

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Vail Haak '49
By Mary Stelle Donin
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DONIN: How is it you ended up coming to Dartmouth?

HAAK: I had started work early in my career. I was twelve and I could get a social security card and I worked for the *Boston Globe* as a runner and that gave me a little money. So, when I got through grammar school and middle school I was encouraged to go to Boston Latin School, where I went for four years. At that time, I was just really struggling with the Latin, plus I had become acquainted with girls. [Laughter] So, I was spending over an hour a day commuting. So, Roslindale High School was just down the road, so I could walk there on a good day. Anyway, I ended up going there for two years and did very well, of course, because I had all this background.

So, high school I was taking French and German and my homeroom teacher—whose name leaves me now, but he was a Scot—he asked me where I was thinking about going to college and I said, well, I thought I was going to be interested in the newspaper business—that's all I had ever known, my father having been there for years—and going to Northeastern. They had a work-study program, which I thought I could handle financially. He said, “No, I think you should go somewhere that's a little more challenging for you.” I said, “Well, any suggestions?” He said, “Well, I'm a little biased, but,” he said, “I went to Dartmouth, and,” he said, “I think that would be a great match for you.”

So, I went home and talked to my father. I said, “Mr. McGregor has suggested that I go to Dartmouth.” My father, who was a very outgoing, gregarious guy and knew a lot of people in Boston, and used to go to—faithfully—he would go to the Dartmouth–Harvard football games. So, when the word Dartmouth materialized then the ball started to roll. So, I was working at the *Globe*, and he said, “Why don't you go up and talk to...” I forget his name, but he was vice president of public relations for the *Boston Globe*. I should remember his name, but didn't. And he said, “Why don't you go up and talk to him because he went to Dartmouth.”

He was a guy that I remembered because he always wore a bowtie and in the winter he wore overshoes opened at the top. And he was a character. When he heard Dartmouth, then we probably had a half-hour

discussion in his office. So, he said, “I think you ought to go up and talk to the admissions officer. At that time, perhaps you know—this is where my long-term names fade, but anyway, he was the admissions officer and a half-a-dozen other jobs.

DONIN: Was it Bob Strong?

HAAK: Bob Strong. That’s the name. Lived out on Reservoir Road, I think, at that time. Had a house out there when I came up to the college. Yeah. Bob Strong. So, I had been asked to come up and see him and he said, “How do you plan to get there?” I said, “Well, my father—who was traveling—had a C card on his window so that he could get more gasoline than other people could at this time.” He said, “If your old man can find enough gas and the car will get up there—” You couldn’t repair cars, even; pretty difficult. So, he says, “Drive up. Your father knows where it is.”

So, we started out and about every fifty miles, the car would start steaming and we would look for brooks or something along the road and we would stop and we had buckets and we would fill the car engine with buckets of water. But, we made it up to Bob Strong’s office, and I hopped out and went down into the bowels. I was there for probably over an hour and a half.

DONIN: Oh, my goodness.

HAAK: It was a long time and it was a lovely discussion. He knew more about me at that point than I did. So, he said, “I think you sound like a good Dartmouth candidate and I’m going to admit you, but you’ve got to fill out this form.” And he gave me the form and I went home and filled it out and sent it in and got in then.

DONIN: Boy, those were the days: to have an interview and get admitted right off the bat.

HAAK: In between there, I had been invited to go over to a president of one of the large insurance companies who was a Dartmouth alumnus and interviewed students. I can’t recall his name, either, but, anyway, he must have said nice things about me because it didn’t hurt.

So, when I got accepted and coming up to the college, I went up to see—My father suggested: “Why don’t you go talk to Jerry Nason?” Because he was the athletic guru for the *Globe*. So, he thought that—When I talked to him directly, he said, “We’ve been using women up there because we didn’t have any male students at college at that time.” So, he

gave me letters of introduction to Tuss McLaughry and the A.D. at that time—the athletic director—and I—that’s another name that’s slipped—McCarter?

DONIN: We can figure that out. We can look that up. I don’t know.

HAAK: I think it’s McCarter. But anyway, so I got letters of introduction for both of these folks to be the representative and feed athletic information, basically, but any stories that I could pick up, I could write and send down, and if it was interesting, then they would pay me. It was called a stringer.

DONIN: Yes.

