

Dartmouth College Oral History Project  
The War Years at Dartmouth  
Interview with John '43 & Mary Mecklin Jenkins  
By Mary Donin  
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DONIN: What made you come to Dartmouth initially?

JOHN JENKINS: Well, there were three schools that I was interested in when I was in high school and prep school. One was Dartmouth, one was Williams, and the other was Stanford. Stanford was too far to go back in those days. Now it's a little bit different. So I took the Dartmouth exam before I did anything about Williams, and miraculously I passed it and I was accepted. So I thought, well, there's nothing wrong with that. So that's how I wound up at Dartmouth, one of the schools that I'd always been interested in ever since I was a kid.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: So I said, Bingo! That's it. So that's what I did.

DONIN: And so you matriculated in the fall of 1939.

JOHN: In the fall of '39, that's correct. I got out of Culver Military Academy the spring of '39 and came to Dartmouth in the fall of '39. That's correct.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. So you had a fairly traditional first couple of years, is that correct?

JOHN: Yes, I would say that that was correct. In the summer of '39, I was in the Hawaiian Islands with a friend of mine that I'd met at Culver Military Academy. And it was an exciting thing for me, a young man and being out in the Hawaiian Islands was really romantic and a different experience. It was terrific. Then of course when Pearl Harbor came along—

MARY JENKINS: No dear, the job that you were going to take and your father wouldn't let you take it with the—

JOHN: Oh, that's right, yes. I had a possibility of joining the Seabees out in the Pacific. The money was good. That would certainly have been an incredible experience.

MARY: It was Guam. Wasn't it Guam?

JOHN: Yes, the island of Guam. And the Seabees were laying runways for large planes. And it sounded very exciting. I knew some of those people. And so I called my father, and said I thought that I would take that job and delay going to Dartmouth. And he in effect said, If you do that, I'm not going to fund Dartmouth, and I don't approve of it. So being an obedient young man and needing the loot, I decided, okay, Dad, you're right. So I came home.

MARY: But had you gone—

JOHN: Well, if I'd gone, a lot of the Seabees that were out there...and if I'd gone, I would have been included—

MARY: A lot of them were killed.

JOHN: —because the islands were invaded, and a lot of them were killed. So that was a fortunate thing in retrospect. Although at the time it was something I really wanted to do.

DONIN: So where did you live—what dorm were you in when you first got to Dartmouth?

JOHN: Russell Sage, 211 Russell Sage. It was a beautiful room looking right into Vermont. And what happens a little better later, they build Butterfield; so I'm looking into another guy's room about two feet away. So much for the beautiful view into Vermont.

DONIN: Mmm mmm. What were your memories of first meeting President Hopkins?

JOHN: Well, that's a good question. I really can't answer it. I don't have a clear vision.

MARY: Did you ever meet him?

JOHN: I don't know that I did ever meet him actually. When we matriculated, he obviously must have given a speech. But I don't have a clear memory. I remember the dean of freshmen, Bob Strong, very well. And I remember Dean Strong, Bob Strong, saying at the time: "Gentlemen, take a look at the man on your right and the man on your left, because next semester one of you is going to

be gone.” Well, that gave me the sweats. Unfortunately, a little bit later, I looked around, and I didn’t have any friends. [Laughs] For one reason or another, they’d been washed out. But things are a little bit different obviously in Dartmouth today. If you’re fortunate enough to get into this school, the chances are pretty good that you’re going to continue to be here unless you do something really disreputable. But back in the forties, it was a little bit different. I think the school was probably easier to get into, but it was also a lot easier, for whatever the reasons, to get kicked out.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: So I remember that clearly, Bob Strong talking about that. And he was right.

DONIN: And people always said you did not want to actually get to know the dean of the college because it always meant that you were going to be in trouble. Dean Neidlinger.

JOHN: Oh, Dean Neidlinger, yes, yes. Yes, he was quite a guy. One of my strong recollections of Dean Neidlinger was I’d taken a chem exam at Steele, and for some strange reason, I’d finished a little bit early. And I was out in the yard in front of Steele, swinging a golf club of all things. And suddenly I felt this tap on my shoulder. Said, “John, are you enjoying yourself out here? How did you do on that exam?” And that I’ve never forgotten. Another clear recollection I have of Steele: L.B. Richardson, a fantastic chem professor...the room there I remember was—he would look down on us. It was like a coliseum, and he would stalk back and forth like the MGM lion popping questions. And I remember he turned around one time in this amphitheater, and I could hear his voice echo all the way to Claremont. “Jenkins! Give me your definition of—“

MARY: Mr. Jenkins.

JOHN: “Mr. Jenkins! Give me your definition of the inverse proportion of gases.” Well, I knew that, but by the time he was finished asking me the question, I was sweating. I didn’t even know my own name. Very embarrassing.

DONIN: [Laughs]

JOHN: My clear recollection to that.

