

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Robert Rooke '49
By Mary Stelle Donin
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ROOKE: Well, I didn't matriculate until—it was late January or February of 1946. I was accepted here and I still hadn't gotten the discharge from the army. The war was over. I was still in Camp Campbell, Kentucky, and anxious to get out of the army, obviously, and I had a lucky break. I ran into a master sergeant who was assistant to the camp commander, whatever he was. I told him I was supposed to be at Dartmouth in two weeks, and how could I get my discharge early? Somehow or other they arranged for me to get a discharge. I got discharged and I was probably here two weeks after I was discharged.

And there was—quite a few freshmen came in with me at that same time, and I was assigned to a room in Topliff Hall with Bert Proom, who was my roommate for two years. We all—in fact, Topliff Hall probably had, I don't know, twenty or thirty veterans return at that time, and we stayed on through the—I guess it would be the second semester, and then we all stayed on for summer school. The college gave us six credits for being in the army, so with the summer school, we qualified to be sophomores in September of '46.

DONIN: So you caught up pretty fast.

ROOKE: Yeah. They gave us the option of changing our class, so quite a few of us—we started out as 1950s, but we all became '49s.

DONIN: Why was that? Why did you decide to change? Because you caught up with that class?

ROOKE: Well, then we were with the regular class, so that we would graduate in '49, so it seemed likely that we should be '49s, and that was how that worked. Now, what else can I tell you here?

DONIN: Well, let's back up for a minute. Let's back up to high school and your decision to come to Dartmouth. Why had you chosen—you had already applied, I assume before you—I was checking your military service. You were in infantry and then corporal from '43 to '46.

ROOKE: Yes.

DONIN: So, you had—What year did you graduate from high school?

ROOKE: Forty-three.

DONIN: Oh.

ROOKE: I was in the army for almost three years.

DONIN: And so, had you applied to go to Dartmouth?

ROOKE: Well, the reason I came to Dartmouth, my father was a trustee of Bucknell University and he wanted me to go there, but I had two friends, very close friends, that had matriculated at Dartmouth before the war. One was a next-door neighbor of mine in the summer home over in Newfound Lake, and the other was another chap that I knew from over in that area. And I was in touch with them. I had known them before the war, and we sort of stayed in touch during the war. They all said to me, there's only one place for me to go and that was Dartmouth. And the one chap had discharged early and he had married and was here in Hanover as a student when I was still in the army, and it turned out that his wife was secretary to Dean Strong.

DONIN: Oh, how interesting.

ROOKE: He was the admissions director.

DONIN: Right.

ROOKE: So, I was still in the army when I sent my application in, and she—my friend's wife—took it to the dean and said, "Here, put this guy on." That's how I happened to be here. [Laughter]

DONIN: How'd your dad take it that you weren't going to go to Bucknell?

ROOKE: Well, he never really said anything. He was never one to get too excited about anything.

DONIN: Since you were summering at Newfound Lake, you'd been over to Hanover and seen Dartmouth, then, before you applied?

ROOKE: Once or twice, yes, but not that I was actually looking at the college to go here and all. I think I might have been here once or twice, but the answer was only on occasion.

DONIN: Had the idea of coming to Dartmouth appealed to you because of the setting or the influence of your friends?

ROOKE: It was strictly the influence of my friends, and the fact that I had been spending summers in New Hampshire since 1931, so I was familiar with the climate. Well, actually, the summer climate. I had never been here in the winter.

DONIN: Oh. [Laughter] That can be shocking at first.

ROOKE: Yes.

DONIN: So, you applied during your military service, and you were lucky to get out and come here. You came, then, just after President Dickey had become president.

ROOKE: Yes, that's correct. He had just come here, I don't know, the prior—I'm not sure. He hadn't been here very long when I arrived. He probably came in 1945 sometime.

DONIN: I think he came in the fall of '45.

ROOKE: Is that right?

DONIN: He matriculated his first group of—I mean, it was your class coming in in 1945.

ROOKE: Yes, but I wasn't there for the original.

DONIN: Did you get the handshake and the signature from him when you arrived in '46?

ROOKE: Not that I recall, no. I may have.

DONIN: Right. But there was a real influx of students, obviously.

ROOKE: Veterans. Mostly veterans.

DONIN: Veterans. Because the war was over, and they were all coming back, and wanting to pursue their education. And I gather the dormitories were sort of bursting at the seams because the veterans were all coming back, as well as the regular civilian undergrads were starting.

ROOKE: Yeah. Well, we never had problems with rooms that I know of, at least I didn't. We were in Topliff Hall that spring and I don't remember where we were the summer, but then for our sophomore year we moved across the street to a complex opposite the old gym there. I can't think of what the—

DONIN: And did they place you with veterans as roommates? Were you always placed with other veterans?

