

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Robert '45 & Nancy Joy
By Mary Donin
February 1, 2008

DONIN: So how did you end up coming to Dartmouth. Was it the family legacy?

ROBERT JOY: That was part of it. Not the whole story. I couldn't have come without scholarship support. I lived in Proctor, Vermont. A Proctor family was known for their philanthropy and he made it possible for me to come to Dartmouth.

DONIN: Oh, that's wonderful. Ok, so you matriculated in September of '41.

ROBERT: That's right.

DONIN: Was that...since you lived relatively close to Dartmouth, I assume you'd already been to the campus and seen it before.

ROBERT: Many times.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Many times. Was Hanover a place that people came back to in those days to do other things even when they weren't connected to the college?

ROBERT: Well, I think it was an interesting spot.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

ROBERT: People had many reasons for coming. My family knew some people in the area. One of them was Ted Bacon, principal of Hanover High School.

DONIN: And of course, you probably accompanied your father back here for things. Football games and such.

ROBERT: Yes. Not too many of the reunion activities. He never attended a reunion until his 50th.

DONIN: That must have been fun to come back after that long.

ROBERT: Yes. That was a long time.

DONIN: OK, so you come here in the fall of '41 and I guess you able to enjoy a fairly traditional first term at school.

ROBERT: Yes.

DONIN: Were you hazed as a freshman and all that kind of thing?

ROBERT: I don't recall any of that.

DONIN: Did you have to wear a beanie?

ROBERT: I guess we had to wear freshmen caps.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

ROBERT: With our year of graduation

DONIN: What about... What dormitory were you in?

ROBERT: Ripley. 104 Ripley.

DONIN: Oh. What a memory.

ROBERT: Riply, Woodward and Smith. A dormitory complex behind the Fayerweathers.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Right.

ROBERT: So I spent a year there.

DONIN: And do you remember December 7th?

ROBERT: I do. I can tell you that it was a beautiful sunny day. It was a Sunday.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

ROBERT: That's as much as I remember about it. I remember seeing my friend Fred Berthold on that day passing on the sidewalk. That's about all I remember.

DONIN: Did President Hopkins call the whole community together and give a speech?

- ROBERT: He may have, but I don't recall.
- DONIN: Do you remember meeting him at matriculation?
- ROBERT: Yes. All the freshmen got to shake hands with the president.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. And he was quite an imposing figure, I gather.
- ROBERT: Yes, he was. Ernest Martin Hopkins.
- DONIN: Right.
- ROBERT: Yes, he was. There were a lot of changes in administration after him. John Sloan Dickey was the president most of the time I was here.
- DONIN: Right.
- ROBERT: He was also a very imposing presence.
- DONIN: So let's hear what happened. Did you enlist, or were you drafted?
- ROBERT: Well, I spent my freshman and sophomore years in Hanover. I joined the Enlisted Reserve Corps, ERC, which allowed me to stay 'til the end of my sophomore year. While I was in Hanover, I was drafted or enlisted or enrolled in an organization called OSS, Office of Strategic Services. So when I was called up, I went for basic training. Where was that?
- NANCY JOY: Did you go to New York? Washington?
- ROBERT: Anyway, I got basic training. Then I went to antiaircraft for placement training facility at Fort Eustace, Virginia. Fort Meade is where I got my basic training. While I was there, I got called to headquarters and asked whether I wanted to enroll in the ASTP.
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- ROBERT: The Army's Specialized Training Program or whether I wanted to stay with OSS—or go to OSS. Since I'd already made a commitment to them, I said that's what I would like to do. So they cut my orders, I packed my duffel bag, got on a train, and ended up

in Union Station in Washington. I spent about three months learning to be an encoder, a cipher clerk.

DONIN: Oh.

ROBERT: After that.... The next thing that happened to me was I went overseas to Egypt. I spent a year. Went in a Liberty ship convoy from Hampton Roads, Virginia, which was a big staging area for going to Europe and North Africa. I spent a year in Cairo and went to India for a couple of months and then to China.

DONIN: My goodness!

ROBERT: Where I spent about eight months in Chung-King as a clerk there.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT: Then I came back when the War was over in August 1945. Came back home for a few weeks with my parents. Then came to Hanover and got a job as a bellhop in the Hanover Inn.

DONIN: Oh, great. [Laughs]

ROBERT: Well, it provided a little income.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

ROBERT: And the GI Bill saved me.