- MARY: It's interesting, though, in those days. You were mister. And a professor was professor or doctor.
- JOHN: Yes. And they wore ties. Everybody well dressed. Of course informality has taken over considerably. I see these professors walking around campus now. I only know that they're professors because they certainly aren't students. But they're all very informal: open shirts. So it's changed; the styles have changed a lot. And it goes along with the culture.
- MARY: I remember my father always in the winter had a vest, a suit with a vest; and a tie, obviously.
- JOHN: Oh, yes.
- MARY: And then in the spring and early fall, he'd take out the vest perhaps. But I mean, always. And it was always mister or professor.
- DONIN: And the students, didn't you wear a coat and tie to a class every day?
- MARY: No, I don't think so.
- JOHN: No, I don't think so.
- DONIN: No?
- JOHN: No. But one of my clear recollections about going to class is walking across campus from Russell Sage to Dartmouth Hall where we were going to go for a class. And it'd be 20 below zero but dry and crisp and clear. And all I had on was a heavy sweater. And never being cold or ever being chilled. But I do remember inhaling and almost coughing. It would certainly freeze the hairs in your nose; I recall that very clearly. Now, of course, that I'm approaching early middle age, having graduated in 1942, the class of '43 with the accelerated program, I'd probably wear two coats going across campus and still be cold. [Laughter] It's a function of age.
- DONIN: It's true. So tell us your memories of that day, December 7, 1941.
- JOHN: I recall that very clearly. I was in Baker studying, back in one of the rooms. I don't remember the name of the room, but it was right on the ground floor away from the desk where you checked in books and checked them out. It was always very quiet in there. And all of

a sudden I sort of heard this—and I'd just been reading the *New York Times*, all about the war and what was going on, paying some attention but not that closely. There was sort of a din in that room, a little bit of a hub-hub. And I thought, geez, that's unusual. What's going on? I've never heard this before: students starting to talk and whisper. So I finished the studying. I took my book out to check it out. And on the desk there where you check books in and out, there was a blackboard. And on it was written: JAPS BOMB PEARL HARBOR. Well, obviously that was what the din was about. So I ran like mad over to the dormitory, Russell Sage, and turned on my radio. And of course the complete din and everything. So if you think that life changed after 9/11, life really changed then.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: Completely transformation. Guys rushing to sign up in the service. It was a melee. A different world that started at that time. A very clear memory.

DONIN: How quickly did Dartmouth sort of get itself organized to—

JOHN: Well, I think pretty rapidly. They had the V-7 program, the V-12 program, naval training programs, accelerated programs for the students. So I took the accelerated program. Went to school. Got to college in the summer of '42. Graduated in December of '42. Fortunately in a way, in retrospect, it's where I met my dear wife because....

MARY: I was home from college the summer of '42.

JOHN: Yes, Mary was home from college, and I was a member of the Zeta Psi fraternity there on Fraternity Row. And I'd see this vision of loveliness walking back and forth.

MARY: You didn't see this vision...

JOHN: I did. Anyway, she doesn't remember that; she has a short term memory. But anyway, in retrospect, that was fortunate personally for me. Because we consolidated our future at that time. Looking back now, four kids and eight grandchildren later, here we are still in Hanover.

MARY: I think that the majority of your class was there that summer, wasn't it, the summer of '42?

JOHN: Oh, many of them. Sure, got their degree. We were the only class never to hold a formal graduation because obviously we were going to school that summer and then went into the service. I went into the service that December, so there was never a graduation. And we had an acknowledged graduation—

MARY: At your 50<sup>th</sup>.

JOHN: At our 50<sup>th</sup> reunion.

DONIN: Mmm, nice.

JOHN: And I remember the speakers on the podium making a big special deal out of the members of the class of '43 who never had a formal graduation ceremony. And would they please—everybody applauded. Of course the people that were applauding were all a lot younger than we were. [Laughs]

DONIN: Right.

JOHN: But that was an exceptional thing. I think it's the only thing that has ever happened like that in the history of Dartmouth.

DONIN: Did most of your classmates stay and finish, or did some go off and enlist right away?

JOHN: Well, I think there was a combination of both. I think that some went right away, signed up.

MARY: I think more, though, in later classes, '44, '45, left and came back. I think most of your class.

JOHN: Yes, probably most of our class. But some of them did leave and then came back after the war.

DONIN: Yes.

JOHN: And then finished up and got the degree.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: I stayed that summer along with many other of my classmates, all men in those days. Finished up and got the degree in December of '42, which is when I joined the service.

DONIN: I guess the thinking was you all were so close to being finished anyway.

JOHN: Yes.

DONIN: And with these compressed classes that were going to go on through the summer, it made more sense to get your degree.

JOHN: Yes, well that was my thinking.

MARY: And the services let them.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

MARY: I mean they weren't...you were in the service before Christmas, however. You were out of here.

JOHN: Yes, I wasn't even here at Christmastime. I remember I was in some army camp on Long Island.

