Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth College
Interview with Harry Hampton '45
By Mary Donin
11/13/07

HAMPTON: In August of 1940, having moved from Evanston, Illinois, and having graduated from high school there after three years and three summer schools, my folks had me on a college prowl. And we traveled from Larchmont, New York, where my family had moved, and went to New Haven to see Yale and then north from there to Williams—or first Amherst and then to Williams. And across from Williams to Colby and down—en route to Colby stopped off here in Hanover. And somewhere along the trip—it was about a two-week junket; we stayed for almost a week in Maine—my father remembered that Jess Tesreau had been a pitcher for the Philadelphia Athletics when he was a boy, and was now coaching baseball at Dartmouth. And that Red Rolfe, the old Yankee third baseman, was then also I think the athletic director here. And if a school could have two such fine men as that, it would be a wonderful place for his son to go to school. My father had not gone to college. He'd gone to the School of Hard Knocks. But between that introduction and my father's appreciation of the place and the physical presence of this school at that time, far superior in my view, and the view of my family, to all other schools, why, that was the choice. And at that time, let's be honest, it didn't matter whether you were a D or and E student or an A student. You could get into most any school in the USA as long as there was some hope that someone was going to be able to pay the bill.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: It was that simple. Half of my classmates from Illinois that I've kept up with just out of the air picked Yale as the place to go or Harvard or Princeton or Northwestern or Stanford. It didn't really matter. You were a lead-pipe cinch to get in, in those days. But it was a good choice. I was happy here. Although I must admit that during the first month perhaps I would've been glad to see my folks draw up and take me off because you are homesick; every kid has to be that way. And I certainly was. But it was a good choice, I think, and I'm still happy over it. The only regret I have about my experience here is that when I came back, I should have tossed all credits that I had

previously obtained, achieved, while in my first three semesters here, as well as those credits that came from military service in the Army Specialized Training Program out at Michigan State College. I should have said, Forget 'em all, and started all over as a freshman because really there was no rush to go lick the world.

DONIN: And you would've liked to have been an undergrad even longer here.

HAMPTON: Well, aside from that, I'd have liked to have gotten a few more…some of my brain cells put into high gear—or higher gear then otherwise occurred. But you have to admit that at the time, the college was jam-packed coming back in 1946. Where there had been dorm rooms for two, there were now dorm rooms for three; where there had been dorm rooms for three, there were now dorm rooms for four or maybe even five. The Fayerweathers were taken over by married students. The place was crowded. And the college had its own reasons to get us in and get us out.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: Although I'm sorry that they took that attitude now. [Laughter]

DONIN: So when you arrived here as a freshman, you lived in—

HAMPTON: Two oh nine South Mass, which was a good location. You were as close as you could get to College Hall and the meals. You were easy access to all classes, whatever classes were held on the west side of campus. And it was an easy walk across campus, of course, to Dartmouth Row.

DONIN: So you had essentially one semester here, not even, before—

HAMPTON: No, I had three before entering service. But December 7th, of course, came at the end of our first semester here.

DONIN: What are your memories of that day? Do you remember when you learned about—

HAMPTON: Yes, I do. Bud Elder, my roommate, who I'd known since third grade in Evanston, Illinois, and I were both studying in the room and did not have our radios on. Until we heard somebody holler in the corridors of the dorm about the Japanese having bombed Pearl

Harbor. And then of course everybody grabbed their radios. And the only radio we could get in those days was the Dartmouth Broadcasting System, which worked off a system where your radiators in the room were the antennas. We were then— Well, I guess you could get Montreal in some situations. And I guess some of the Boston AM stations. This was before FM. But most of our news came off the Dartmouth Broadcasting System. And of course everybody had the feeling, well, when will I be—or had an awareness that we were all going to be ripe for pickings by one of the military services. None of us, I don't believe, had any preconceived notions as to which service we would go for or try to enlist in. I think there were several members of the class, though, that perhaps right away just went off and quit, quit school, and did enlist, although I didn't know any of them personally.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Do you remember what the college's reaction was? I mean was there a speech by President Hopkins right away or any event like that?