DONIN: Sure.

ROBERT: Like it did most people in my position.

DONIN: Now did you earn—people talk about earning points for their service towards their education?

ROBERT: Could be.

DONIN: Does that mean anything to you?

ROBERT: No.

DONIN: No, okay. So you had already completed two years. So you had....

- ROBERT: So I had to finish my undergraduate premedical curriculum.
- DONIN: Right, right.
- ROBERT: And then entered the medical school. Rolf Syvertsen was the dean, and it was a two-year school.
- DONIN: Right.
- ROBERT: I was in Medicine '49.
- DONIN: Okay.
- ROBERT: That was the five-year plan. Your first year in graduate school when there was Tuck, Thayer and the medical school, was the senior year in your undergraduate class.
- DONIN: Right, right. And then you had to go somewhere else to finish your medical degree?
- ROBERT: Went to Montreal, to McGill.
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- ROBERT: For.... Well, Dr. Syvertsen told us, more or less, where we were to go. It turned out it was a wise choice for us because expenses there were minimal.
- DONIN: Yes. Cheaper than the States.
- ROBERT: Yes.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. So let's go back...let's back up. So when you started here, Ernest Martin Hopkins was the president. But when you came back, John Dickey was the president.
- ROBERT: That's right.
- DONIN: And it must have been a very different place here. Not because he was president, but because you were all coming back, having done some growing up and having been through a war. Some were—all sorts of different experiences.
- ROBERT: It was a very different group coming back.

DONIN: In what way? Can you describe?

ROBERT: Well, I think we'd seen the wider world.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Yes.

ROBERT: Places we never expected.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Do you think you were a better student when you came back?

ROBERT: I think so. I was a more focused, dedicated student.

DONIN: Right.

ROBERT: Because we lost—I lost two and a half years.

DONIN: Right. There was some feeling of wanting to sort of catch up.

ROBERT: I think so. I think that was very important. We worked very hard.

DONIN: Now did you get involved with a fraternity?

ROBERT: I did, although I've never followed that up. Never been active since I left Hanover.

DONIN: Did you live in the fraternity, though, when you came back?

ROBERT: Never.

DONIN: No. But you used it for social stuff.

ROBERT: That's right.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Well, speaking of social stuff, I want to find out how Nancy got into the picture here.

ROBERT: Well, the fraternity, to which I belonged, her aunt was a frequent visitor. She had many friends there. She introduced us.

DONIN: Nancy's aunt?

ROBERT: Nancy's aunt.

DONIN: She was socializing in the fraternity?

ROBERT: Yes.

DONIN: Which one was it?

ROBERT: SAE.

DONIN: Oh, yes. Right on College Street there. Yes, yes.

ROBERT: So she introduced us in the summer of 1947. It was apparent we were going to make this a permanent relationship. That was the summer we spent singing Bach chorales.

DONIN: Singing Bach chorales. Oh!

ROBERT: It was a pickup group in Bartlett Hall. I'm trying to think who the director was. Don Cobleigh ran the Glee Club.

DONIN: And how did you get involved in that Nancy?

NANCY: Well, I had a friend who was in my high school class who had gone to the rehearsals and knew something about it. So she asked me to go with her, which I did for the rest of the summer season. And we made a connection at that point, you know gradually. And it went on from there.

DONIN: So at this point you were a high school student.

NANCY: I was a high school student. No, I was at Boston University; I'd had two years in college.

DONIN: Right. Okay. So you were home for the summer.

NANCY: I was home for the summer.

DONIN: From college.

NANCY: I was expecting to go back. I had decided I wanted to be a teacher. So I got into the right program to do that. But it didn't work out just then. But 20 years later it did.

DONIN: That's great. So there was a lot of...I get the impression from talking to a number of you that there was a lot of socializing between the people in the town and the students.

NANCY: Mm-hmm. Can't remember the name of the house, the Hostess House. Do you know where that is?

DONIN: No.

NANCY: It's on the corner of East Wheelock and Main Street.

ROBERT: West Wheelock.

NANCY: It's a small brick house. I don't think it's changed very much. Who was the matron of that? That wasn't what she was called. But she was the mother of a student who lived there. And the house was open to students that wanted to come in and dance or, you know, play cards or do whatever. I don't know whether it was an organization that....

DONIN: I'll have to look this up, the Hostess House.