MARY: I mean from the time he graduated in December—20<sup>th</sup> or something—bingo! Right straight.

DONIN: They shipped right out.

JOHN: Yes, shipped right out. But those were traumatic days. I can remember the emotional tug at those days because I was young and had just finished college. I guess they mailed the diploma to me. And there I was in some army camp feeling sorry for myself at Christmastime.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: No family, no Mary. And there I was. But three and a half years later I got out of the service, and all was well.

DONIN: So let's go back to how you actually met Mary. I mean how did you—

JOHN: Well, actually we met on a blind date.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

JOHN: Our versions are pretty similar. I had a friend Mike Ives who lived across the street in Kappa Sig fraternity.

MARY: His father was senator from New York?

JOHN: Yes, Mike Ives's father was a New York State senator.

MARY: Not state, wasn't he federal?

JOHN: I don't think so. But anyway, so Mike said, "Well, there's this lovely girl, Mary Mecklin, who wants to meet you." And I thought, well, I'd like to meet her, too. So then she was getting fed the same story by a friend of hers.

MARY: That he was dying to meet me. And in truth neither of us had ever laid eyes on each other.

JOHN: In any event, we got it together. And we had our date, I guess, down at the coffee shop at the Hanover Inn.

MARY: But we went there afterwards. And I couldn't have a beer because I was too young.

JOHN: She couldn't have a beer because she was too young. And I guess we were flexing our muscles along with some of my friends. And that's what started it. And I guess she just had a bounce. This guy that she'd been going with....

MARY: Well, I was.... It was a Thursday night that we had a date. I don't know what day of the month. And there were summer house parties that weekend. And I had a date for summer house.

JOHN: It was Green Key. That's right.

MARY: No, it wasn't Green Key because it was summer. I don't know what they called it. Summer House. And while we were sitting there perfectly happily, four of us, my date for the weekend walked in, and they knew him, and they asked him to join us. And I was very annoyed, one, that he did join us. And, two, that they'd asked him. It put my nose quite out of joint. So we didn't part on...you know kind



of disinterested grounds. And then I had a huge fight with Jack that Saturday night.

JOHN: Jack, by the way, was Jack Hemingway, Ernest Hemingway's son. See, Mary wouldn't say that, but he was a neat guy.

MARY: Whom I was dating that summer. And Johnny had had a date for the weekend, and she had gone home, and there were always milk punch parties on Sunday mornings. And I was sorry I wasn't going to be going to one. And they didn't want him to come without a date. And they said, "Well, you just met Mary Mecklin." So he called me. My question was: What party? Because if it wasn't one I wanted to go to, I would've said no.

JOHN: Fortunately she said yes.

MARY: And then there we were.... Owing nothing to each other at all. We were there to make it possible for each of us to be there. And it was fine. And then we started dating.

JOHN: Then the chemistry started to take. And as I said before, 63 years later, here we are with four kids and eight grandchildren.

MARY: One of the things I think that I noticed, in retrospect, I sure didn't notice it then—was the change in tempo after Pearl Harbor. When it became clear that the guys were going to go off to war and everything, there was just a pickup of intensity. I think the parties were more heavy duty, more—louder, you know. And I think a bit of this, you know, eat, drink, be merry, tomorrow we die kind of thing. And to me there was a real difference there.

JOHN: Were a lot of people sort of rushing off and getting married before these guys shipped out?

MARY: Well, probably.

JOHN: I think so.

MARY: I saw more of that probably at college than he did here. I don't know about the guys. But certainly some girls were doing that, and the guys were going off and wanting to marry them.

JOHN: One outstanding thing let me throw in: Mary's father was a very famous professor here at Dartmouth. And I was invited over to their

house from time to time for dinner. And somebody would say, "John," and that's another story because everybody's name was John. Her father's name was John, my name was John, her brother's name was John. It was a mess. "Hey, John!" and six guys would answer. But anyway, Mary's mother and father knew that we were quite serious about one another. And he had a private study off the living room in their on Five Webster Terrace, which is the most beautiful location in Hanover.

DONIN: Oh, I know Webster Terrace.

MARY: We sold it to the Eberharts.

JOHN: Yes, we sold it to Dick Eberhart and Betty. In any event, so Professor Mecklin said, "John, I'd like to talk to you." Well, I started to—

MARY: Young man.

JOHN: —sweat. Yes, young man. "Would you come back here at my home?" "Oh my God, what's happening?" So I go back there, and Mary's mother and Mary are looking at one another. What's going on? So the good old professor gets me back there. And in effect said: What are your intentions, young man? Well, how do I answer this?

MARY: You're interfering with my daughter's education. You're messing up everything. What's going on? And I don't remember how I answered it, but however I answered it, it must have been acceptable to him because things worked out very well. As you now know. [Laughter] And another interesting thing was her mother asked me one time if I would prepare some cocktails. And I said sure. And there was a glass cocktail shaker. I remember I was out in the living room, and there was ice in the cocktail shaker, and I was shaking it up like this. Not showing off but just had the ability to mix this great drink. And I'll be damned if shaking it up, one of the ice cubes didn't break the glass in the cocktail shaker. And the ice, glass, drinks all over the living room carpet. I thought, well, it was a good start, but I'm done now. [Laughter]. So that didn't go over too well.