ROOKE: Yes, before I arrived in Hanover, they told me who my roommate was going to be. It was another veteran about my age from New Jersey. We became very fast friends and, unfortunately, he passed on about five years ago. Then he and I roomed together freshman and sophomore years. And then for the junior year—well, first of all, all of the guys that were in Topliff that had come in, we all joined the same fraternity.

DONIN: Oh, did you?

ROOKE: That was Beta Theta Pi. And then for our junior year, five of us rented a house on Sergeant Place. Do you know where Sergeant Place is?

DONIN: Yes.

ROOKE: And the landlady that owned it was named Mrs. Sovosky.

DONIN: Good memory you've got.

ROOKE: Well, she was something else. She was a seamstress for Campion.

DONIN: Oh, yes. Right.

ROOKE: And she had rooms, apparently, on the third floor, and we had the whole first floor, the five of us.

DONIN: Oh, terrific.

ROOKE: It was kind of a sparse existence there, but we didn't seem to care. It was better than the army.

DONIN: And did you do all your own cooking or did you eat on campus?

ROOKE: Well, in five years that I attended Dartmouth—I went to Tuck School—I don't recall ever having a meal in a college facility. We used to eat—there were a few restaurants here in town, or it was something in the Inn. We didn't have breakfast. There was a diner just around from Sergeant Place

on that—I forget the name of that road. It doesn't exist—the diner—any more. And for twenty-five cents, you could get a glass of beer and a plate of spaghetti, and that was lunch. And then for dinner we would go there. And then eventually, one of my other roommates from my junior year—his name was Lee Bronson. He lives in Salt Lake City—he and I would go to White River Junction, or something like that for dinner, or someplace else. But, we prided ourselves on not eating in the college [Laughter].

DONIN: No college food.

ROOKE: That is correct, yes.

DONIN: Now, did you spend most of your social time—you know, your time not in class—with other veterans, or did you sort of mix it up with your fraternity brothers?

ROOKE: Well, in those days, everybody was very congenial, and one fraternity—it really didn't seem to matter. You were welcome in any fraternity, it seemed like, and the—I don't know. As far as—you know, we'd go from one fraternity to another on the weekends and all this and that. I never stayed in the fraternity house. I didn't like the—

DONIN: Oh, you didn't want to live there.

ROOKE: No. That was too much activity, if you will. In those days, there weren't too many scholars around, as far as I could see. As a matter of fact, at the end of my junior year, I said to my roommate—one of them—I said—I was on the GI Bill for four and a half years when I came here, and I said, "I still have time on the GI Bill." And I said, "We're having such a good time, let's go to Tuck School." So, we marched down there and: How to get into Tuck School? They handed us a piece of paper and we signed our names or whatever, and first thing you knew, we were told we were accepted. In those days, I don't think they looked much at your grades, because we didn't have any particular—we always considered C grades were adequate. Incidentally, I'm just reading *Franklin and Lucy*. Have you seen that book?

DONIN: No.

ROOKE: It's about Franklin Roosevelt and his girlfriends. He went to Harvard and I was quite interested to note that he went through Harvard as a C student and then considered himself—a gentleman's C was what they used to—

DONIN: Oh, yes. I've heard that term. A gentleman's C.

ROOKE: Right. If you got a C, that was adequate.

DONIN: Right. So, the Tuck program was one year long, then, and you got a—

ROOKE: Well, you could go for one year, your senior year, or you could take two years, which I did. My senior year in college I spent at Tuck School. I could get the masters degree in five years by taking senior year at Tuck School, and that's what the two if us did, and I think quite a few of the other chaps did.

DONIN: They called that the Three-Two Program, I think. Three undergrad years and then two graduate years.

ROOKE: That's what it was. I don't recall that term, but maybe that's—

DONIN: Maybe that was a term that was made up later on, after the fact.

ROOKE: Yes.

DONIN: How did you find the undergraduate teaching, compared to Tuck?

ROOKE: Well, when most of us came out of the army, we weren't too much interested in education, so as far as the teaching at the college was concerned, I didn't really pay much attention to it. They had just started the Great Issues program, and I remember President Dickey was a lawyer, as I recall. All of the freshmen and whoever else was taking Great Issues over in the big room there in Dartmouth Hall. He was talking about something, and I'll never forget: the term indictment came up. The legal term. And Dickey asked the student body to explain what indictment meant, and there wasn't a soul that could tell him. I'll never forget that. He was flabbergasted. Of course, you know, you're coming out of high school and all. If you hadn't been in trouble, you wouldn't be indicted or something. That was one thing I remember from the Great Issues course.