HAMPTON: I honestly don't remember. But I feel fairly certain that he did have a statement to make. And I should know that because I have one of the books about Hopkins at Dartmouth. Charlie Widmayer wrote one, and Professor Dewing, Art Dewing, edited the volume that contains nearly all the public statements by President Hopkins.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: And I have perhaps not read every single word of those two books, but I've scanned them from time to time. I'm sure that President Hopkins had something to tell us and urge us not to go pell-mell flying to the nearest recruiting station. [Laughs]

DONIN: So you said you stayed three semesters in total before—

HAMPTON: Well, at the end of the second semester, which would be in June, late May, of 1942, by that time the college had announced that there would be an accelerated program. And in my situation, economically it was not feasible for me to stay on what would have been my third semester starting in June of '42 and concluding the following September. I returned home and got a job in New York City. And came back then for my third semester September of '42. During that summer I'm not sure which of the Navy programs got started here, but I do remember coming back and finding that over

at the SAE house, [Byron] Whizzer White, who had been a professional football player with the Chicago Bears, graduate of the University of Colorado, I believe, and the gentleman who went on to become a supreme court justice, was stretched out on one of the couches over in the library of the SAE house. And I think it was a V-5 or a V-7—I'm not certain of the numbers—program that had begun here on campus. It was a program that introduced individuals who got direct commissions to what it meant to become an officer and a gentleman. And he was one of those who was here for that. But during that summer also, I believe, I'm not certain of this, that the Navy and the Marines were recruiting for what became the V-12 program. And a great many of my classmates had stayed that summer. And there was also some recruiting, I understand, I recall, by the OSS. Nick Sandoe, who was a classmate and who lived in South Mass with me; he had a trick knee from childhood, and couldn't have been considered physically fit for Navy or Air Force or Marines. So Nick signed up with the OSS. A guy named Moose Rowan, Charles Rowan, from Pittsburgh and a graduate of Exeter, Phillips Exeter, he also signed up with the OSS. Moose had feet like rockers they were so flat. [Laughs] And the two of them wound up during the war in London as cryptographers. I've never understood what it was about some individual undertaking liberal arts training or schooling at Dartmouth or anywhere else that made him fit to become a cryptographer. But nevertheless there were dozens of them that were made cryptographers. But I stayed until—Coming back in September of '42, I stayed until the end of that semester. And it was apparent that since I was not eligible for any of the services that were continuing their program here at Dartmouth because I was colorblind—

DONIN: Really! Huh!

HAMPTON: Well, at least by the Ishihara test; that's the one that has all those little colored dots. And the colored dots, if you're not colorblind, you promptly see a number in the circle of those hundreds of dots. And if you are colorblind, you don't see a number. I could pass the wool skein test that the Army had, without any problem. But the Ishihara test which the Air Force and the Navy used threw me off all the time. So that November, Thanksgiving holiday of '42, there was no vacation over that Thanksgiving period. And we were told that there would be serious consequences if somebody took off. But I took off, and tried several of the recruiting stations down in the Connecticut River Valley: Springfield and then New Haven, seeing whether I

could flummox some recruiter at a Navy station into letting me get past that Ishihara test, which didn't work. And arrived home Thanksgiving Day. And the next day, Friday following Thanksgiving, I went into New York City to Grand Central Palace, which was the world's largest recruiting station for the U.S. Army. Thousands of guys standing around in their underwear. And signed up with the Army Reserve. That was a system whereby if you stayed in college, and were doing well enough to get passing grades, why, you would not be troubled by your draft board. And my thought was I would immediately sign up for my fourth semester at Columbia University, which I did. And after three days of Columbia University and commuting, I decided maybe the service would be the place I ought to get into. So I packed it in at Columbia. And the draft board gave me a notice to show up at Camp Upton out on Yaphank, Long Island, on March 4th. So there I was. Age 19 by one month. And from there into basic training like everybody was pushed through. And subsequently to— After basic training the Army, along about April or May of '43, announced this program called the ASTP, Army Specialized Training Program. They had language training and general science type program. And I was assigned to that science type program, but my mathematics had always been rather weak. So I managed somehow to persuade somebody to let me get into the so-called Area and Language Program at Michigan State. And there they had training in Italian. It was as if there weren't enough Italians in the United States to serve the military government units. And there they were with hundreds of youngsters like myself, many of them Italian and having spoken Italian in the families, and then idiots like myself [laughs] who had had two years of high school French and three semesters of college French. And what they expected to do with us, I don't know. My roommate at Michigan State College wound up with a Japanese prisoner of war interrogation unit, [laughs] having spent nine months learning Italian. And that happened to lots of other guys. But in my case, when ASTP came to an abrupt end, April Fools Day of '44, and we were suddenly back with the troops, I was shipped up to Lacrosse, Wisconsin, Camp McCoy. The 76th Division was there in training. And I managed by just dumb luck to be coming off of sick call one day—I had a terrible cold, and I'd gone on sick call that morning—and come back to the unit, the battalion I was in, to find that they were off in the field somewhere. And that meant that I had to wait around until they came in that noontime. And while waiting around, Colonel Forgey, who was the battalion commander, came down the company street looking for somebody who could drive a typewriter.

