

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Jerry Tallmer '42
By Mary Stelle Donin
February 26, 2010

DONIN: Okay, so today is Friday, February 26, 2010. I'm in New York, the upper west side, with Jerry Tallmer, Dartmouth class of 1942.

TALLMER: As of 1946.

DONIN: Right.

TALLMER: After the war.

DONIN: Sorry. Yeah, you were class of '42.

TALLMER: I was class of '42, but I graduated as of 1946.

DONIN: Right. That's one of the interesting things I want you to describe. So, tell us how is it that you chose to go to Dartmouth in the first place.

TALLMER: I think through the enthusiasm of one of my classmates who was wild to go to Dartmouth and did go to Dartmouth, Harry Jacobs, one of my high school classmates. And I think somebody from Dartmouth—a young man who was still in college—came down and talked to me in Manhattan. I don't know if the college arranged that or what. It's a very vague memory. But, four of us—we went to the—it was the greatest high school in the history of the world. I keep saying that—I really think it was—the Lincoln School of Teachers' College for a few years, up on Morningside Heights, 123rd Street. It was part of—it was an offspring of Columbia University, I guess. And there were four of us who applied to Dartmouth and all four New York City kids got in, which was extraordinary. What was even more extraordinary, given the time and climate: three of us were Jewish and we all got in. All four. One was not. It's amazing. And we all went through school, and went through the war, and all that stuff. I don't know if that's an answer.

DONIN: Go ahead.

TALLMER: Up in the hills of New Hampshire, it just seemed attractive, you know?

DONIN: Had you been there before, before you actually matriculated?

TALLMER: Yes. My father took me up in advance. I mean, I think it was before they accepted me and we talked to a wonderful man called Robert C. Strong, who was the dean of freshmen. And I wrote a—when he died, I wrote an obituary, which should be in your records someplace. Sort of a Strong piece. And we went into his office and he questioned me and my father, and then he—I've written this in that piece—then he, straight-faced, straight out talked about the quota system. He said, "It's going to be tough. We may well not take you in." And all of that stuff. He was very honest.

DONIN: Were you shocked?

TALLMER: I wasn't so shocked. I was impressed that he was such an honest guy.

DONIN: So this was back in, say, 1937.

TALLMER: Yeah, roughly so. Yeah.

DONIN: Do you remember what the quota number was? It was a percentage, wasn't it, of the class?

TALLMER: It was a very small percentage, whatever it was. I don't know. Maybe it wasn't a number; maybe it was just... I don't know. The answer is I don't know. But, I do remember Bob Strong laying it on the line. And I got in anyway, so there we were.

DONIN: And did that put you off about coming?

TALLMER: No, it did not.

DONIN: How did your father feel about it?

TALLMER: It didn't put him off, either. He was a flexible person.

DONIN: Did you apply to any other schools besides Dartmouth?

TALLMER: I don't think I did. I don't remember ever doing that. In that obit, again, about—that I'm sure you have someplace—which I wrote in 1946, I guess, when he died. Whenever that was. And then I wrote this piece and it was in the Dartmouth. And I talked in there about how, when I came out of the army and came home, the first thing I did after landing in Manhattan was get myself up to Dartmouth, to Hanover, and as I walked up Main Street and got to the main crossroad where College Hall and the Inn were, there

was Bob Strong crossing the street or something, and he said, “Hello, Jerry,” and stuck out his hand. That was four years after the thing. I think I was still in uniform. That impressed me.

DONIN: Yeah. Now, had you arranged with Dartmouth when you left—I guess you left shortly before your actual graduation time, right after Pearl Harbor?

TALLMER: Babe Fannelli, my buddy and classmate from Pelham, New York and associate—I don’t know what his title was. He was second guy to me on the newspaper and my best friend in school, I think, and afterward. What was the question?

DONIN: The question was...

TALLMER: Oh no, when I left.

DONIN: Permission about—

TALLMER: I also wrote all of this. I wrote a big piece about Babe, which never got printed except in the *Villager*, where my present newspaper is, but I could send it. I wanted to have it—I sent it up to the alumni magazine and the jerk person—whoever was running it—wasn’t interested at all.

DONIN: Oh, what a shame.