And then I took—They had a set curriculum. You had to take English, a foreign language, and, I guess, some math course maybe. And I took German, because I had been taking German all through prep school. And in those days, you didn't speak it. If you could read it and translate a little bit, that was all. There weren't very many German students here. So, I took German for my language, and the professors were always glad to have somebody, so no matter how poorly you did, they would let you go by.

DONIN: And at what point did you figure out what your major was going to be?

ROOKE: I never knew. I never really had a major, because I went to Tuck School. And down there, you took business courses, accounting, and marketing, and whatever else they taught there. So, I never selected a major that I recall. And I never had to write a thesis, either, that I recall, unless it was something I wrote at—I did write a report on the Gillette Company at Tuck School. I think they required you to do a detailed report on some company. And the Gillette Company was in Boston, and my father knew a friend that knew a friend at the Gillette Company or something, so I might have gone down there. I don't recall if I ever did, but that's what I did for my major effort at Tuck School.

DONIN: Now, when you're a student that's going on to Tuck for your second year, you still had a traditional graduation ceremony in '49.

ROOKE: Yes, we did. In June, I guess it was. We went through a ceremony, and then that summer I think it was another Dartmouth friend—a class of '50—and I went to the west coast and got a job out there for a couple of months during the summer. Then he came back as a senior and I came back as a second-year in Tuck School.

DONIN: And where were you living when you were going to Tuck?

ROOKE: I lived two years in the Tuck dorm.

DONIN: Oh, did you?

ROOKE: Yes. Well, as I think I mentioned, after spending three years here at the college, we really didn't spend much time on academics, quite frankly. By this time, the excitement of being out of the army and enjoying life, my roommate and I decided: well, let's go to Tuck School. Maybe we ought to get an education while we're here. So, that's what— [Laughter]

DONIN: So you were making up for lost time.

ROOKE: Yes, indeed.

DONIN: So, describe what your social life was like. I mean, did you do all these road trips to visit the other—the women's colleges?

ROOKE: Oh, yes. Every weekend we went somewhere. It was—I can't remember—except maybe in the deepest winter where we didn't go somewhere. We

went to Connecticut College; we'd go to Harvard occasionally for football games; Yale. Smith College: that was a favorite place to go. I went to Connecticut College once. Over in Vermont, there was a girls' school. I can't remember the name of that.

DONIN: Well, a lot of them talk about going over to Saratoga Springs to Skidmore. I don't know if that was one of your destinations.

ROOKE: I went there once. I have a daughter-in-law that graduated from Skidmore. Yes, I went to Skidmore once. Almost cost me my life. One of our fraternity brothers had a new Dodge roadster with a convertible top.

DONIN: Oh my goodness.

ROOKE: I think it was four of us in that car. We were going over the—to get there, you had to go over those big mountains in Vermont, and the driver had been drinking a little too much. And we're going down the hill, and it didn't seem like he was in control of the car. We persuaded him to stop so we could relieve ourselves, and as soon as he stopped, we pulled him out of the driver's seat and put a new driver in and continued on our way.

DONIN: Wise move.

ROOKE: Yes, yes. We had a lot of experiences something like that. We used to go to Boston a lot. I eventually had a girlfriend in Boston; I used to go down and see her frequently. And then two of my prep school friends: one was in—they went to Boston University. And so they'd come up to Hanover occasionally on weekends and I'd go down there for weekends, so we went down there.

One of our worst experiences while we were—my roommate and I were coming back from Boston and it was late at night—Sunday night—and they didn't have interstates in those days. We're coming through Concord, New Hampshire, and my friend, who was driving—it was his car. Fortunately, it was a two-door coupe, hard top—fell asleep and I was half-asleep. I opened my eyes and we were off the road, heading right for a dump truck. And I yelled at him and swung the wheel and we went across the road and the car flipped over in the parking lot of the hospital in Concord. And no seatbelts or anything. I said to him, "Brance," I said, "There's sand in my hair." I said, "What's going on here?" Of course, the sand on the car upside down—the car's laying upside down. So, I said, "You all right?" He said, "Yes." I looked down. We didn't realize the car was upside down. You know, we were trying to figure it out. Finally it

dawned on us. So, we were able to crank the windows up, crawl out. No injuries.

Well, what had happened was, the trunk of the car had popped open and we had two of Tanzi's kegs in the back, and they were laying on the front lawn of this—and just as we're getting out of the car, we hear a siren coming. Somebody called the cops. And we were in the front yard there. Some guy came out of his house. This was probably—it was one o'clock in the morning—and he was in long johns, his pajamas, and I said to this old—I said, "Is that your garage?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, put these kegs in there," which he did. [Laughter]

DONIN: He did?