And I knew darn good and well you never volunteer for anything in the service. But on the other hand, it was better than lying around in the barracks. So I let Colonel Forgey know that I thought I could do the typewriter for him. And in the following two weeks, I managed to take down the paper stack of correspondence that he had to deal with and get it in a condition that he knew that he wasn't going to catch all kinds of problems for it. And that persuaded him to sign my application to OCS. And so on June 6th, when D-Day was in full blossom, I was before the OCS Review Board at Camp McCoy, and managed to get my name on the list of a dozen or so individuals from the 76th Division who would be shipped off to Fort Benning to the Officer Candidate School there. They had previously had a 13-week program. And of course they were all referred to as the "13-week wonders." But by the time I got there, they were now up to 17 weeks, which was a fortunate thing because it slowed me down getting to Europe. And I graduated from OCS in early November. I had a two or three week leave like everybody did. Shipped out of Camp Mead—or Fort Mead—down near Washington, DC, in mid-December. And we loaded aboard the SS Volendam in New York Harbor on Christmas Eve. And that evening Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced to the world that there would be no U.S. troops leaving the States on Christmas Day. So there we were locked up on that ship at 52nd Street and the Hudson River all Christmas Day. We'd have rather been at sea, I must tell you. [Laughs]

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: And the next day they took off and joined a convoy somewhere off the East Coast. Got to Southampton January 2nd or 3rd. And some of my billet papers showing my military record—or Army record—of service, indicates I was on the continent on January 5, '45. And about ten days later was assigned, having gone from Le Havre into Belgium, to the 84th Division, which was then in the last week of the mop-up of the Battle of the Ardennes. What is known as the Battle of the Bulge. And there was relatively minor combat still going on as they mopped up. And from there it was a downhill ride, although I walked from the Ruhr River to the Rhine, mostly. I was a weapons platoon leader in L Company of the 333rd Infantry Regiment. And from there we wound up on the Elbe with the German population on that side waving us across. And we were stopped there by General Eisenhower's decision that we would…Allied Forces, British and American and French, would not

go into Berlin. It would be left for the Russians to take. And from then on, after May 8th and VE-Day, I was involved at various times in rounding up displaced persons and putting them onto trucks that took them to Berlin or somewhere in the Russian zone to get them back home. Darned few of them wanted to do, I must tell you. And in early June we were pulled back out of the area up by the Elbe into what we thought was to become British occupation zone, but later turned out to be Russian. West of Hannover in Hannover, Germany, a town named Bad Endorf, which was one of the many towns in Germany that have spas. Bad Endorf was known for its mud baths. And being the youngest officer in the company, and our company being the only unit in the town, I was made the town major. And there I had the misery of hearing the daily pleas of representatives from the various groups of displaced persons that had been rounded up and were housed in a school and in a church parish hall and so forth, pleading not to be sent back to Russia. And a goodly number of them were highly educated people who spoke good English and better French. They'd been involved with the Russian motion picture industry. But had cast their lot with the Germans doing propaganda. And of course they knew what their fate would be if they were forced to go back. But I had no control really over what became of them. And in the course of the daily loading of a convoy of trucks with maybe as many as 50 or 60 of these individuals, we had at least two or three suicides where some individual having gotten onto the truck would intentionally roll off into the path of the following truck. It was a sad, sad situation. And one you'll never forget.

DONIN: Mmmm. Indeed.

HAMPTON: The 84th Division then wound up near Heidelberg in the town of Weinheim, home of wine. Which is north of Heidelberg about ten or 15 miles. Headquarters were there. And my unit was housed in a little town of Laudenbach. We were the only unit there. My platoon was house in the Gasthaus zur Goldenen Krone, which was a local inn of sorts. Had a large tavern-like area on the first floor and some guestrooms on the second and third floors. And enough beds in the place that the 36 or so men in my platoon each had a bed to sleep in. And I housed myself with the platoon. The other officers of the other three platoons in the company and the company headquarters staff, they all stuck around headquarters and played bridge all day or poker. And I chose to stay with the men. And when I went back to Laudenbach for the first time in 1987, I was with my