HAAK: You know that designation. The derivative of it is so many lines and that’s how you got paid. So, I came up and probably spent more time doing that than I should have, but anyway, that was what I did for my four years at Dartmouth.

DONIN: So, you had a lot of pieces, then, in the *Globe*.

HAAK: Yes.

DONIN: Great. Because I noticed you also had a couple in the D. You had some reporting in the D about a swim meet. I read one about a swim meet that you covered.

HAAK: Yeah. Well, if I thought I could make a buck on it I would try to get the stories. One of the tragic ones was a group of Dartmouth guys coming back late at night and crashed and four of them were killed. They were from Massachusetts. So, I got a call in the middle of the night and the phone came into the dormitory, or somehow they got a hold of me. I guess maybe it came into the college and I got a call: “Go get some information on this; get a picture of the car; and get a photographer.” And then— We’ve worked with people before up there and they gave me the name of a photographer that I might use.

So, we went down and they had hauled the car up fairly close to Dartmouth. I went down and we got pictures of it. And then they wanted the pictures and the story as promptly as I could get it. And I had to go—I wrote it up and with assistance and guidance from Sid Hayward— everything sort of flowed through him if it was going out of the college. I said, “How am I going to get this picture down there?” And they said, “We’ve got a way to get it from the people in the physics lab. They’ve got a machine that will transfer photographs through and come down to the

Globe.” I didn’t know anything about this, so I went over to the physics department and talked to some people over there and they said, yes, they were doing that. So they took the picture and some way that I didn’t know the details of—anyway, they got it back to the *Boston Globe*.

DONIN: Amazing.

HAAK: Yeah.

DONIN: In the forties this was. Wow.

HAAK: In the forties, yeah. So, that was—I didn’t have anything like that, but I spent a lot of time writing and then—What was the sports information? Whitey Fuller asked me if I would like to be a spotter and I had been playing in the band at that time and I enjoyed that. He said that: “You know so much about the players,” he said. “When we have a game up here and a high-profile announcer coming up to do it, they all want spotters.” “What does that entail?” He said, “You’ll know it when you see it, because they all do something differently. But they’ll come and they’ll provide a chart and it will have the names of all of the players on each of the teams. Then we’ll have different signals for what kind of a run it might have been or a pass play or something. And they will want you to point to the player on the field and then if there was somebody who had applied a good block of some kind, you’d be pointing and then point to block.” So, that was the way it went. So, I did that. I did a number of games at home and a number of games away.

DONIN: These are football games, right?

HAAK: Football games.

DONIN: Wow.

HAAK: And I had to hitch a ride with the guy that took the pictures of the football games on away games. He subsequently died. Another name that’s in the archives, but he was the photographer for a long time, so he would be in the archives.

DONIN: For sure. Let’s see: in the forties taking pictures. Was it Adrian Bouchard?

HAAK: No. He was taking still pictures. This guy was taking all kinds of—

DONIN: Oh, the films.

HAAK: Films, yeah.

DONIN: Oh, yeah. I'll have to find his name. So, you were doing this in your freshman year? So, the fall of '45?

HAAK: I started in my sophomore year.

DONIN: Sophomore year, yeah.

HAAK: I played in the band my freshman year.

DONIN: Were you an athlete yourself?

HAAK: No. I played high school baseball. I was on the speed skating team up here and got involved with the rowing club, but more as an advisor. That's a completely different story when rowing started again at Dartmouth. I saw that they were looking for a manager, so I went down and applied, got that job and then a guy named Hill—professor of history, I think—decided that we had to have more formal organization, so he made me president.
[Laughter]

DONIN: Of the rowing club.

HAAK: Of the rowing club and I had never rowed in a shell in my life. But, I learned to do that and did it not in a competitive way, but just going out. We had something that we called the barge where everybody that was just starting to learn about how to row would go out. So, I coxed, and it was fun, and going up the river in those days, early on, the hardest duty was to spot the ice that was flowing down the river rather than hit it and try to miss it. I was the only one that could see it because they were all facing me and I'm looking for ice cubes that are coming down the river.

DONIN: Oh my goodness. It sounds like you got an early start then if there was still ice on the river.

HAAK: Yes. Well, we had to. And there is another story that comes along later than that where we took a group... Well, I'm digressing.

DONIN: That's all right. You can digress.