ROOKE: Yeah. So, by the time the cops got there, the kegs were out of sight. They gave my roommate a ticket for reckless driving and took us down to Concord to the bus station and we got a bus back to Hanover. And then we got to—I guess we were in Tuck School then—and then we had to arrange to get his car towed and repaired. It wasn't that much damage because it didn't hit anything head-on. You know, it rolled over.

You asked about what we did on weekends. That was probably our biggest experience. Eventually—We always used to go down to Colby Junior College, too. Of course that was right there. And later when I was in Tuck School, I was down there one night and saw a student who looked familiar to me, and it turned out that I had met her some years before over at Newfound Lake, where my folks had a summer home. And it turned out that she had a summer home. She was some three years younger than me, but in any event, I started taking her out, subsequently, and we got married. So...

DONIN: I was going to ask you about that, because I noticed that you—

ROOKE: Yes. And my brother married a girl from Colby Junior College. He came to Dartmouth after me.

DONIN: Oh, did he?

ROOKE: Yes. He was class of '52, I think.

DONIN: Did you have a sense of being slightly removed from the sort of traditional undergraduate life while you were here?

ROOKE: Oh, definitely.

DONIN: Because you were a veteran, or because you were older than they were?

ROOKE: I think both, yes. I started here—I was twenty-one years old—and what other freshmen had come in, they were eighteen or so, and most of the veterans had been overseas and a lot of unpleasantness and all. I was pretty fortunate in my army career. I got as far as Italy, but by the time I was there, you know, the war was winding down, so I never got into any action or anything. And I was lucky. My organization was to go to Japan, so they shipped us out of Italy early, and Germany surrendered, I think, in May of '45, and we were shipped out of Italy in June or so on our way to Japan, but they brought us back to the States, and while we were here in the States, I got a pass—two-week leave—and I was over at Newfound Lake here in New Hampshire when the Japanese—when they dropped the bomb. And, of course, from then on—then the war wound down.

We never went to Japan or anything, but since I didn't have enough points, I couldn't get my discharge until after the turn of the year. They gave you—I think you needed thirty-six points to get out. They give you one point per month; two points a month overseas, something like that. I was up only thirty points or something, so they kept me in the army for five months, I think. I did nothing. It was kind of a waste of time. They didn't do any more training or anything.

DONIN: They didn't know what to do with you, I suppose.

ROOKE: That's right. So, that's what kept me from maybe starting Dartmouth in the fall of '45, I guess.

DONIN: Right. So, your sort of group here that you identified with was mainly older veterans?

ROOKE: Yes. One of our friends was twenty-eight.

DONIN: Wow.

ROOKE: There were students here that had gone back as far as the class of '38.

DONIN: Yes.

ROOKE: You probably—

DONIN: Well, I was just reading, I think in your freshman book. They said that the class that graduated in 1949 included people from—Where did I see that? I think it included people from 1937 all the way to 1945.

ROOKE: Yes, there were. And there were a lot of married guys around here, too.

DONIN: Sure. So, in terms of your group, did you identify more with your fraternity brothers or with this group of veterans that you were spending time with?

ROOKE: Well, I would say mostly with fraternity brothers, yes.

DONIN: And they were mostly veterans?

ROOKE: Yes. Well, I wouldn't say 100 percent, but pretty much so, yes.

DONIN: Did you have to go through the traditional hazing and rushing and all that stuff to join the fraternity?

ROOKE: Not really, no. The only thing that they were going to do with us was they were going to take us out in the woods someplace where we didn't know where we were and drop us off, and we got wind of it, so we put potatoes in the tailpipe of the guy's car so he had problems. So, I don't know. They might have taken us as far as White River Junction, but it wasn't anything too serious. That was about the extent of it. It was really—Everybody having been in the army and been beaten up pretty well in the army, they weren't interested in that kind of, you know... For the kids that were just out of high school, you know, that would be something else. Looking at the big college men, you know, and all this and that.

DONIN: So, I assume that they didn't make you walk around in your freshman beanie and all that stuff.

ROOKE: No. I never had one. We didn't have any.

DONIN: Right.

ROOKE: Of course, we started in the middle of winter. I remember one winter, a friend of my father's sent me a coonskin coat that he'd had when he was in college, and it was the winter that I lived down on Sergeant Place with Mrs. Sovosky, and I'll tell you that coonskin coat—this guy was very tall and the coat came down to my ankles, and it had a collar like this, so when you put the collar up, it was over your head. It was warm. It was lined with a wool blanket. It was really something. But it was old.