daughter. And the hotel, the Gasthaus zur Goldenen Krone was being totally renovated to be made into the town Bierstube. Most every town in Germany in the Rathaus, the town hall, had in the cellar—or many of the towns—in their Rathaus had a Bierstube which generated funds for various recreational programs and that sort of thing. But Laudenbach did not have that. So now in 1987 they were turning the Gasthaus, the Goldenen Krone, into the town's Bierstube. And I wandered into the courtyard and there found three gentlemen: One it turned out was the Buergermeister, the other was an architect responsible for the design of what they were doing to this building, and the third was the superintendent of the work crew. All three of them spoke fairly good English. In chatting with them, I came to realize that I had been billeted there in 1945. And the Buergermeister turned to me and said, "And you are the officer who stayed with the men in his platoon." And I said, "How did you know that?" He said, "My father, who had been the…." He went on to say that, "My father who had been in the Wehrmacht and injured and discharged was then living in the area, in the town and knew that there was an officer living with his troops, which would never be permitted in the German Army." A shameful thing to do apparently as far as the Germans were concerned. [Laughs] But it had been remembered by this gentleman who was then a boy. Maybe barely 12 years old at the time being told by his father that there was this officer living with his troops. [Laughs] In late '45, well, by October '45, the system of discharge or release from service was underway all around the world. There was a point system that had to do with your length of service, your family situation, married, children, how many combat zones you'd been in or how many battle stars did you have. Wounds if any and so on. Well, my number of points was well down at the bottom of the barrel. So I had some time to spend. And as they were breaking up the division and sending people home, or to various other units, I was notified I would be sent to what they called Army Postal Officer School. And so I was shipped out in mid-October—late October, closer to the first of November really—to Firstberg, Germany, where APO #1 was situated. And this was fairly central to all of the U.S. occupation zone of Germany. And therefore the next three weeks or so they put us through the ropes of learning the various things that go with operation of an army post office. Mainly it's paperwork and keeping track of the sales of money orders. Postage was free to the GIs. But all of them were taking their monthly pay—or many of them were taking their monthly pay—and putting them into money orders to ship home, send home. Thanksgiving Day I spent

in Firstberg. The town is one that had been just practically blasted off the map. There had been no military objective there. But sometime in February of '45, the British Air Force, the Royal Air Force, had had a night flight or some bombing run somewhere in eastern Europe. And for weather reasons had found it impossible to drop their bomb loads. So on the way home they just picked someplace to dump them, and they dumped them on Firstberg. And later in March when the Buergermeister of the town of Firstberg decided that he would put up a fight as the U.S. forces, Third Army, was coming through. The U.S. Air Force in a daylight raid finished the town off fairly well. It was just really obliterated. And the only facility in the place that would be useful was a flak tower, an anti-aircraft tower or building, that was in the middle of the city adjacent to the railroad station, that had miraculously withstood direct bomb hits and never collapsed. And in that facility or in that building is where the APO 1 was situated. And of course to go back to see Firstberg in 1987, again with my daughter—still with my daughter—the city had been totally reconstructed to look as it had looked in 1940. The city had taken the choice of reconstructing to replicate what had been there. And of course everything inside the buildings was totally modern. But the exteriors of virtually the entire city was as it had been prior to the war.

DONIN: Amazing.

HAMPTON: That's not the only city in Germany that that's happened to. I happened to be with my daughter because she at the time was a librarian assigned in Firstberg. She worked for the Department of Defense running the library there. I continued— Well, from the army postal school, I was assigned to APO 175 located in Darmstadt, Germany. Darmstadt is about halfway between Heidelberg and Frankfurt, maybe closer to Frankfurt. That was a city that had been bombed but mainly around the railroad station. But nevertheless the Hauptbahnhof was still standing, and across from it was the Bahnhof Hotel. And adjacent to it were a series of office buildings, in one of which was APO 175. And the military government unit there provided housing and our meals. And it was a very pleasant assignment as long as I wasn't able to get out of the service as rapidly as I might like. Why, if I had to be anywhere, why, I might just as well be at APO 175. Because there I was my own boss. I could sign morning reports for the entire month and then take off and do what I wanted to do. [Laughs] As long as I kept the men in the unit content and oftentimes took them with me wherever I was

touring around western Germany. The post office ran itself pretty much with or without me. All I had to be around for was signing various documents that proved we had so much in money orders to begin with and we had so much cash at the end of the month to represent the sale of those money orders. [Laughs]

DONIN: Now when does the dog boat story come?

HAMPTON: Well, at the end of my tour of duty there at APO 175, which came along about March I think or April, I got wind of the fact that the military recognized—this is now in '46 remember, ah, yes, '46—the army transportation moguls recognized that there was a problem with the hundreds of GI pets coming back from Europe aboard troop ships. There obviously would be a certain hygiene problem. And what to do about it? Well, somebody had the bright idea, why don't we make use of these liberty ships that are bringing supplies to U.S. forces into Bremerhafen and Le Havre and Marseilles. Why don't we set up a program whereby the GIs who have pets can ship them home on one of these vessels that are empty going west. And Railway Express, which was then a going operation, would take the dogs once they landed in the U.S. and ship them—deliver them—anywhere in the country for a flat $100. I had a friend who was the commanding officer of the medical depot in Mannheim, medical supply depot. And he subsequently was transferred to the Bremerhaven medical depot. And he knew I had a German shepherd and wanted to come home with that dog. So he informed me about this dog boat proposition. With his aid, I slowed down the process by which I was coming closer to leaving Europe to await the first dog boat. And at first I was going to be leaving in late May or something or early June. And then it was delayed another week or two. And then another week or so. Finally we left Bremerhafen in late July to arrive in the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn on August 9, '46. And with the help of Bill King, this medical officer, I was given the assignment as the commanding officer of this group of 14 GIs and an army vet. The army had more veterinarians, it seemed, than anything else. Their obligation was to check the food supplies, especially meat, which arrived in great quantities all over Europe for U.S. purposes and troops. And those vets also were being returned to the States one by one. And so the time that a pet spent in the kennels in Bremerhaven plus the time aboard the ship generally came out to about 30 days. And that satisfied the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the quarantine time that a pet must be observed arriving in the U.S. And of course all that time the dog was under