DONIN: So he was effectively a junior in college? And where were you in your education at this point?

MARY: I was at Skidmore.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

MARY: And I was I guess a sophomore when I met him, yes.

DONIN: So you were home just for the summer?

MARY: I was home for the summer, and I had a job typing my father's last book at five cents a page. And I had to read it years later to find out what it said. I became so involved in the typing, I didn't really.... And it had to have one carbon, and that was the great horror, if you remember those days. It was just awful to correct a carbon. And I remember swearing and fussing and carrying on. But I had a wild summer because there were very few girls and a thousand men. And again, the war feeling was there. One of the interesting things was that when V-12 came to Dartmouth, it jammed up the town pretty heavily with wives, their wives, and so on. And the college made a plea that anyone who could rent rooms to dates and people like that to please do so. So my mother started doing it. And had wonderful experiences. In fact, she was lifelong friends to some of these boys later who had brought girls, and then they married the girl, and, you know, kept in touch with Mother. She just loved it. There was one classic time that the boy had called and asked to rent a room, and Mother had said fine. And he showed up Friday with his girl. And it was a black student with a black girl. And my father was from Mississippi. And my mother couldn't have cared less, you know. When she went to the door, she thought Uh-oh, you know, what's going to happen? Well, she misread my father totally because my father was enchanted. He sat that boy down, and he wanted to know how did you pick Dartmouth? How is it to be black at Dartmouth? What kind of treatment do you get? What do you want to do when you get out of here? Until Mother had to break it up so they could go off and have a weekend together, you know.

JOHN: Her father was a professor of sociology, so that was right up his alley.

MARY: But that was interesting. And I remember dating a V-12 boy, and he was absolutely disgusted. He had just graduated from dental school, and he was up here with the Navy V-12 program. And so they were making him a navigator. [Laughter]

DONIN: Oh, no.

MARY: And he said, "This is just like the service. They can't utilize my talents properly."

JOHN: Let me interject one thing. In those days, of course, Dartmouth was purely a man's college. And it was very exciting for the undergraduates at Dartmouth and hopefully for the women that came up to various house parties for us to go off for weekends. In my case going to Skidmore to see Mary. And then their coming up to Green Key or Carnival or something like that. And it was a very exciting time. And I would imagine that nowadays when the women are about the same number of men at Dartmouth, that there isn't that same excitement. But it was very exciting. I'd always look forward to having Mary come up for Green Key or for Carnival. And then we'd get in a car and go down to Saratoga Springs. And in the case of some other people—not me of course—going down to rah-hahs at Smith in Northampton. But it was a different culture then.

MARY: I wonder whether the boys tend to still welcome the girls from away. Whether there's this sort of feeling of because, you know, I'm in class with her. It's not the same as bringing someone in from some other.... I don't know whether that exists or not.

JOHN: I'm a fundraiser among many others for our class at Dartmouth. I remember back in those days when I started to call up classmates for funding, they said, "Well, John, what do you think of this idea of letting women into our college?" And I thought, well, a lot of them were old-time rednecks, including some of my best friends. Well, I happened to feel that the time had come that this was going to make some sense and that they would get used to it. And I guess that's pretty much happened. But Mary's brother was a good example. He said, "I don't know about women at Dartmouth College."

MARY: He came around.

JOHN: Oh, yes, he came around. And most of them did in time. But initially there was....

MARY: There's still some holdouts, in fact your classmate.

JOHN: Yes. We have a very good friend, George Munroe, who was Mr. Everything and a great guy. Captain of the basketball team, Rhodes Scholar, president of this and president of that.

DONIN: Trustee?

JOHN: Pardon?

DONIN: Trustee.

MARY: And a trustee.

JOHN: Yes, trustee, yes. George is a pretty good friend of ours. I remember at a reunion one time, George and Mary and I were talking about this. He said, "Well, John, I don't know how you change those people. I guess the only thing is that they'll be dying off, and it'll help." [Laughter] And maybe George was right. Unfortunately that has happened.

MARY: And I suppose there's been—not that you would notice it—but there had to have been some impact on giving, at least initially.

JOHN: Oh, definitely. It certainly did. But as Mary said, most of them now have come around. A couple of diehards maybe.

DONIN: So after John left, obviously your family was still here. There are stories that actually some of the faculty enlisted as well.

MARY: Oh, I'm sure.

DONIN: And as a result, you know, the teaching here had to be altered somewhat because there was nobody to teach, you know, math or whatever.

MARY: Right.

DONIN: You know a German teacher was trying to teach math. And you know, they were trying to also make do in terms of the faculty.

MARY: Well, my father retired in '41. He was in his fifties when I was born, and he taught until he was 70 as well.