A funny thing about that coat: it was—One of our fraternity brothers had a brother that was at Princeton, and he came up for Green Key weekend—no, Winter Carnival, it was. And that was the year I was living at Sargent Place, and I had the coat there on a coat rack, and that evening, I was sitting with my friend in the Inn in the—it had a little cafeteria, like at the end, right on the corner. I looked out the window and I saw a guy in a fur coat, and it was in shreds. It was, like hanging down on this guy, and I said, “Boy, look at that coat.” Well, it was my coat, I found out later. [Laughter] And the guy that—name was Simms. I’ll never forget. And he had a glass eye, and he had one with an American flag in it. And, of course, in the evening he’d pop this glass eye. Those were some of the interesting things that would happen in those days.

DONIN: Did he explain how the coat got into shreds?

ROOKE: He’d had too much to drink and apparently had been rolling around either in the street or in the cellar or something. I don’t know. He wasn’t with me when it happened. But, I wrote him at Princeton and asked him for some money for the coat and I got [inaudible]. I don’t think he probably remembered it.

DONIN: That’s too bad.

ROOKE: Yeah. So, that was the end of that coat.

DONIN: I’ll say. So President Dickey, in his interview that we did with him before he died, he talked about the difficulty of mainstreaming this very diverse group of students that landed on campus, starting after the war, and it was exactly was you alluded to, you know, it was the traditional young men right out of college all the way through to these seasoned war veterans who’d seen terrible things in war.

ROOKE: Yeah, guys had been lieutenants, captains, majors in the Army.

DONIN: Yes, POWs and just terrible things had happened to them.

ROOKE: It’s true.

DONIN: And it was a very diverse group of people who were suddenly all squeezed into this one campus and he was trying to bring back all the traditions of Dartmouth: you know, the Winter Carnival, and Homecoming, and Green Key, and all of that.

ROOKE: We had all of those things, but I don't know about... The academic structure was—Unless you were an eager beaver, you know, you were not really pressed to excel academically, at least that was my impression. My first roommate wanted to be a doctor, but after a couple years as an undergraduate, he changed his mind and he joined the rest of us. He was, you know, enjoying life, if you will. And he went on to become president of one of the big insurance companies, so he worked out all right.

DONIN: Yes. So, did you feel that the focus was more on just sort of getting through and getting out of here, rather than—

ROOKE: Well, the focus was getting through with the minimum of academics, I guess that's what you would say. And, as I mentioned, after three years, I was not interested in getting out, no. That's why I really went to Tuck School, because it gave me an extra year here. And I think a lot of people felt that way. I don't think too many people were anxious to graduate. We had no responsibilities.

DONIN: And you were going to school on the GI Bill.

ROOKE: Yes. I think they gave us one hundred dollars a month, if I recall.

DONIN: Somebody else—Other people have said the same thing, to live on.

ROOKE: That was for food and books.

DONIN: Right, and clothing and whatever.

ROOKE: Right. I was one of the few people who had a car.

DONIN: You must have been a popular guy.

ROOKE: I was. Whenever I went home to New Jersey, I had to turn people down. I'd always have four passengers in the five-seater car. My grandfather had a '34 Buick: four-door, black sedan, a model forty. And my mother took it away from him because he got too old, and she gave it to me. And I had that in the army down in Camp Campbell while I was waiting to be discharged. And then when I came to Dartmouth, I arrived with that car. Freshmen were not supposed to have cars, so I made a deal with my friend that I told you his wife was secretary. I said, "You pretend the car is yours; you can use it once a week." [Laughter]

And then, in the fall, that was the fall of '46—while I was in the army I had had most of my paychecks sent to my mother. I had a friend before

the war whose father had a Buick agency, and somewhere along the line, I put a hundred dollars down on a new Buick. It was \$1,640, and I was up here as a—I was still a freshman. That was in November. I got a call from my father. He says, “Some guy called up, and he said he had the Buick for you down here.” I’d pretty much forgotten about it. “Oh, yeah,” I said. “Yes.” He said, “Well, the guy’s got a car. It’s a ’46 Buick.” And, of course, ’46 was the first year they started making cars. It was, like, the first Buick—and it was a convertible—to come into New Jersey. So, somehow I drove the old black thing to Jersey and I came back with this brand-new Buick car. Well, that was an eye-opener up here. I had \$1,640 I had saved, you know, from my army, and that’s how I paid for the car. We drove that car all over the country here.

DONIN: All over the Northeast, I bet.

ROOKE: Yes. That was—

DONIN: No wonder there were so many road trips going on.