the surveillance of a qualified veterinarian. So the 140 or thereabouts dogs leaving Bremerhaven, several of them expiring on the way and being replaced by a litter or two of pups.

DONIN: [Laughs]

HAMPTON: We wound up with almost the same number of dogs as we started out with. And Wolf and I arrived, as I say, on August 9. My mother and dad were down at the pier. And the tide was in, the ship was very high at the wharf. And they had a gangway that was like a ladder almost vertical. And to show my parents and some friends that they'd brought along with them to greet me what an intelligent dog I had, Wolf came down that gangway almost, as I say, as if it were vertical. Very reluctantly, but he came off on his own, following me. [Laughs] And so soon thereafter, still in army uniform, because I hadn't had any civilian clothes that fit, I came up to Dartmouth to see about reentering. And of course there was no possibility that I would be permitted to live in the dormitory. And so I had—

DONIN: Because of the dog?

HAMPTON: Yes.

DONIN: Oh.

HAMPTON: They wouldn't listen to the possibility that a dog could live in the dormitory. I inquired of several homes here in Hanover, homes of faculty members. One of them would have taken me with the dog, but it was on the third floor, which would have meant that early morning hours and possibly late hours I'd be having to go out to take the dog, and that would be disturbing of the family. And I was a member of the SAE right here up the street a bit. So I went around to see Professor Andy Scarlett. And of course he wasn't any happier about the possibility of the dog in the SAE house than folks over in the bursar's office were. But he soon realized that the dog was smarter than I was.

DONIN: [Laughs]

HAMPTON: And was exceedingly well trained and well behaved. And he reluctantly agreed to let me have a room in the house. So there I was for the next two semesters with Wolf. Wolf would go to classes with me. And if it was a professor who was not keen on having a

German Shepherd in the class, why Wolf would lie out in the hallway.

DONIN: Amazing.

HAMPTON: And await me. I was a member of the glee club, and they had a—then of course it was all male. They had a group of some eight fellows who called themselves the Injunaires. We could call ourselves Indians in those days. And the Injunaires would put on an act where they would come racing down the aisle of an auditorium with Wolf in full pursuit.

DONIN: [Laughs]

HAMPTON: Barking after their heels and chase them up onto the stage. And then Wolf would go up on the stage and lie down under the piano.

DONIN: Fantastic.

HAMPTON: [Laughs] We had a lot of fun with that dog, yes. He was, as I say, exceedingly well behaved and nobody could complain about this animal in any way. If they were unhappy with his presence, why, I could take him outside, outside the building even, and tell him stay, and he would stay.

DONIN: So we're now into what? The spring of—

HAMPTON: We're into the fall of '46.

DONIN: Oh, you came back in the summer, right.

HAMPTON: Yes. And of course GIs had flooded the place starting in summer of '45. The college accepted not only its own, those who had been here prior to going into service, but also all of those that had been assigned here by the V-12. And that meant there was an overload. All the facilities were—the housing facilities of the college were just chock-a-block. You didn't notice it so much in the dining facilities. Thayer Hall could handle it. The freshmen still ate in what was then known as College Hall, now Collis. All the eating places, of course, on Main Street—and there were several eating clubs—they were thriving. I had worked at the Mary Hitchcock Hospital as a pot-scrubber in the bakery prior to leaving. That was my third semester here. And I came back to find that somebody else had gotten a hold

of that job. So for a while I was raking leaves at the hospital, and that's a sure way to put your shoulder out of whack. And soon found that there was a possibility I could show up at the Mary Hitchcock Hospital at five in the morning and relieve a gentleman who was paying off a hospital bill watching the dials on the boilers up there. At five o'clock in the morning I could study up there while I was in the boiler room. And it gave Wolf a morning walk on the way from the SAE house up there. And for every hour of work, you got a meal.

DONIN: Oh.

HAMPTON: And soon I managed to graduate from there to where I was a short-order cook up in the nurses' cafeteria for breakfast meals. I do a mean soft-boiled egg, I'll tell you. [Laughter] Don't I, dear?