HAAK: We had to get a coach and a fellow named Jim Smith had coached the Dartmouth crew. We found him down in Boston again, and Jim liked to drink. He didn't do it during the day, but at night he liked to drink. And so

we were all designated as Smith drinkers and we'd go down into the tavern room where the murals that everybody—

DONIN: The Hovey [phonetic] murals?

HAAK: The Hovey murals that everybody knows about.

DONIN: So this was in Thayer Dining Hall?

HAAK: Yes. And there was a little tavern down there in this room, and we would take turns—everybody in the crew and myself was included and would have to come in and have a beer with Jim at night. He lived upstairs in one of the houses that—maybe above the India Bowl or someplace down there. Pretty shabby places, but he was there. He didn't charge us much and he was great on repairing the shells, because they had been sitting undercover and pretty much... There had been some vandalism.

DONIN: So these were shells that had been not used for a number of years.

HAAK: Yes, but we maybe had one that was pretty good, one that was good, and then the barge. Then I got a fellow to take charge as a manager, the job that I had had initially and he called his father who was chairman of the board of Weyerhaeuser Corporation and his father got so excited about his son working in the crew team that he said, "What do you need?" I said, "Well, to start we need some kind of a boat and a motor so that Jim can go back and forth on the river and tell people what they're doing wrong and right." So immediately within a couple of weeks we had both of those items.

DONIN: Fantastic.

HAAK: And his father said, "That wasn't much. Is there something else you need?" I said, "We really would like to have a new skull—or shell." He said, "Well, I think I know where we can get these." So, within a month we had a new shell. First new shell we had.

DONIN: Amazing. That's exciting.

HAAK: It was.

DONIN: So, this kid was a class younger than you?

HAAK: Yes.

DONIN: A good choice. Good choice.

HAAK: Then there was an organization named Dad Vail Society. I don't know if you've run across it.

DONIN: Dead Vail?

HAAK: The Dad Vail Society. Just coincidental that my first name is Vail.

DONIN: Right. So it didn't have anything to do with you?

HAAK: No. It had to do with an organization for small rowing clubs. Not the big university-type clubs, but these were small rowing clubs. And if you won, I think, three championships in a row you couldn't be in the Dad Vail Association anymore. You were now going into the higher level.

I got a letter in the mail from a doctor—not a physician, but a PhD from Rollins College, where Thad Seymour actually went after a while, and he was in charge of rowing down at Rollins. I got a call from him and he said, "I just heard that Dartmouth is starting a rowing program again." And he said, "I know you have to go out early as you can, but early is not early, it's late in terms of getting a workout and getting in shape and getting a crew together." And he said, "If you can put a bunch of oars on the roof of your cars and get down here, we'll provide the shells; we'll provide the housing; and we'll provide all of your meals and being coached. See if you can do it." So, I went to the college and asked. I think we were taking some kind of a break. But in any event, we piled in the cars and headed for Rollins College.

DONIN: That's a drive. It's all the way down in Florida.

HAAK: Yes. We stayed overnight in New Jersey with one of the guys that was a rower—had a house there. We all piled—slept on the floor and then took off for Florida. We were cautioned when we got down into Georgia and that area that it was all open range, so you could have cows standing in the road or hogs standing in the road, which were much more dangerous than the cows because they were down lower and they'd tip a car over if you hit them. But the closest we came was getting hit by a train where there were no lights and we were crossing the tracks and suddenly the trains were coming. But anyway, we gassed it. But, we had no idea that train was coming. There were no lights, no monitors or anything.

But we got down there and so the word got out that there were these bunch of guys coming down from Dartmouth College who thought it

would be nice to row in the sun. There were a lot of Dartmouth guys that lived in Winter Park, so they put us up in their homes. We were in one of the loveliest groves and every morning before we could even get up there was a big pitcher of orange juice on our table before we headed over to the cafeteria to get our breakfast. But we had a great time. I had gotten involved in other things, so I kind of abandoned the rowing club.

DONIN: This was after your sophomore year, right?

HAAK: Yeah. So...

DONIN: But you learned a great set of skills, I think, running a club like that.

HAAK: Yeah. It was fun and the guys that were rowing and had been to war and all of that stuff, they were coming back now as veterans. It was an experience because these guys were mature.

DONIN: Much older.

HAAK: Much older, yes, particularly when we first came. We matriculated three classes: one in March, one in July, and then one in September. Interestingly enough—and you may have heard this story before—the one that came in in March was forty-nine guys.

DONIN: Forty-nine '49ers.