NANCY: Yes, the Hostess House.

ROBERT: Hospitality house type....

NANCY: Yes.

DONIN: So that the college boys could hang around with the town girls in this hospitality house, in the Hostess House.

NANCY: Yes, we called it the Hostess House, right.

DONIN: Oh, interesting.

NANCY: And it was probably also a shack room.

DONIN: And, of course, yes, the shack room, right. [Laughter] Which in those days—

NANCY: Very important.

DONIN: Yes, very important. Uh-huh. Interesting. So you were a student.... So then did you get married?

NANCY: We got married in the spring vacation of 1948.

DONIN: And you were still a student?

NANCY: He was.

ROBERT: Yes.

NANCY: Headed for Montreal for the last two years. By then he knew where he was going to go for the last two years.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

NANCY: So I went with him

DONIN: That's wonderful. So you were together as a couple—I mean you weren't married yet—but you were together for a couple of years in Hanover. So you were still living at home at this point then.

NANCY: No, we were living in Wigwam Circle.

DONIN: Oh, you moved to Wigwam Circle. Oh. So you recognize this picture. This is a picture from the Sissons.

NANCY: Oh.

DONIN: Who said they were living there.

NANCY: Yes, they were there. And Craig and Jocelyn Cain were there. I think.

ROBERT: I'm not sure.

NANCY: I'm not sure about them. It was quite a place.

DONIN: I gather it was a total firetrap.

NANCY: It was a total firetrap, and we had these burners _____.

DONIN: Kerosene burners.

NANCY: Kerosene burners, yes. We were glad to get out of it because it was cold. I don't think we have a picture of it.

DONIN: But everybody says it was a very happy time.

NANCY: Oh, it was a happy time indeed. Babies being born.

DONIN: Yes.

ROBERT: There was a lot of socializing.

DONIN: Yes, that's what they say. Somebody was talking about having waffle parties, using waffle irons?

NANCY: Oh? I don't....

DONIN: You didn't have one of those.

NANCY: No, we didn't have one of those.

ROBERT: We had spaghetti parties.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

NANCY: Spaghetti, yes. Bob Paulson was the spaghetti maker.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So when you came back, you obviously had no, there was obviously no graduation ceremony for the class of 1945. Do you think your feeling as a class of being united was impacted by the fact that, you know, everybody was coming and going and they had these long absences.

ROBERT: We were spread out. There were a lot of military people here, V-12 program.

DONIN: Yes. And there was no official graduation ceremony. So you couldn't sort of develop a lot of the traditions.

ROBERT: No. We didn't have a—that's right.

DONIN: Did that impact your feeling of identity with the class of '45?

ROBERT: I was more focused on my work than I was on that so I don't remember.

DONIN: It didn't matter that much to you.

ROBERT: It didn't mean that much to me.

DONIN: Right. Did you find you made a distinction between the military students who came back after the war and the traditional undergraduates who had matriculated there as freshmen?

ROBERT: I wasn't aware of that, conscious of it.

DONIN: But it sounds to me, as you said, you were so focused on getting through all your premed requirements.

ROBERT: A lot of them. '45. I started in '46, '47. 'Forty-six the spring, and then a summer semester.

DONIN: They were still doing the accelerated classes, weren't they?

ROBERT: Right.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. So you never really got a break between semesters.

ROBERT: There wasn't time for that.

DONIN: Right. You were focused on finishing up and getting on with it.

ROBERT: That's right. As soon as possible.

DONIN: Right. Was there a period of time when you were there Nancy, when Bob was in school that you needed to get a job, or...

NANCY: I worked for the hospital.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

NANCY: They were taking inventory. I worked the switchboard. If you went into the rotunda and saw the switchboard. So, yes, I worked. But they were short jobs, you know.

ROBERT: Did you work at the reserve desk?

NANCY: I did work. Thank you for remembering that. I worked at the reserve desk.

DONIN: Amazing. In Baker Library.

NANCY: In Baker Library. And one day everything was.... Every two hours books were sent out, and I had to work pretty fast. I had to hold a drawer open and I completely upended it. The drawer was about this long. It wasn't very long. But it took a while to put it back together.

DONIN: Oh, dear.

NANCY: It was embarrassing.

DONIN: Now of course the murals were already down there by then, weren't they?

NANCY: Oh, they were there indeed. Yes. The murals.