MRS. HAMPTON: Yes. I can attest to that. [Laughter]

DONIN: Now was it common that a lot of the returning veterans wanted to have jobs?

HAMPTON: Yes, it was, I think. You were paid— Of course your tuition was taken care of under the GI Bill. And you also got, for a certain period of time, I've forgotten what that length of time was, $75 a month, which was a lot of money in those days. But still if you wanted to save any money, why, it was helpful to get yourself a job somewhere. And I think that one meal for one hour of work prevailed pretty much all over town.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: At Lou's, at Hap 'n Hal's, which was another eatery. Thayer Hall. And also College Hall. I'm not certain of that, but that's the way it was at the Mary Hitchcock Hospital. And some of the best meals in town were at the hospital.

DONIN: So when you returned in '46, you had a new president. There was a new president here.

HAMPTON: John Sloan Dickey, yes. He had taken office in '45, after his involvement with the creation of the United Nations out in San Francisco. Yes, he was in office then. And it was the following year,

I think sometime in ’47, that he began, the college began the so-called Great Issues program.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: I was graduated by that time. I don’t think it was going—in fact it was not operating in the two semesters, late ’46, early ’47, that I was here.

DONIN: So all told you were here for five semesters?

HAMPTON: Five semesters, yes.

DONIN: Because you got a lot of points for….

HAMPTON: They gave me the equivalent—nearly the equivalent—of three semesters. I was taking an overload of courses both semesters I was here. But essentially you got—if you were in ASTP from the start in September of ’43 to the finish in ’44, you could get close to three semesters’ credit.

DONIN: Was there any real commencement ceremony—

HAMPTON: Oh, yes.

DONIN: —when you finished?

HAMPTON: Oh, yes. There sure was, in the Bema.

DONIN: Ah, nice.

HAMPTON: Yes. And fortunately the weather was just perfect.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So what did you feel like in terms of class cohesion?

HAMPTON: None whatever.

DONIN: There wasn’t any.

HAMPTON: Not that I could tell. In fact, it was the absence of that which is what later got me involved in class activity. In the early 1950s, a classmate of mine, Bill—now his name has escaped me—the

gentleman, the classmate who was the head editor of our class newsletter called Mail Call, was getting ready to accept an assignment with Goodrich, his employer, in Jamaica. And he lived near me in Westchester County. And he invited me to come down to have dinner one night with him and bring my wife. I was then married. And between the good wine and the good meal, he convinced me that I should be his successor as the newsletter editor. Well, in the following three or four years in that task, I had gotten the attention of Nick Sandoe who was then employed by the college in the Alumni Fund, and Cliff Jordan. And they appointed themselves a nominating committee for our tenth reunion. And nothing would do but what I would become the class chairman. We didn't call the individuals in those days class president. At least in our class we didn't. And so over my feeble protests, I became chairman of the class. And over the following four years, from '55 to '59, Nick and Cliff kept prodding me and other members of the class executive committee: we ought to get a project going of some kind. Well, I'm not sure whose idea it was, but it seemed to grow spontaneously. It was time there should be a memorial to those members of our class who had died during service—or as a result of service. The college would not hear of it because, and rightly so, they were fearful of having the place look like it had been hit by the measles with memorials. Well, that didn't make us very happy because here we were now more than ten years after service, and nothing had been done by the college to memorialize anyone. However, in the summer of 1945, those of us for whom the college had mailing addresses, received the advice that the college had plans to create a memorial to Ernest Martin Hopkins, and it would be the Hopkins Auditorium, of a size sufficient to accommodate a graduating class and parents under sheltering roof. And would also become a performance hall to replace the inadequacy of Webster Hall. Well, in the… They were trying to generate funds for this. I remember very distinctly receiving that while I was in Laudenbach. And sending in $20 or whatever it was I sent. And then we were told it was going to be the Hopkins Center and six million dollars, I think it was, contributed by Nelson Rockefeller, which was quite generous of him. But nothing in it would be a memorial to service losses, which had been a portion of the letter that we had received about the Hopkins Center; it would be a memorial honoring the service losses as well as President Hopkins. Well, this irritated a number of individuals. And what to do about it? Well, one of our classmates had been the assistant manager at the inn. And Jim McFate, who was then the manager of the inn, and we went to Jim