DONIN: Wow!

MARY: And he retired in '41 so that there was less contact after that. Oh, he still had friends and stuff. But I mean there was just less contact with what was going on in the life of the school. Of course I always

heard a lot about Hopkins who had brought my father here, and they had a lot of correspondence back and forth, more than face to face.

JOHN: Mary's father was pretty much of a liberal. Hopkins had said to him: "You know you can say anything you want at Dartmouth," which had not been his experience previously. Which he did when he got here, and nobody complained at all. He thought something's wrong. And Mary said, "As the years went by and nobody complained about his obvious liberalism, he started to become more conservative." [Laughs]

MARY: He could say anything he wanted.

DONIN: Right.

JOHN: Yes, he could say anything he wanted.

MARY: Well, his last book, his last book, his autobiography, is *My Quest for Freedom*, and he felt that he got that freedom here at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Interesting.

MARY: And he had not.... In fact, I found on the Web at year or so ago a woman who had written her doctoral thesis on his concept of freedom, which I thought was very interesting.

DONIN: Oh!

MARY: But he had, you know, been in trouble in one school and dumped out. And then was starting to get into trouble with another at the time that he came here.

JOHN: Was he the founder of—

MARY: Well, he supposedly was the straw that broke the camel's back after his trouble at Lafayette. And that's when they founded the American Association of University and College Professors. It had been building for a long time. But he was just that last straw that....

JOHN: Tell what happened at graduation.

MARY: Oh, yes. Well, that was—well, that's not related to the war, though. We shouldn't get into all of that.

JOHN: No, I know. It's an interesting sidebar.

DONIN: Dartmouth graduation?

JOHN: No, no. The one at Lafayette.

DONIN: So he was more a contemporary of President Hopkins.

JOHN: Oh, yes.

MARY: Yes. Much more so than—

DONIN: Because Hopkins retired in I think in '45.

MARY: Yes. He may even have been a little older than he.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: When your father was born in what, 1873?

MARY: Eighteen seventy-one.

JOHN: Eighteen seventy-one. I can remember Mary's father saying to me one day after we got pretty well acquainted and he was complaining about this and complaining about that, and I was trying to butter him up a little bit. "Oh, no, Professor, you're fine." "Young man! What the hell do you know about being 85 years old?" And I remember that as if it were yesterday. My God! I'm now what? Eighty-six years old. [Laughter]

MARY: There was one famous time, and that would have been through the war years there. I think a little later, perhaps—I'm not clear—but I was home from school, and college was in session. And I had a date with a boy who was in a class of Dad's. And he said, "I think it would be fun if we just visited your father's class." And I said, "Sure." And it wasn't a special weekend, so there were no other visitors at all. And we got there a little ahead of time, and my father dashed in at the last minute, kind of threw his briefcase there and his coat there and turned around to face everybody. And stopped dead. And I had the feeling, I said, Mary, I think you should get out of here. Dad had absolutely extraordinary blue eyes, and they could do anything from glare to twinkle to whatever. And there was just a look in those eyes, and I thought.... And he said, "Gentlemen, today

we were going to discuss Plato's allegory, *The Cave*, but I see we have a guest, and I think it would be more *apropos* if we talk about Eve and all the things she brought into the world and so on." He was an ordained minister. So he knew the Bible from front to back. And he talked extemporaneously for one whole hour about women. And in the course of that—and of course he had the class in hysterics! They thought it was the funniest thing they'd ever heard.

JOHN: He was a fantastic professor.

MARY: Except I, who was raging in the back, and my date even got twitchy toward the end. He hit everything from dating, to sex, to cigarettes, to drinking, to makeup, to clothes. I mean there was nothing that he didn't do. And the next day it was all over campus: Did you hear what Mecklin did to his daughter? Because none of the class knew that I was his daughter, of course, except my date. And the net result, unfortunately, was that I never attended a class of his again. And the only other time I heard him speak was after he had retired. And for two or three years after he retired, professors would bring him back to lecture on a specific whatever. And they were always in Dartmouth Hall, and they were always jammed. And I heard him there once where I could get lost in the crowd and didn't have to worry about it. [Laughter]

DONIN: Being singled out again. [Laughs] So after the war, did you come back?

JOHN: After the war, did I come back? No. I had graduated, found myself married, and I thought, well, I'd better get a job.

MARY: But we were back here all the time because my parents were here.

JOHN: Oh, well, yes, we came up here a lot, too.

DONIN: When did you get married, before the war?

MARY: 'Forty-four.

JOHN: 'Forty-four, February.

DONIN: So you were still serving then?

MARY: Yes, he was still in the service.



DONIN: Oooh.

JOHN: February of '44 we were married. And I got out of the service in January of '45. So I was in the service from December '42 to January '45.

MARY: No, '46.

JOHN: Oh, '46, yes. Excuse me. That's correct. And I was in the Air Force.

MARY: And we were here.