HAAK: Forty-nine '49ers.

DONIN: Which group did you matriculate with?

HAAK: In March. No, July.

DONIN: Oh, the middle group.

HAAK: Yeah.

DONIN: Right.

HAAK: That was—I finished high school then, so it was... Some of these guys had already finished high school or prep schools or whatever.

DONIN: So you got up here in July of '45, then that means President Hopkins was still around then.

- HAAK: We were the last class to matriculate.
- DONIN: Right. Do you have any memories of him?
- HAAK: Just that he was a very impressive guy and he came in and we shook hands and then he said, "Welcome to Dartmouth," and a few other comments. Then the next guy came.
- DONIN: One by one.
- HAAK: One by one.
- DONIN: Signed your card, your matriculation card?
- HAAK: Yeah.
- DONIN: But you didn't have the whole group with you; it was a...
- HAAK: We were—I don't know. You probably could get better statistics, but I think maybe there were one hundred of us.
- DONIN: Ultimately, I think you were the biggest class that had ever matriculated when the whole group finally arrived in September. Class of '49.
- HAAK: And they kept coming in. Some of them had already been to Dartmouth. Some of them had been accepted but not matriculated. It was just a real mix and, like most of the guys that I started with, we all had jobs, too. We worked in the dining hall.
- DONIN: Everybody was working, it seems.
- HAAK: Yeah. So, I worked in the dining hall for three and a half years. It was taking a lot of time, and I was now making some pretty good money writing and also in summer jobs. With my contacts with the *Boston Globe*, I got jobs at summer hotels, which paid very nicely with tips. When I wasn't hustling luggage, I had a chance to caddy for the golfers.
- DONIN: Oh, that pays well.
- HAAK: The one I remember: the guy apologized to me that was sending him out. He says, "You're going to have to carry double because Joe Cronin's got a friend with him." If you can remember the name Joe Cronin, he was the manager of the Boston Red Sox.

DONIN: Oh my goodness.

HAAK: So, that was...

DONIN: Which hotel was this at? One of these big New Hampshire hotels?

HAAK: No, these were down on the Cape.

DONIN: Right.

HAAK: The Oyster Harbor Club was the most lucrative.

DONIN: I bet.

HAAK: And then Falmouth Heights: there was a hotel there.

DONIN: So, did you ever have summer jobs up here or they were usually down in the Boston area or on the Cape?

HAAK: Yeah. I worked on a— It was a boatyard, but it was basically for sports fishermen and they were all frame in those days. So, I was a caulker. You put them together and you pound the caulking into the... I did that one summer and then I got into the hotel business.

DONIN: So, the trend at that point was virtually everybody was having jobs even while they were in school.

HAAK: Yeah.

DONIN: And this was true for both the traditional civilian undergrads like yourself as well as the veterans who had returned from war.

HAAK: Well, there was a difference in the economic levels. I was somewhat surprised by all of the kids that were coming out of prep schools at that time. So, that was—

DONIN: They didn't have to work.

HAAK: Most of them did not work. And they had the jump on some of us, academically, also.

DONIN: Yeah, although you had a pretty good educational background.

HAAK: Yes, I did.

DONIN: Did you feel that there was a sort of gap, generally speaking, between the private school kids and the public school kids?

HAAK: No. I don't think so, because we were all— If we had been in the army, of course we were going to be more mature. If we hadn't been in the army, we were going to grow up very fast. And then some of us were getting ready to wonder what we were going to do when we get out of here. I decided to sign up because I knew I had a high number and I was going to get drafted, probably, so I just signed up.

DONIN: And what happened? What service were you in? The army?

HAAK: I was in the army. Another interesting thing: I was working. One of the problems getting out of college at that time, if you hadn't been in the army, the first thing an employer asked was: "Have you done your service yet?" And if it was no, they said, "Well, come back and talk to us." So, I found one guy that was interested in me because I had gone to Dartmouth. He wasn't a Dartmouth person. He was a high guy in the Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. I had never thought of business. I thought I was going to be a newspaperman the rest of my life. But, he talked to me and—

DONIN: Oops. Hold on a second here. We're just going to turn over the tape. That's not working. Well, let's try this again here. There we go. Okay.

HAAK: I always figured he was the best salesman that I had ever come across because he talked me into the insurance business. So, I was commuting and I think my wife or wife-to-be was up in Durham and then she finally got a job in Needham, and most of the nights I would eat in the Howard Johnson's and there was another guy that used to eat in the Howard Johnson's, so it was another one of these fortuitous things.