ROOKE: Yes. Well, I never went anywhere by myself. I always had... especially, you know, Christmas or Thanksgiving and whenever we had breaks there. There’s still one chap, he still sends me a Christmas card, and he was some years ahead of me. I couldn’t remember why and it finally dawned on me that he was one of my regular passengers. He’s still active. I can’t think of his name offhand, but they rejuvenated the Beta house. Did you...

DONIN: Yes, right.

ROOKE: I read that somewhere. And he was one of the old timers that was instrumental in bringing it back.

DONIN: And he still remembers those rides with you.

ROOKE: Yep. It could be. I guess so, because for years we got this card from Frank—his name was Frank somebody-or-other. I said to my wife, I said, “Who’s Frank, Frank, Frank?” After some years, it finally dawned on me who he was. That was the extent of it.

DONIN: So, do you think that the sense of identity with your class was impacted by the fact that there were all these, you know, different ages that were associated with the class of ’49?

ROOKE: Yeah, I think I never really knew any of the younger guys that came in in the class of ’50. I also know that I met more classmates after I graduated

than I knew, because all of the classes were intermingled and we really didn't do anything by class until after we graduated, really, and started—I think I've been to just about every fifth-year reunion that we've had, and a lot of the people that have come back there were people that I didn't know. In fact, apart from one chap that's treasurer of our class, the other half-dozen executives I didn't know as undergraduates.

DONIN: Do you distinguish—or did you back then—did you distinguish between members of the class who were, you know, young civilians, versus the members that were the veterans? Did you migrate more towards the older guys who were the veterans?

ROOKE: Oh, yeah. Definitely. Yes. I can't think of any younger person that I probably knew when I was here in school. I said, I met most of the—Most of the classmates that I know today I met after I graduated, because back in those days, as you said, there were so many classes mixed up, no one really—you sort of mingled with people your own age, I guess, and veterans.

DONIN: Did you get the sense that the veterans were treated with, you know, respect or treated differently because of their military service?

ROOKE: Well, I never felt that. I never felt that way.

DONIN: Whether you were treated—whether you thought that veterans were treated differently than the traditional undergrad civilians.

ROOKE: Well, there was very little discipline around, and I don't think they were, you know—we had very, very little contact with the administration here.

DONIN: It was a much smaller administration in those days.

ROOKE: Yeah, I would have suspected so.

DONIN: So you didn't have run-ins with the legendary Dean Neidlinger?

ROOKE: I didn't, no. Yes, he was well known on campus.

DONIN: Right.

ROOKE: No, I didn't have—there was a—the campus cop. I think his name was Wormwood. You've probably heard about him. One of my classmates, Tom Schwartz—I don't know if you've interviewed him—he'd been very active in our class—he was one of the group that I didn't know as an

undergraduate. His favorite story is, they were living in Massachusetts dorm here somewhere, and somebody threw a bottle of beer out at Wormwood or something. I don't know. He was making a patrol or something. I don't know what happened, but they went out and they got hold of Wormwood and they tied him to a tree. You can ask Tom Schwartz about that. He's the one that told me that story.

DONIN: I don't know how they could possibly have the nerve to do that, because he would be able to identify them.

ROOKE: Well, I hardly remember him. It was more in later years when I heard about Wormwood, because I didn't—well, I lived in Topliff, and then down there, and then on Sargent Place, and then at Tuck School. I was never in these dorms that are right up in here. I never had any problem with the police or anything like that. In fact, I don't know of any of my gang, so to speak—we never had any disciplinary problems with the university or the police there. I think things were more relaxed. A lot of the traditions had sort of evaporated with the war. You know, they brought in the navy and whatever.

DONIN: Were they still training when you came on campus?

ROOKE: No.

DONIN: They were finished. They were still going year-round in the summertime, because you said you did a summer—forty-six you were here for school in the summer.

ROOKE: I think the summer school—

DONIN: I think that was the last summer they did that, actually.

ROOKE: Oh, is that right? I honestly can't remember whether it was six weeks or eight weeks, quite frankly. It wasn't very intensive. You picked out a couple of courses that didn't require much work. We played golf and ran around here or there. Of course, my family had the home over here at Newfound Lake, so I had a lot of friends over there. Some of my friends, we'd go over and spend the weekends over at Newfound Lake. We had—let's see.

I think I bought a motorboat while I was still here in college. It was hard to get a boat in those days, because all the boat companies had gone to war work or something. But I did find a speedboat. It was called a Bentner, made in Bentner, New Jersey, and it was made out of plywood.

And I had that over there, and during the summers that I was here we used that boat. While I was here I bought a sailboat down on Lake Mascoma, and took that over there. I didn't know how to sail, but my one roommate knew how to sail, so he and I borrowed a trailer, went to Mascoma, picked up the sailboat, took it over there, and he showed me how to sail. I never did much sailing, but the kids liked it.