and said what about the possibility we could put a memorial on the inn here? And we had in mind that we would put up what then many of the banks around the country had, these large one-foot diameter or larger thermometers and barometers and hydrometers. This is before the days of digitized gear. And we had in mind exactly the same set that was sitting on the corner of Forty-fifth and Madison Avenue on the Abercrombie & Fitch building in New York City. And Jim McFate thought it would be fine. And he let us know that after all, he didn't answer to Parkhurst; he answered to a board of overseers and none of them were likely to complain. So in our 15th reunion, which was then a year early under the system that they had then of getting classes to come back at the same time, adjacent classes were here for reunions, we dedicated the first of the weather posts on the Hanover Inn corner. And fortunately in the ensuing years, why, the weather post has managed to thrive. And at one point Matt Marshall, the manager then, agreed—or took it on himself—to put in readout instruments inside the inn, which was quite generous of him we thought. And we've subsequently created a trust fund that will assure the maintenance in perpetuity of the weather post. And the college need not be concerned for it if they don't wish to be.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: And of course in the following years, why, the college finally got around to doing something, although I must say that what they have is a large slab that's on the east end of the inn is a very poor memorial. It's been affected by freeze and thaw. And all those letters, or many of those letters, that have a circular shape to them have been frozen out. And it looks pretty poor. And of course the Zahn Garden makes up for that to some degree.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: But the first thing you see is that big slab up there.

DONIN: Right.

HAMPTON: Which—

DONIN: Needs some attention.

HAMPTON: Needs a lot of attention.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: It's interesting. In the last month I was with a gentleman by the name of Judd Alexander from Carleton College. He resides in the same community where Peg and I live. Came to me with a story of a gentleman of the class of 1938 who was killed in Holland and Mr. Alexander witnessed this event. And it wasn't until the last two or three years that the college became aware of this man's death in the service, thanks to John Alexander. The college did not do well in pursuing what had become of its service people, I'm afraid.

DONIN: Why do you think that is?

HAMPTON: Well, of course it goes back to hoping to avoid an overload of memorials on campus. And now they've managed to avoid that by putting them in a concentrated location.

DONIN: All together. Yes, yes. Are we out of time here?

HAMPTON: Well, we have to be over at the Norwich Inn at noon. Yes. I could come back if you wanted. There's really not much more to say about my time in college—in service here. I'd be glad to help you identify some of these folks or try to anyway.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Well, I have just a couple of follow-up questions of when you came back. One thing we're trying to establish is how did the college do mainstreaming you back into the life, into college life, after you came back as a veteran. You know there have been lots of stories about how, you know, veterans had to settle into this undergraduate situation with virtually schoolboys versus men. And I'm just interested in what your sense of what it was like….

HAMPTON: I was not aware that the college was involved really in any particular way. It just—we came back and started all over again the way we had been. And while you're right, there was a great mixture of ages, and my one roommate had had no military service living in the SAE house; the other one had had a brief time, I think, in the Merchant Marine. I don't know that we drew any distinctions. We were all Dartmouth students and glad to be so.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. What did you do for social life?

HAMPTON: Well, what went on at any all-male school. The fraternities were active then. I think the tales of abuse of alcohol are exaggerated, at least in my opinion. I will say, though, that during such events as fall house parties, Winter Carnival, I purposely left Hanover to go visit in Chicago. But I was then on what you might call a social mission, just as much as I would have been had I stayed in Hanover. [Laughs] Every fraternity had a bar in the cellar; and every fraternity every Saturday, maybe Friday nights even, had a beer keg in the place. I was never much for beer despite the fact I was in Germany where every village had a brewery. And it didn't seem to me that there was excess use. We didn't see Nelson Wormwood who was then the one-man police force. Maybe he was active somewhere on campus but he certainly wasn't hanging around the SAE house. [Laughs]

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Well, the drinking age back in those days was probably a lot lower than it is today. It was probably 18.

HAMPTON: That's true. I think 18 was considered the drinking age.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

HAMPTON: But it didn't really matter. Who was going to argue with some guy that had spent four years or three years in the service whether he was drinking or not. [Laughs]

DONIN: Exactly. Well, I don't want to hold you up…

[End Part One, Begin Part Two]

HAMPTON: …Comment about well, the college has done this for our social lives. Most of us were so focused on getting the dickens out of school because we thought we had been delayed in… I don't know what our hurry was but anyway, we were all so focused on getting better grades. Most of us had lousy grades before we went into service and that happened of course the minute Pearl Harbor struck why we said, "What the hell." I'm sure some of the grades I got after that were giveaways by professors who took a kindly attitude towards what our future might be.

DONIN: Uh huh.

HAMPTON: Any many of them I think had the same attitude when we came back but it wasn't really necessary because most of us by then were getting serious about this business of becoming genuine students.

DONIN: So you feel, uh, you feel like there was more motivation to be a good student once you returned from the war?

HAMPTON: I think so and I am really at a loss to explain why we had that motivation except that possibly we thought we'd been delayed in getting onto the track of life and therefore we had to make up for it somehow or other and the best way to do so is to get ourselves a good transcript.