We got to know each other quite well and he said, "You got your service in yet?" I said, "No." He said, "God, what are you waiting for?" I said, "Well, I thought I'd just let it roll." He said, "Oh, no. All the Harvard people are going into the army with the active reserves." He said, "This would be a good thing. You'd get into the active reserves; it's going to protect you because you'll be in and you won't be stretched too much, unless the war explodes." And the Korean War was still grinding up. So, he said, "I know a major over at the first army over in Boston." So, he said, "If you'd like, I'll give him a call and see if they've got any openings." So, he did and they said yes, they had an opening. And they said, "Send him over," and they sent me over and they said, "Raise your hand." So, I was in the army. [Laughter]

It was evenings we were going down and they were having Russian experts from Harvard coming over trying to teach us Russian, because everybody was scared to death of Communists at this time. There was a Communist behind every tree. [Laughter] So, anyway, I was working at Liberty Mutual and then going to school at night at the army. And then we had to go to basic training up in Camp Drum at that time—it's now Fort Drum. And so we all went up there.

Then the guy that was my boss at Liberty Mutual said, "I'm really looking for somebody down south." And so he said, "Where would you like to go?" He said, "I've got two spots for you: Atlanta or Dallas." We had been going to an Episcopal church and the priest came and talked to the groups that were just getting out of high school and getting married and all of this stuff. He said, "I always tell folks like you, the best thing you can do is put a thousand miles between yourself and your parents." Barbara, my wife, jumped at that chance. [Laughter] And not too many weeks later, we were on our way to Atlanta, Georgia. I had made arrangements militarily so that they could transfer my military status, so I was now part of a unit down in Atlanta, where I spent six years.

DONIN: Perfect. And that finished your military duty, then?

HAAK: Yes.

DONIN: Great. What was your major at Dartmouth?

HAAK: Psychology. I knew I had a reason for taking it, but I think most of it was with the sales experience just to figure out how people thought. We were doing a lot of work on misinformation and.... You're getting some military stuff worked into the teaching component in those days.

DONIN: At that point, yeah.

HAAK: Yeah. Particularly about being able to tell stories that weren't quite true.

DONIN: Oh, interesting.

HAAK: And to draw people out so you could get into— We sort of had a course of how to explain this and do this.

DONIN: At this point the V-12 was still operating.

HAAK: Yes.

DONIN: And did you have those guys in your classes with you?

HAAK: Yes. I had two marines that I got to know particularly well, and I just finished physics in high school, and they sat down—one on either side of me—and they got me in trouble later on [Laughter], but not in cheating in the physics course. I wasn't cheating, but if they got their head way over there, you know, I wasn't punching them.

But, when I was first working in the kitchen, I was passing out meals and milk and you were only supposed to give one bottle of milk. I knew these guys and, of course, some of them had been at Guadalcanal. But they were neat guys. A couple of them were playing football and that's a whole other story, which I'm sure you've heard. But, the woman that was in charge of the dining hall, she said, "I've seen you giving two bottles." And she said, "Obviously I can't trust you up here." And so she said, "You go on out in the kitchen and work washing dishes." So, I said, "Fine."

So, I went out and I washed dishes for a while and I hurt my back down in the gym doing pull-ups, so I had to come in and I was all strapped up and it was hotter than the devil out there. And I said, "I'm really uncomfortable here. Have you got something else?" She said, "Yeah, I've got something else. It starts at six o'clock. Can you do six o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the morning?" And I said, "Fine with me."

So, that turned out that I went down to work in the pasteurizing facility that we had down in the basement. The farmers would bring their milk in in these big tubs and then I would dump them into the pasteurizing vat. Then while the pasteurizing was working, all of the dirty bottles from the previous day had to be washed, so I would be feeding them onto the... Then, if I got through those duties by that time, the garbage pails were always waiting and that was where you go out and press a lever and steam would shoot up inside the barrels. Then you'd flip them over and they'd be ready for another day. So, I really ran the gamut. [Laughter]

DONIN: Oh, I see. You sure did. All of it must have hurt your back it sounds like.

HAAK: But anyway, it was my fault, but it was part of life.

DONIN: So, was there a big distinction made between these older sort of military guys and you traditional civilian undergraduates? There's a big sort of gap between your life experience and their life experience.