JOHN: We were going to save the world for democracy. Well, we didn't do much of a good job I'm afraid. [Laughs]

MARY: But we were up here, of course, with my parents, you know.

JOHN: Oh, we came up here frequently to see Mary's mother and father.

DONIN: Sure.

JOHN: Absolutely.

MARY: But when it came to think of going to a CCRC like Kendal, it was obvious, you know, that that was the place to go.

JOHN: Yes, when retirement days were approaching us, when we lived in Westport, Connecticut, and we knew about Kendal.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: No question that the only place we were going to go—it was a no-brainer to come up here, which we did. We moved up here—moved into Kendal in March of '99. And probably one of the best moves we've ever made. I'm glad we're not trying to move in now because who's going to pack our books? [Laughter]

MARY: Well, it's been fun to be back here, too. People keep saying you've come home. But I haven't come home. I was gone too long. I mean I came back to a place where I know some of the streets, not even all of them.

JOHN: Well, it's interesting. Right around the college Green, it really hasn't changed at all.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: The buildings are still there. The Hanover Inn is still there. So there isn't much of a change. But you get, as you well know, beyond the college Green, and it's completely transformed. I'm a volunteer at the kiosk, the information booth on campus, and fortunately I have a great map. And you have to be pretty dumb not to be able to understand it and read it. And these people would come around: Where's such-and-such a building? I'd never heard of the building because it'd just opened six months ago or whatever it happened to be. But there it is, even today, you drive around outside the immediate college Green, and the new building is just unbelievable.

DONIN: Hold on a second. Let me get this turned over.

MARY: It's amazing and wonderful the way you could come back after 50 years—having not been here in 50 years—and come up the hill from the bridge, and it's your campus. Now granted, as Johnny said, if you go a block in any direction.... And the other thing that's interesting—and I've talked about this to my few good friends who are still around who grew up here—when we said campus, we meant the Green. And it was never called the Green.

DONIN: Oh, it wasn't called the Green back then?

MARY: Well, at least not by any of us. Never used the word Green. And when we said campus, which was an incorrect use of the word obviously, we meant the Green. I'll meet you on campus. I'll meet—you know, use it in that context. And it's very interesting to see the evolution. And another thing that's different: When you were in college and I was dating and stuff, the word "frat" was considered to be a state university word, and everyone looked down their nose at it, and they never under any conditions would use the word "frat," meaning fraternity. And now it's I think commonly used.

DONIN: So what did you call—oh, you called it a fraternity.

MARY: A fraternity. Or by the Greek name.

DONIN: Sure.

MARY: But these are just little dumb things, little changes. Of course there are probably tons more of which we're unaware.

JOHN: One of the things I recall outstandingly: When I'd drive to Hanover to start a new term, coming up I guess it's Route 10, the first thing that'd you see would be the great big smokestack sticking up. And I recall that very clearly back in the late thirties when I started to come up here, seeing that smokestack. I said, well, there's Hanover. And the smokestack is still there, and I still get that feeling every time I come up that road. Now of course a lot of people come up 91, and you see Baker sticking way up.

DONIN: Yes.

JOHN: There wasn't any Route 91 in those days.

MARY: It was seven hours from—wasn't it? Seven hours from home.

JOHN: Yes, the old College Highway, they called it, Route 15. I remember I lived in Bronxville, New York, and it took about seven, seven and a half hours to drive up the College Highway up to Hanover.

DONIN: That's a long haul.

JOHN: A long haul. Well, now if you drive along and you don't get pinched for speeding, you can do it in three and three quarter hours, which unfortunately I've done all too many times. But that's Route 91.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Exactly. So thinking back to your class, did the fact that you all missed out on some of the traditions like commencement—you didn't have commencement—and some of you went off to war before you graduated and then came back, did that impact your feeling of sort of class cohesiveness? I mean did you feel a strong identity with being in the class of '43 even though you all were sort of scattered at the end?

JOHN: I think there's a strong class identity, which I never lost. Of course it was fragmented, and it might have been a little bit different by not going through that. But I've always sort of felt a cohesion to the class. I didn't go to many reunions when we didn't live in Hanover because we lived in St. Louis for a while, and we had all these kids. And there were just other priorities that set it up. But now of course that we're in Hanover, we attend the mini-reunion and all of those functions. And many of the classmates come back. One of the things that sort of shocked me when we'd go to chapel during reunion on the program, they always separated those men that had

lost their lives in the war from those that had died since the war. And I was amazed at the number of classmates who didn't make it through the war. I should've known better. But to see them all put together.

DONIN: In a list.

JOHN: And recalling many of those names personally was sort of a shock.

MARY: I think the reverse. I think that the war and the confusion cemented the class. I think that it put them together in a tighter bond than they might have had under normal conditions.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

MARY: And then of course the shared experiences are so different.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

MARY: I've wondered whether the cohesiveness has been broken somewhat by that summer semester, summer term.

JOHN: What, December '42?