DONIN: Sure. Now, did you get involved in anything like the Outing Club or, you know, other college—

ROOKE: No, I didn't participate in any sports. My next door neighbors—the chap that persuaded me to come—his older brother had come here. He was a class of '39, and he was very active in the Outing Club. I remember as a teenager, before the war, he had started—he was a class of '39, so he must have started in '35 or something—he'd come over to Newfound Lake and he had a double-bladed axe. I remember I was very impressed with that, and he'd chop wood. I guess that was my first time I ever heard about Dartmouth was he was over there and he eventually became a doctor and he was with the Tenth Mountain Division, and it was his younger brother that was the chap that persuaded me to come here.

DONIN: And what was his name?

ROOKE: His name was Fred Ruoff, and I don't know what class he eventually was. He started before the war and probably graduated in '47 or '48 or something like that. It was his wife that was secretary to Dean Strong. Most our life circulated around the fraternities in those days. And you probably know that they opened up a beer hall here for the students. Do you recall that?

DONIN: You know, President Dickey talks about that, that they needed a social space for the veterans that was more appropriate for their age.

ROOKE: Yes, that's right. It was in the basement of that corner building up there, right opposite the Inn, as I recall.

DONIN: Right, in the basement of—they now call it Collis, but I think you used to call it—although since you never ate at these places, you probably didn't even know what they called it.

ROOKE: No.

DONIN: I think they called it—

ROOKE: That was the student cafeteria, I think.

DONIN: Right. Freshman Commons.

ROOKE: Oh, yes. That was the name. Like you said, I—

DONIN: But it was in the basement, this beer hall?

ROOKE: I think that's where they had the—We always had beer at the fraternity, so there was no occasion, really, to go to that place that I recall. I might have been in there once. I don't remember that, but I do remember they had it and everybody thought that was a good deal.

DONIN: Yeah. Now, did you socialize much—I mean, there were a lot of married vets on campus who came back with wives and lived in Wigwam Circle and Sachem.

ROOKE: Yes. We had maybe two in our fraternity that were married, and I remember one: he was a year or two ahead of me—Jack Marlette. His wife was Mary. She was very gracious; participated and everybody loved her. She was about the only student wife that I recall. There probably were a couple of others, but I don't recall.

DONIN: Who were in the fraternity?

ROOKE: Yeah, I don't think there were too many in our fraternity. That was right down the road here somewhere.

DONIN: I can't imagine that many of the married couples would find much that was appealing to them in fraternity life, since—

ROOKE: Yeah, well, all weekends, parties, they would probably come by.

DONIN: I think the parties were probably more civilized than the fraternity parties are today.

ROOKE: Yes, I suspect so. Less civilized, you mean. Yes, they were kind of raucous. Having been cooped up in the army for anywhere from five to three—you know, however many years. You know, it was almost like getting out of jail, you know, because you were in the army and get up at six, and you did this and that and that, and if you were lucky maybe at five o'clock you were free for the day.

DONIN: Right. Well, I gather there were—This is from other vets that have been interviewed—there was stuff going on in White River Junction and Lebanon. There was some sort of—what do they call it? Like a boardwalk over in—it's not a boardwalk because it wasn't on the water, but some sort of—

ROOKE: They used to have a carnival there, down there in Hartland. There used to be, you know, Ferris wheels and all that kind of stuff there. I don't know—

DONIN: Some pretty raunchy bars over there in White River Junction, I guess.

ROOKE: Well, I'll tell you one other thing that happened. The state of New Hampshire, in those days, bars had to close at, I don't know, midnight, maybe. And all of the veterans joined the VFW in White River Junction.

DONIN: Oh, maybe that's what they were talking about.

ROOKE: So, if you wanted to get a drink late or anything, you'd go down there to the VFW. They had a big bar. It was a popular place.

DONIN: A welcoming place, I'm sure.

ROOKE: Yes. The years we were in Tuck School, my roommate and I, we used to go to the big old hotel in White River Junction. I don't recall what the name of it is.

DONIN: The Coolidge, the Hotel Coolidge. Still there.

ROOKE: Yeah? Was that there or in Claremont?

DONIN: The Coolidge?

ROOKE: Yes.

DONIN: Well, it's in White River now. It looks like it's been there a very long time.

ROOKE: Yeah. Well, that probably was it, and I don't know whether the owner, but the head chef was named Zolicoffer, and he came from Switzerland or something, and we ate there so often, he treated us like family. We'd come in there, and he'd sit down and have dinner with us and occasionally, we were having a party up here—this was after we were in Tuck School—we'd like to have oysters and he'd get oysters sent up from Boston, and he'd open them, and then he'd bring them up in a bushel

basket, with the shell and the juices dripping out... And we'd eat oysters and drink martinis. That was a real... That was...