HAAK: I was one of probably a dozen kids that were sixteen when we came and seventeen a month later, but we were young. And, of course, we were under military rules then in terms of lights out and all of that stuff, which we probably didn't adhere to closely. When we were doing our twenty-fifth reunion, I think it was. Maybe it was the fiftieth. I went down to the Rauner and got all of the *Daily Dartmouths*, but in those days it was the *Dartmouth Log*, so it was much more interesting to be feeding in. So, I took excerpts from the *Dartmouth Log* starting in and other quips that I knew—some of it athletic-oriented or something else that I thought would be interesting.

And then, of course, in the later years there was a lot going on in the world, and so I would have stories about what was going on at Dartmouth and what was going on in the rest of the world as a little runner on our yearbook.

DONIN: In your twenty-fifth reunion book, right.

HAAK: Yeah.

DONIN: So you were responsible for that.

HAAK: No, Bob Nutt put it together. Have you talked with Bob?

DONIN: Yes, I have.

HAAK: But he asked me to do that and I jumped at it.

DONIN: So, you matriculated under President Hopkins and then that fall he retired and John Dickey began his presidency?

HAAK: John Dickey became president, yes.

DONIN: Do you remember the changeover?

HAAK: Oh sure, because the only place that there was any entertainment, really, in town—there were two. One was the SAE house, which was open for the military, I think, but civilians could go into it. We did kind of curiosity: there was a fraternity house. What are they like? They had a television set, which was interesting. But, then the other—I lost my train of thought.

DONIN: There were two places for social life: the SAE and—or entertainment.

HAAK: That was really the only place for entertainment, because the fraternities hadn't opened then.

DONIN: They hadn't opened up yet.

HAAK: Yeah, and I was in Russell Sage Hall and—

DONIN: We were talking about President Dickey and you said...

HAAK: Oh yes, but I have to jump ahead to when I joined a fraternity. The veterans were all coming back. Most of them had been in—these aren't the military people; these are the guys that had been in school and then had left. They wanted to get these fraternities open and so I think they had to have six or eight people and then they could then start recruiting. So I had made a bunch of friends and had gotten to know one particular individual who I had worked with briefly in—what's the name of that magazine they used to put out?

DONIN: The Jack O'Lantern?

HAAK: The *Jack O'Lantern*. I worked for this guy—The *Jack O'Lantern* for a year—a guy named Paul Caravatt.

DONIN: Oh, yes. I interviewed Paul.

HAAK: Well, I was going to say, if you haven't interviewed Paul he is really a wealth of information. So, he was a good salesman, also, so I ended up in the Zeta house with Paul and a bunch of other guys that were all friends. But, I came in, as you know. A guy down at the other end of the hall, Frank Malavasic, the class of '39, skippered a submarine for the entire Pacific war.

DONIN: Amazing.

HAAK: So, he's down at the other end of the fraternity house.

DONIN: Scary for you or overwhelming, I would think.

HAAK: Well, yeah. He was a neat guy and he had finished most of his—but he had another year to go, so he showed up. He didn't want to live in a dormitory, but he showed up in the Zeta house. And after that, he became a commandant for the naval base and was in charge of those marching back and forth every day, and then he was gone.

DONIN: Beautiful cardinal out there.

HAAK: Yeah. We've had them all winter long and over the years. We see their little babies coming along.

DONIN: Sorry. I got distracted. The birds are beautiful out there. So, what was the social life like for a young 'un like you when you're surrounded by all these mature veterans and guys that have had incredible life experiences in war?

HAAK: Well, we grew up very fast. We started drinking too soon. But, we matured.

DONIN: Yeah, quickly.

HAAK: Yep.

DONIN: Now, did you go through all the freshman torture that they made you wear beanies?

HAAK: No, the only thing—we had to wear the beanies and—

DONIN: Carry furniture?

HAAK: And carry furniture. That's the only thing we did. We didn't have the— If we had it, I didn't participate in it. That was the—

DONIN: Running the gamut?

HAAK: The rope pull.

DONIN: The rope pull. Right. So, when you came back, of course VE Day had happened and VJ Day happened while you were there.

HAAK: VJ Day happened while I was here. It was probably the wildest scene I have ever seen. The campus was covered with bodies in various shapes. [Laughter] And some other things that I won't go into. But it was bedlam.

