing in a sense, or whatever. But, for me, that’s when I’m always at my happiest and stuff. So that’s what I always bring up and it brings back a ton of fun memories and a ton of fun great people from Allen. So I always love any chance I get to talk about *Big Brother*, that’s why I was excited to do this.

SB: It seems like if you were going to do college all over again, you would definitely be part of Allen once again?

DV: Oh, yeah. If I were to do it again, I think that would have been my first choice right away as a great freshman dorm. I think it is probably one of the better freshman dorms that someone can have. Because if you’re someone that’s worried about meeting other people or branching out or finding your niche or just getting to find your place at U of I, there’s definitely going to be somebody or something at Allen that will be that for you. And if it’s not, they have all the resources in the world for you to build that for yourself. So, it’s also a very social dorm. And I think people would benefit a lot from that, and that’s what I always tried to tell my residents and tried to push people to do is like, “This is your chance to branch out, this is the one time that you will probably be surrounded by this many people your own age. This is your chance, just go for it.”

SB: And did you ever have the opportunity to recommend Allen Hall to a new student to the University? Or would you do that if somebody asked?

DV: Yeah, I always do. I think there's definitely students that I, who I know will benefit from Allen and I push them that way. And there's other students that I think may not know that Allen would be a good fit for them, or may not be the best fit or what they expected in their college experience. But I'm always like, "No, I think you need to give it a chance. I actually think you'd really enjoy it." And I think that's a common theme with a lot of people. I think a lot of people looking at it on the outside being like, "Ooh, it's the artsy dorm, it's the dorm with no AC, ooh it's this that the third." When you actually get into it, I don't think people understand what it's like to live in Allen or live in Unit One without actually having experienced it themselves. There's still people who are friends to this day from that. I don't know if other people are as integrated or as friends with the people that they were in a dorm with than people were at Allen. So I always make sure to recommend it to people, and I think it's definitely a unique place [unintelligible] college experience.

SB: And you're still keeping in touch with people that you met there?

DV: Oh, yeah. I still invite people, every summer, I don't host *Big Brother* anymore because it's a lot to do it over five days. But I do host *Survivor* still, and that's only a one-day thing, and I invite people every summer to come up to do it. So I've had people from literally as far as states away who went to U of I who are like, "No, Danny, I will be there! I'm driving to Chicago for the next season. I will be there." So it's cool to see that those friendships have lasted and I have to say it's all thanks to Allen Hall *Big Brother* and Allen Hall in general, because who's social like that? I don't know, it's a unique group of people.

SB: Certainly. And if I may ask, we're getting up on two hours, which is just awesome.

DV: Oh my gosh!

SB: I'm so glad to have this perspective. Are there any memories of the University and Unit One that we haven't talked about that you'd like to share? Anything that stands out in your mind? People you met, things you did?

DV: I think one thing that really stood out to me was how passionate people were. People at Allen, if it was something they liked, they went to the ends of the earth for it. The way I went all out for *Big Brother* is the way people would go all out for social causes, for their own clubs, or even their own friends. Passion runs deep there at Allen, and I just remember, kind of, taking a moment to look at what everybody else was doing, and just being like, "Wow, where else would people be able to create these clubs that they wanted or make these friends with people that they wouldn't have probably met in their other lives?" I don't know, it's cool, and I think even cooler now seeing where everybody went off in their lives. I have friends now, one person who went to Allen, I'm going to give them a shoutout, their name is AdamTheFlop on TikTok. They were at Allen, they competed in Allen Hall *Big Brother* 1 and 2, and they were one of my first friends that I had made there. And they started making these TikTok videos about Billboard Hot 100 or

the Billboard charts, and because they're really into music and stuff. And it completely took off for him! And how he has a million followers, he's attending these music awards, he lives in LA, he just went to Coachella with a company. He's, where else am I going to meet people that I can say were friends like that, or will have had these cool experiences? So, I think Allen Hall just brings in a lot of unique people and when you really take time to get to know them and be friends with those people, you could be friends with some of the coolest people you'll ever know. So, it's just cool to see where everyone's at now.

SB: That's really a ringing endorsement and a really good way to, unless there's anything else that you want to mention, I'm going to wrap us up here. I know you said you blocked the time out, but still, I don't want to take too much of it. Nothing else you can think of? It really seems like we've covered so much of your time here, I have a really good well-rounded perspective of not only your experiences at Allen, but you experiences as a student, just a general student as well.

DV: Yeah, I don't really have anything else to add. Again, Ramona was robbed! Season One! [Laughs]

SB: Well, Danny, that's a wonderful way to end it. And of course, if I come up with any follow-up questions, may I reach out?

DV: Oh, yeah, totally!

SB: Of course, yeah. And there's nothing that says if you don't think of anything else that we can't speak again or anything like that either.

DV: Yeah, totally. I literally did not even realize that two hours had passed, talking with you. It was literally like talking with an old friend. So, thank you so much for interviewing me and contributing *Big Brother* to the Archives. I think that's so cool. If you need any more episodes or want to see anything else, I can always send those your way. And if you have those other two links, I mean, that's all...

SB: That would be great. Yeah, I mean, it's a possibility we could even add those to the collections themselves rather than just the links from YouTube. But I'd have to talk to my supervisor about that. That's the kind of thing where we don't have those things from other periods, or we do, but they're in different ways of course. That's just the kind of thing that we like looking after, what students did, what they do, how did you handle COVID. Danny, on behalf of myself and the Archives, thank you so much for your time and sharing your story with me.

DV: Thank you so much for having me! I had a blast.

SB: Great. And so what I'll do, just moving forward, what I'm going to do is, save this recording both the video and the audio. Although I think the audio is what will go up there, just because IT doesn't like it when we upload giant videos. But I'll keep them both, and you'll, of course, I'll send you a copy or provide you with one. I'll also make a

transcript of this, which will take some time because I do them, pardon me, because I do them by hand.

DV: Oh God, so sorry. I talked so much... just random things.

SB: Oh, that's alright. Well, we have it, I have it down to a science by this point, and it's very handy doing transcriptions for your own interviews, because you know how you were speaking and how the person you were speaking with was talking as well. So, we'll that done and we'll of course get you a copy of that. Eventually, we have, and I will send you a link to this, we have an existing oral history portal called *Voices of Illinois*, and that's where we would put these things. Except we're, one of the other hats that I wear is doing outreach and some technical support for the Archives, and we're currently working on a more enduring portal. That portal has reached the end of its technological lifespan, so I think once we get something new worked out and get that built, then this, the Allen Hall interviews will be the first new collection that will go up on there.

DV: Yay!

SB: And of course, we'll keep you posted on that.

DV: Awesome! Well, thank you so much.

SB: Thank you, Danny. Alright, you take care and have a good day and please let me know if you have any questions.

DV: Bye Spenser!

SB: See ya, take care.

END