DONIN: They created quite a stir, I gather, when they first went up.

NANCY: There was controversy. Certainly there was controversy back then.

ROBERT: They're a national treasure.

NANCY: They really are. Yes. Amazing.

DONIN: It is amazing, yes.

NANCY: People eventually changed their minds.

DONIN: Right, exactly.

NANCY: They know what's going on.

DONIN: Right. For all the trouble that Hopkins got in. In fact it turned out to be a wonderful thing that he did.

NANCY: He got into hot water for the murals?

DONIN: Well, some of the alums didn't approve.

NANCY: Oh, sure.

DONIN: That sort of art. He got in some hot water. So how do you think Dartmouth did.... So you come back after the war. You've got veterans coming back, you've got traditional civilian undergraduates

coming in. They've got this big mixture of different students from all walks of life. Big age span. How do you think the college did sort of mainstreaming this large group that's descended back at the college after the war?

ROBERT: I hadn't really thought about that question. They did fine as far as I can remember.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT: I don't remember specific difficulties or problems that arose from that mix of students.

DONIN: Right. I gather there was some question of, you know, how do you discipline a war, an experienced war veteran? How do you discipline when he comes back on campus and he has a beer when he's not supposed to be drinking beer? And that became an issue, that whole sort of social, you know, the social life of these experienced war veterans drinking a beer should not be a crime. And it presented some challenges. But that wasn't a problem for you.

ROBERT: I lived off campus much of my return, after my return, in private homes that rented—

DONIN: Oh, yes.

ROBERT: —rooms to students. So I wasn't involved in campus life very much beyond the academic portion.

DONIN: Right. You should like you were pretty focused on just getting through.

ROBERT: That's right. The other thing about Wigwam Circle was none of us had much of anything. So we had that in common.

DONIN: Right.

ROBERT: It was very much like when we went to McGill.

DONIN: Well, that was a common, that seems to be a common impression that nobody had any money. And it was sort of fun to be in it together.

ROBERT: Right. There was a certain character to that experience.

DONIN: Right.

ROBERT: Which is fondly remembered.

DONIN: Yes. Let's see here, I am just looking at my list. One thing I didn't ask you about. Did you have any teachers whom you have particular memories of, that made an impression on you?

ROBERT: Yes, Arthur Wilson.

DONIN: Oh, yes, right.

ROBERT: And then I took a year of French with Leon Verriest.

DONIN: Oh, good memory.

ROBERT: Does that ring a bell?

DONIN: No, but I'm sure you're right.

ROBERT: And Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy.

DONIN: Oh, yes. Sure. He was a philosophy teacher, right?

ROBERT: Yes. Now who else? George Frost was an English teacher.

NANCY: How about Professor Booth?

ROBERT: Edmund Hendershot Booth?

DONIN: Oh. Now I've heard that name before.

NANCY: His son-in-law....

DONIN: Oh, was the poet.

NANCY: His son was the poet. We moved to Kendall, we went into their apartment for one reason or another. We were invited for a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, whatever. And when Bob said that he had been in a course with his father, Philip just went like this and grabbed him and gave him a big hug.

- DONIN: Oh, that's nice.
- ROBERT: It wasn't actually a course.
- NANCY: Well, it was....
- ROBERT: Professor Booth used to give readings in Sanborn English House of Chaucer. I liked English poetry. I remember going and listening, in awe of his accomplishments. Edmund Hendershot Booth.
- DONIN: Wonderful. That's a nice memory.
- NANCY: Yes, it is.
- ROBERT: [Quotes poetry in Middle English.]
- DONIN: Oh! Nothing wrong with your memory! That's wonderful.
- NANCY: You're absolutely right.
- DONIN: That's wonderful. Well, I think that's a nice way to end this, unless you have other thoughts you want to share with us.
- ROBERT: I'm still confused about the chronology. I came back in '45. Dave Heald was the manager of the Hanover Inn.
- DONIN: And you were the bellhop.
- ROBERT: I was one of three.
- NANCY: Do you want to tell the Sisson's story?
- ROBERT: Oh, the Sissons were on their honeymoon and they came to stay overnight at the Hanover Inn and I carried their bags to their room. They never gave me a tip. [Laughter]
- DONIN: You should remind him. He was just in here.
- ROBERT: Since we've been at Kendal they've rectified it.
- DONIN: That's a great story.

[End of Interview]