DONIN: Very exciting.

HAAK: Yep. And these guys really—particularly the ones that had seen a lot of action, it really was—

DONIN: They had every right to be celebrating, every right to be celebrating. So, let's go back to Mr. Dickey. What are your memories of him when you first met him, and his first convocation, and all that?

HAAK: Well, we sort of got to know him because the Zeta house was on his way to his office. We used to play football out in back of the house and have parties and stuff like this. The thing I remember about him, if you or a couple of you were standing out doing something or maybe even throwing a football and he'd walk by with his dog—black dog—and he'd stop and chat with you. So, I remember him as a very personable guy.

DONIN: Now, you must have enjoyed his Great Issues course, being tied to newspapers.

HAAK: I made a mistake, but I was so anxious to get out of school and get on with my life that I went right through the summer and missed the last three years—three terms of my...

DONIN: Oh, I see. So, you missed—because that was just for seniors, wasn't it? Great Issues.

HAAK: Yes, it was seniors. But I had already been a senior.

DONIN: So you—That's right. You started school in July, so you went through the following summer as well.

HAAK: Yes.

DONIN: Oh. Did you actually go to your commencement? Did you go to your graduation ceremony?

HAAK: I came back for it and got an empty piece of paper.

DONIN: Because you already had your diploma.

HAAK: Already had it.

DONIN: Right. I see. So, you actually finished up and left at the end of the summer.

HAAK: Yeah. So, a lot of the pictures that were taken of clubs and organizations, I'm not there.

DONIN: So, do you regret that?

- HAAK: Yes, in a way, but quite frankly, I didn't have any money.
- DONIN: Right. Well, everybody seemed to be in the same boat, that they were very anxious to sort of get on with their lives, whether they were a veteran or not a veteran—get on with their lives and start earning some money.
- HAAK: Yep.
- DONIN: Nobody had any money.
- HAAK: And we didn't know what jobs were going to be like, because veterans would be getting preference, so we were all kind of scrambling.
- DONIN: Right. So, you were able to start working in September of '48 then.
- HAAK: Yes.
- DONIN: Ah ha. Well done. And that, I think, was the last summer— The summer of '46 was the last summer they had summer session, I think, so you took advantage of that. So, you were there continuously, then, from July of '45 all the way through to the summer of '47. Wow.
- HAAK: Yeah, that was—
- DONIN: That's intense.
- HAAK: Yeah, it was.
- DONIN: And it seems to me— So, you were stringing; you were working in the dining hall; you were going to classes.
- HAAK: I stopped the dining hall deal when I—between the summer job and my Dartmouth job that I had and I said, "I'm not going to bus dishes anymore."
- DONIN: No. So, you must not have had much time for social life, or did you?
- HAAK: Probably more than I should have. [Laughter] No, probably not.
- DONIN: How do you think the college did in terms of sort of mainstreaming this incredibly diverse group of students that they had on their hands starting in '46 because of the war being over and all these veterans returning and of course all the regular flow of traditional high school grads coming in, too.

HAAK: I don't think we thought of it as that way. I mean, we were here at Dartmouth and we were going to try to graduate, and if we had— Obviously I picked up a number of other interests that I really felt strongly about, so we evolved and I knew I had to get grades to graduate and I concentrated on that. And then get out and get to work.

DONIN: Did you— When you were in the dorm, did you live in the dorm the whole three years that you were there?

HAAK: No.

DONIN: You moved to the Zeta house?

HAAK: As soon as they opened up the fraternities, I moved into a fraternity.

DONIN: Oh, I see. So you were in Russell Sage for one year and then that was it.

HAAK: Yeah.

DONIN: Ah ha.

HAAK: Was it just one year that we were here before they opened them?

DONIN: I don't know when they opened them. I think it was sort of gradual; it was a gradual process.

HAAK: Yeah. Well, they were all trying at the same time, because they were...

DONIN: Exactly. They were all trying. There was a lot to—I mean, Dickey had his hands full those first couple of years, just getting his arms around the place.

HAAK: Yeah.

DONIN: I know he was working on the—you know, whatever you call them—those clauses that some of the fraternities had that discriminated against various groups.