DONIN: That definitely doesn't sound like traditional undergraduate life at Dartmouth. [Laughter]

ROOKE: That was fun.

DONIN: Now, did you stay on campus enough to sort of participate in things like Winter Carnival and Green Key?

ROOKE: I think most everybody stayed around for Winter Carnival, yeah. That was sort of the big weekend of the year. Everybody would—most everybody would get a girlfriend or somebody to come up here and we'd move out of our rooms and let the girls be there. It was always kind of tough to find a decent place for them to stay. One of my wife's favorite—My favorite story about my wife was she came up for a weekend from Colby. We were living at Sargent Place—five of us on the first floor—and we had five girls staying down there—I think it was five, including my present wife. We weren't married, of course—One of our five roommates, after the five of us had moved out, unbeknownst to the rest of us, he decided that the girls weren't safe down there and he went down there and jumped into one of the beds that was vacant, apparently. And apparently he was about my size, probably blond, I guess; looked a little like me or something, and when my wife came in to go to bed, she thought it was me in bed and kissed him. [Laughter] We still laugh about that.

DONIN: Oh, what a nice surprise for him. That's great.

ROOKE: Yeah. It was one of the funniest things that happened, but... I think my friends and I, they were some of the greatest years of our lives because we had no responsibilities and the work wasn't all that tough. Had plenty of free time. Didn't have a lot of money; you didn't need a lot of money.

DONIN: A lot of them it seems—A lot of the vets when they came back, got jobs, you know, got part-time jobs even while they were students. Do you recall that?

ROOKE: Oh, yes. I never did. I never had a job while I was here on campus. The only jobs I had were summer, and I never made a whole lot of money there. I didn't have to pay the tuition and I always—my father never paid tuition until my second—my last semester at Tuck School. I think he paid, I don't know, a couple hundred dollars, whatever tuition was in those days. So, I was free of parental control, financially.

DONIN: Right, exactly. No, I gather some of them were really stretched and worked in the dining hall and got, you know, free meals, and undertook some entrepreneurial, you know, endeavors such as selling sandwiches and that sort of thing.

ROOKE: I remember one chap used to run a laundry route and some guys delivered newspapers or something.

DONIN: One guy was delivering ice. I guess they were still using ice boxes in those days.

ROOKE: The only guy I knew was Bob Purvis. He had a laundry route for some reason.

DONIN: Did you ever go to many of the football games or follow the sports here?

ROOKE: Oh, yes. We always went to all the football games. Football was the only sport that—it's still the only one that I really have interest in, yes. We always went. We'd go to Princeton; went to Cornell once or twice. That was when they were building the interstate highway. I remember that. They didn't have interstates until they started that Eisenhower.

DONIN: Eisenhower, yeah. Right.

ROOKE: Yeah, we'd go to Harvard; we'd go to Yale. I don't think I ever went to Brown. I don't know why, but... I never went there, but we always went to Princeton, occasionally to Yale for a game.

DONIN: It was a big attraction back in those days, sports.

ROOKE: Yeah, there was always a big turnout for football here, and we had a band, even, with uniforms and stuff. I don't think they have that anymore.

DONIN: Your class has regular get-togethers, don't they?

ROOKE: We have a mini reunion every October, and we're usually staying over in Newfound Lake, so I drive over Saturday for class meetings and stay on for the home football game, stay on for the game, but to get a room in Hanover, you know, it's kind of tough.

DONIN: It's difficult.

ROOKE: So, my wife's not into football, so that's why I come by myself.

DONIN: Now, did any of your children come to Dartmouth?

ROOKE: Yes. Bob Jr. was the class of '74, and my granddaughter was the class of—let's see... What year is this? I think she was class of '06. That's Bob's daughter.

DONIN: Oh, nice.

ROOKE: My brother went here. My brother-in-law went here; that was Sandy McCulloch. You might know him. My brother had one boy come here. Sandy had one boy come here. That's about the extent of it, so we're pretty well Dartmouth family.

DONIN: You are pretty well, many generations.

ROOKE: Yeah.

DONIN: Yeah, you're on your third generation, then. That's wonderful. That's great.

ROOKE: Well it was mostly extracurricular activity we discussed today. Going to Tuck School was about the smartest move I made, because it gave me a good foundation for my business. It all worked out well for me.

DONIN: A lot of people said that. Doing that extra year at Tuck or extra year at Thayer really got them focused and ready for the real world.

ROOKE: Yes. My brother was a class of '52. He started and then he only went to Tuck one year, but he was married and he was called back into the navy.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

[End of Interview]