DONIN: Uh huh.

HAMPTON: With all letters A, never mind those letters C and D [Laughter].

DONIN: Right, right. Now when you were taking your lunch break, I was reading some of the stuff that was in your fiftieth reunion book and I made a note to myself that one of the things that was noted in there was that George Barr, the man you just mentioned, actually convinced President Dickey – this was in May of '47 – that he, President Dickey, he needed to establish some sort of beer hall where the veterans could come together and hang out because life in the fraternities I guess was not sufficient for them and…

HAMPTON: I have no recollection of that.

DONIN: No recollection of that?

HAMPTON: And yet George was in South Mass as a resident with me. I knew him fairly well. Not necessarily so after the war. Living in a fraternity house. I mean those were the nucleus of my contacts then and George was not in any of my classes. That is very likely an accurate report, in fact I am sure it is if it was in the fiftieth book. But if anything came of that approach, I am not aware of it.

DONIN: Uh huh. But your feeling….

HAMPTON: But you said May of '40…

DONIN: …May of '47.

HAMPTON: ’47. Well you see then I was about to leave so whatever happened by the following September, I wasn’t aware of it.

DONIN: Sure. But your feeling and some of your classmates you spoke with today was, you didn’t need this kind of unity, you didn’t need the college intervening to sort of…

HAMPTON: If we did I don’t think we were aware of it. [Laughter]

DONIN: Right. It was a different time. I mean, there was a lot less hands on nurturing by college administrators than there is in this decade. And I think that’s maybe what that’s all about. You know, there was a lot less interaction with the deans I assume. I mean, there were much fewer deans.

HAMPTON: Well, that’s one of the things of course that’s got some of the alumni today upset. Why do we need so darn many deans and vice presidents for Pete’s sake? We got along with one dean of faculty, one dean of the college and the dean of the medical school and that was about it.

DONIN: Right. Dean of admissions, I guess.

HAMPTON: Yeah, although then I think we called it director of admissions or something like that.

DONIN: Right.

HAMPTON: And things got along just fine. It was a somewhat smaller school but not all that much smaller in total numbers of undergraduates.

DONIN: Uh huh.

HAMPTON: The numbers of Tuck and Thayer students was a good deal smaller then than it is today I am sure.

DONIN: Uh huh. Well, that’s that I think.

HAMPTON: Really I talked too much about me. And you want the aspect covered… The college should be the focus of whatever I’ve had to say but you have to understand, I wasn’t here to see what was going on. Some of my classmates, one by the name of Murray,

who had a heart problem, stayed here all the time and he did what he could to initiate a class newsletter while the war was on. Life then for civilian students must have been a bit of a trial. Or at least they had to feel they were left out of things because the whole place was Navy and Marine.

DONIN: And it wasn't just Dartmouth, I understand.

HAMPTON: No, it was all the Ivy League schools. Somehow or other the state, the land grant colleges got left out of the Navy programs, so they got picked up by the Air Force and following that, the so-called ASTP program. But then the schools such as I attended, Michigan State College was known as cow college and by the time we got back from the service it was no more cow college, it was really a university and growing and still growing. My gosh, what's happened to Michigan State College since my days there… As part of that experience, and I think a lot of guys had a similar experience, servicemen were welcomed at those schools because they counterbalanced of course an all-female undergraduate body. And their families took us in as if we were their own kids, at least in my case. I might just as well have moved in to St. Clair Shores, Michigan with the Fernside family, the way they looked after me. [Laughter]

DONIN: That's great.

HAMPTON: And I kept up with the Fernside family for years after until dear Mrs. Fernside died here about ten years ago.

DONIN: Mmmm.

HAMPTON: I don't know a thing really about the guys who went out to the Pacific but they must have had hell to pay, especially those who were in the Marines.

DONIN: There were two guys named Brundage in here – they were cousins and they were both SAEs with me and Howie Brundage died here about eight or nine years ago but his cousin Pete Brundidge was killed. I'm not sure if it was Iwo Jima or Okinawa and his instant replacement as a platoon officer was Leggatt, Johnny Leggatt, whose family is… older brother and younger brother and uncles and cousins and so on are long Dartmouth record. Those who

were obliged to serve on either of those battlefronts, Iwo or Okinawa, saw hell open up and darn near swallow ‘em.

DONIN: Life-changing experiences, so it’s easy to understand why…

HAMPTON: I don’t know whether I’m alone in this feeling but I must say that it was a privilege to have served. It was no pleasure but it was as you say, life-changing and in fact, in my case, I think it was all for the better. Proven, no…. [Laughter]

DONIN: OK, I think this time officially we will turn this off.

HAMPTON: Put an end to it.

[End of Interview]