MARY: No, no, now.

JOHN: Oh, now.

DONIN: Right. That is an ongoing question, I think, that people wonder what that year-round operation has done.

JOHN: With a lot being overseas and all that?

MARY: No, no, no. I'm talking about right now when they have—when you're required as a—is it after sophomore year or before sophomore year?

JOHN: I said overseas. I mean many of the students taking a semester overseas now.

DONIN: Right.

MARY: That, too. That, too. But I really meant more specifically.... No, I'm told that the sophomores or whatever class they are at that

juncture, it's pretty special because they kind of have the run of the campus.

DONIN: Their sophomore summer is pretty fun here.

MARY: And that ought to give them a certain cohesiveness.

JOHN: One of the things, looking back, that I miss is the fact that many of the students now, as I just said, go overseas for different places in Europe or wherever they might be, which wasn't going on when I was an undergraduate. And that's one of the things that I wish that I'd been able to experience, but didn't have. And also, talking about majors, I took a major that was called a topical major; it was Topical 1, 2, 3, and 4. And what they were was emphasis on one particular discipline, whether it be English or economics or philosophy, or whatever it might be. And what happened was that you would take the leading courses, leading professors, at each discipline and put it together. Which I thought was a wonderful idea for a great liberal arts school like Dartmouth. And they dropped those. And now you major in English or you major in philosophy or chemistry or whatever it happened to be. And I thought that that was a—I was disappointed that they'd dropped that because I thought it was a great idea.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: And what caused them to drop the topical majors, I have no idea. But I'm glad that I took it because I had the top courses of Bob Carr in poli sci and L.B. Richardson in chemistry and this and that. Kerr in economics. One thing with Malcolm Kerr I'll never forget.

MARY: Keir.

JOHN: Keir. There was a bluebook exam, four questions, 25 each, and I knew it cold, or at least I thought I knew it cold. And my handwriting looks like Chinese to many people, including my wife. Sometimes I have a little difficulty deciphering it. But anyway, he was reading out the grades in class. And I thought, well, I'll probably get a 98 on this. Anyway, he didn't read off my name. Finally got to the last guy in class: Jenkins, 39! Oh, my God! And I'd never complained about a grade in my life. And I went to the professor after class, and I said, "Frankly, sir, I don't quite understand this grade. Could we go over it?" He said, "Well," he said, "yours was one of the last exams that I examined." He said, "You did pretty well on the first question.

The second was all right. But the third and fourth questions, I couldn't even read what you'd written, so I gave you zeroes on those."

DONIN: Oh!

JOHN: And I said, Oooh. And I said, "Well, I have a question for you. May I rewrite the exam? Or give me a verbal quiz now, and I'll see what I can do." So anyway, we worked it out, and I got a passing grade. I don't remember what it was, but it certainly wasn't 39. So after that I thought I'd better take a class in handwriting.

MARY: You certainly even now....

DONIN: That's great. Did you do any sports when you were here?

JOHN: Did I do any sports? I played touch football, which is a long way from playing in the stadium. But we had a pretty good touch football team. And the opposition was pretty fierce. We played right there on the college Green or campus or whatever you want to call it. And we had some wonderful games. I tried out for the basketball team because I thought I could play basketball. But I found out when you've got guys like Jim Olson and Stan Scow and a few other guys, that I didn't cut it that much. [Laughs] I was all right before I got to Dartmouth.

MARY: What about tennis?

JOHN: Tennis? Well, I played a lot of tennis, yes.

MARY: You weren't on any—

JOHN: I was on the tennis team at Culver Military Academy and Bronxville High School before I came here. But I didn't play varsity tennis at Dartmouth. But we did win the inter-fraternity tennis contest. And who was my partner? Oh, a guy named Bob Tyson, who became a well-known surgeon in Philadelphia, was my tennis partner. And we had some pretty good matches.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: In fact Bob.... Zeta Psi had a brand. And the only other fraternity that branded their undergraduates was Deke, and I remember

Deke.... The brand would wear off after a while. I've forgotten exactly— But the Zeta Psi brand never did wear off.

MARY: He still has it.

JOHN: They literally branded you like cattle. And as I speak, I'm rolling up my sleeve so you can see this brand which is still there.

DONIN: Oh!!!

JOHN: Very clear.

MARY: [Laughs] It's still....

JOHN: I mean it's crazy. But there it is.

DONIN: They literally branded you.

MARY: Well, the college banned it after.

JOHN: And what?

MARY: The college banned it.

JOHN: Yes, they banned it, but anyway, there it is as you can see.

DONIN: They burned it into your skin?

MARY: Yes.

JOHN: Psssst! Like a branding iron with cattle. And I can remember being up, and I guess they called it the goat room or something. And you were all blindfolded, and you're going through all this rigamarole and hocus-pocus, and Psssst! Anyway, there you are. But Bob was the guy that did it.

MARY: You also have a very clear one.

JOHN: It's very clear.

DONIN: Yes.