HAAK: Yes. And that was very disappointing. If I'd had the gumption that I should have had, but I wasn't alone, but we wanted to admit a Black student in the Zeta house and it was— Somebody had blackballed him. And so we decided we'd have— We didn't know who put the blackball in, but we knew that we didn't like it and we really wanted to have this guy. So, somebody got on the telephone to the national and they said, "If you admit

him, we will cancel your charter.” And we should have stood up and said, “Take your damn charter.” I’ve thought about—that’s one thing. Twenty-five other people in the house. Most of us felt strongly about it, but enough didn’t and said that they—and they’d stand there with the phone and say, “If you do it, we’re going to fold.” And we should have said, “Fold.” We didn’t.

DONIN: What became of that student? Do you know?

HAAK: Yes. He graduated with honors; he’s a doctor. Very successful and has returned a couple of times, but never been really heavily involved.

DONIN: Well, those were lonely days, then, for students of color. There were so few of them there.

HAAK: Yeah.

DONIN: Lonely days.

HAAK: We had two in our class and so those were bad days.

DONIN: Well, and there were quotas for Jewish admission, as well. Dickey had a lot of issues that he wanted to deal with in those beginning years, those first five or six years.

HAAK: You’ve heard Sam Smith’s name.

DONIN: Yes, I have.

HAAK: He was—He wasn’t a classmate, but he was a good friend for a long time. He and Barbara both.

DONIN: And he went on to work at the college for a number of years, didn’t he?

HAAK: Yes, he did. And got accused of biting the paperboy who was delivering *The Reviews*.

DONIN: And the paperboy was the son of a faculty member, as I seem to recall, wasn’t he? I don’t know. Maybe not.

HAAK: I’m not aware of that.

- DONIN: Let's see here. What am I forgetting to ask you about? Let's go back to— You alluded to the football season and I did talk football a little bit with Ray Truncellito, who I guess was a real star.
- HAAK: Ray Truncellito was my freshman roommate.
- DONIN: Oh, was he?
- HAAK: Yes. And we've been good friends ever since.
- DONIN: Yep. I had a good time with them down in Manchester.
- HAAK: Yeah. He's a neat guy.
- DONIN: Yeah, he is. He is. So, those were good days for the team because of these older veterans that you had, not just for football, I guess, for a lot of the teams.
- HAAK: Yeah. Early on—of course, McLaughry put together— They were getting hot football players that were becoming available. That story has been told. Then the time that we were playing Notre Dame they all got pulled out.
- DONIN: Yeah. That and the other story that people tell a lot is the game against Cornell with the fifth down or something?
- HAAK: Fifth down. Yeah. That was here. Cornell called up the next day and: "Yeah, we've looked at the figures and you're right. And so we give up. You won." Which showed a lot of sportsmanship. Wouldn't see much of that these days.
- DONIN: Different times. Different times. So, how did you find the quality of the teaching when you were here?
- HAAK: Probably most of it was good. I had one really... I was having trouble with my math and went to the professor, asked him if he could help me. This was after class. And he said no, he was busy. I said, "Well, is there some time that—" "Well, not right at the present." I was on the speed skating team and I went down to practice. Lo and behold, who's skating around Occom Pond but my math prof. And he wasn't there the next year. He was just biding his time.
- DONIN: Oh, interesting. Yep. Oh dear.

HAAK: That's really the only case that I can—

DONIN: The only disappointment you had. Well, that's good. Any memorable deans or professors that you looked up to or got advice from or...?

HAAK: No. We didn't think of that. Some guys may have; I just thought I had to go to school every day. An extension of high school, I guess, but in a different environment—a more mature environment. And a lot of the learning came from just having to mature so fast being thrown into a group of people that ranged in ages from, you know, one to ten years' difference.

DONIN: Right. That seems to be the case with lots of the students who were there at that time. It was such a huge pool of different life experiences that you learned as much from your peers as you did from your professors.

HAAK: Yeah.

DONIN: Yeah. Well, I think unless you've got—Well, one question I didn't ask you that I'm just always curious about is: How do you think the variety of your classmates and their experiences and their different times, you know, on and off campus and such—How do you think that impacted your sense of class identity and class unity?

HAAK: I don't think that affected us that much, except that everybody scattered to the four winds and we had our first mini-reunion down in Boston. We're all sitting around a table. I don't know if you've ever seen that picture—

DONIN: No.

HAAK: There's a picture of it somewhere.

DONIN: We may have it in the archives and I missed it. How soon after was your first reunion?

HAAK: Oh, it was one or two years. Let me see if I can find that.

[End of interview]