JOHN: In any event, to fast forward, when I was at Kendal earlier, there was a great guy there who was a retired doctor. In fact his father—

you talk about a small world syndrome—his father delivered Mary.  
[Laughter]

DONIN: That's amazing.

JOHN: John—

MARY: Gilbert.

JOHN: John Gilbert, Dr. John Gilbert. When we first came to Kendal—it's a very social place—and we just happened to be with John and Barbara only a month or two after we got here, you're sort of getting acquainted. And, oh, what did you do? And where are you from? And all that kind of stuff. So I'm sitting there with John. He said, "Well, did you go to Dartmouth?" "Oh, yeah." Well, we had both graduated. Well, did you join a fraternity? Yes, I did it. Well, what fraternity? Zeta Psi. Well, I was a Zeta Psi, too. Well, we'd had a glass of wine or two, and I remember we both jumped up and we shot each other the secret grip. Now as Mary's pointed out, the secret grip is probably the same for all fraternities. [Laughs] In any event, that's how I got acquainted with John.

MARY: Did he have a brand?

JOHN: Oh, he had a brand, too.

MARY: And did you compare brands?

JOHN: Sure, he pulled up his sleeve, so we were branded brothers together.

DONIN: Unbelievable.

MARY: What class was John? He was in the thirties somewhere.

JOHN: Oh, John Gilbert. Yes, he probably was.

DONIN: So when did they stop branding their members?

JOHN: I couldn't answer that. I don't know. But as Mary said, the school banned it. It probably wasn't a very bright idea.

DONIN: Unbelievable!



- JOHN: So you learned something, eh?
- DONIN: I did indeed. I've never seen that. In fact if my boss is in his office, I want him to see that because I'm not sure he's ever....
- JOHN: I charge, you know. But in your case, I'll make an exception.  
[Laughter]
- DONIN: Any other stories, memories, thoughts?
- MARY: You talked about rationing and it obviously came to be but not while we were here. We ran into it in Kansas and other places we lived when he was in the service. Obviously it happened here but I can't speak to it because it really took hold after.
- JOHN: But I remember one time driving up I guess from Connecticut to Hanover, and you really had to be careful of the gas because a lot of the gas stations had no gas. And if you ran out of gas, you were in trouble. And we would always look forward. There was a place I remember in Springfield, Vermont, that frequently was open and White River; once in a while there'd be a light on, and you'd really have to gauge your driving because if you mis-gauged it, you were in trouble. No gas.
- MARY: You were stuck.
- JOHN: You were stuck. I mean now you pay three and a quarter for a gallon of gas, but at least the gas is there. Back then the price didn't mean anything because you couldn't get it anyway.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Well, a lot of people—or a number of people—have said that they felt that Dartmouth was a very sort of Republican place when they came here in the forties. Was that your feeling? I mean your father wouldn't have been attracted to a place like that.
- MARY: Yes. Well, Dad was not. But I think it probably was pretty Republican. But I don't think of it as a very political place, period. But that's not fair. It'd be better for him to say that, not for me, because I wasn't in class. But it was certainly a free place in the sense of expression.
- JOHN: Well, I think it was probably pretty conservative as I think back on it. I happened to be raised certainly in Bronxville, New York, which is a very, very Republican town. And my father was one of the few

Democrats in town. So I probably picked that up from him. But my mother wasn't very political. I don't know that she was particularly interested in that. And there was a young man who was a friend of mine, a high school classmate and also went to Dartmouth, Ollie Quayle, who was one of the earlier pollsters and very well known. And his good friend here was Ad Winship. Ad had died. Ollie died. His wife is now at Kendal.

DONIN: Yes, I spoke to her last week.

JOHN: Pardon?

DONIN: I spoke with her last week.

JOHN: Oh, you did. Jackie Quayle. She's now at Kendal. And I had never met her. I'm a volunteer at the hospital on the escort guests, and somebody said, "Well, Jackie Quayle is an escort." And she was Ollie's wife. And that's where I first met her actually at the hospital.

MARY: But Ollie used to go seek out your father in Bronxville.

JOHN: So Ollie would seek out my father, and they would talk.

MARY: Because there were so few Democrats.

DONIN: Mmmm.

JOHN: Politics, you'd have to almost do it behind closed doors because they'd think you're subversive or something.

DONIN: Right, right.

JOHN: So Bronxville, a Republican town. And I guess my concept thinking about it at Dartmouth was probably quite conservative.

MARY: Well, Dartmouth had the reputation.

JOHN: But I think it's changed.

MARY: I don't know. But Dartmouth had a reputation as being by far the most conservative college in the Ivy League. Now whether that's still true, I don't know.

JOHN: But I don't even know if that was a proper rap then. But that was the impression I had.

MARY: But it was the way it was perceived. In fact I know of one child of friends of ours who wouldn't come here because of that, thinking it was too conservative a school.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

MARY: Well, I don't know that that's true.

**[End of Interview]**