TALLMER: And he wasn’t interested in my writing about Charles Bolté when Bolté died, either. So, that’s that. But, I did write a piece about Babe and in it I explained that we put out three or four newspapers—extras—on Pearl Harbor Day or the next day after that. Anyway, on December 7th or 8th, Babe and I were having coffee in the Hanover Inn coffee shop—bitter and black coffee, I wrote—and Babe said—well, the newspaper had been very interventionist. I have always thought it was the very first interventionist college newspaper in this country. I thought, I still think, because I’ve never seen any evidence other than that. So, I had been writing editorial, after editorial, after editorial how we should get in the war and fight Hitler, causing much turbulence on campus. And then Babe, who was the poetic half of the team and had written the intervening poetic articles, looked at me across the coffee table and said, “I guess we better go.” I was shocked. I mean, I was the guy who wanted to go and get in the war.

So, the next day, which was December 9th, we left school. We left the paper in the hands of Craig Kuhn, another close friend and roommate. We also lived in College Hall, most of us. And I don’t know if we hitchhiked or what, but we got down to Boston and that’s when we left school,

December 9th. It was my twenty-first birthday; I thought that was appropriate.

DONIN: And Hopkins himself was sort of on your side, as well. Wasn't he support—

TALLMER: Who?

DONIN: President Hopkins was supporting intervention, as well, wasn't he?

TALLMER: Oh, yeah. Yes, he was, indeed. And I have a memory of him—I thought about this yesterday when Leo was dragooning me into talking with you [Laughter]. During the war, somehow when I was on—I don't know if it was a two-day pass or a furlough—not a furlough. I don't know. I was here in Manhattan. I was still—I was not still—I was in the air force, but I was home for a day or two, I don't know. It was during the war. And there was some Dartmouth College function in Manhattan where Ernest Martin Hopkins was to be. I can't be more exact than that—I can't remember more than that—but I do remember I was there. And I was standing next to him, about to say, "Hello, Mr. Hopkins," and somebody took his ear and said, "Stubby Pearson is dead." And Ernest Martin Hopkins turned white.

Stubby Pearson—Charles Milton Pearson—was captain of the football team. I think he was the center on the football team, and he was also an aspirant for *The Dartmouth*, which was amazing. He was trying out—what were called heelers, which were kids who tried out for the paper. He didn't have much chance of getting on the paper, but he was very earnest about it, serious about it. And he died, I think, dive bombing a Japanese battleship or something like that. I'm not sure.

But anyway, that was Ernest Martin Hopkins, who had—I've used this line ten thousand times, because it's true—who had once famously said before I got to school—he said, "Budd Schulberg"—Budd Schulberg was the editor of *The Dartmouth* seven years before me—"Budd Schulberg cost this college \$1 million, but it was worth it to have a Budd Schulberg at Dartmouth." Budd had made the paper heavily interested in the granite quarry strikes up in northern Vermont, or wherever the hell it was.

DONIN: Barre, I think.

TALLMER: Barre, yeah. So...

DONIN: What did he mean by costing the college \$1 million?

TALLMER: The quarry owners were heavy—What do you call those people who give money to colleges?

DONIN: Oh, donors? [Laughter]

TALLMER: Donors, yes. Whatever. And one in particular, two in particular. I don't know the facts, but he did say that, I think, Mr. Hopkins.

DONIN: Did you ever see him again? President Hopkins?

TALLMER: I don't think so, because when the war was over John Dickey was the president and he took me under his wing. I saw a lot more of him than I ever did see of Mr. Hopkins.

DONIN: In what way did he take you under his wing?

TALLMER: Oh, he invited me to his house for an evening discussion. Just wanted to know all about me, and I didn't know this until much, much later—quite recently, actually. When it was time for me to leave school at the end of '46—I was there for one semester after the war—when it was time for me to go out into the great world, he wrote a letter, a long letter, to a man in Washington whose name I'm ashamed I can't remember. Quite a well known journalist or government guy or something. All about me. He was promoting me to get a job through this guy. It never panned out as a job, but as I said, I say, I recently—Ed Bock, of the class of '43, who was very involved in Dartmouth, much more than me. Much, much more.

DONIN: I interviewed him for this project.

TALLMER: I'm sure you did, yeah. He's good. He dug out a lot of old papers of the Dartmouth and me, and he produced a copy of this letter, which I still have upstairs someplace. How'd I get into that? Oh, John Dickey. You know, I was the campus "radical." I really wasn't very radical. I was just—I don't know, just independent, I guess. But John—Mr. Dickey; I didn't call him John—Mr. Dickey thought of me as the radical wing of this institution. Go ahead.

DONIN: Were you radical before as well as when you returned?

TALLMER: Oh, yeah. Well, I'm a New York kid, you know? East Side, West Side. My mother had a phase of being very close to being a communist, though not. She went through that. Later on, she changed her mind. And I went to the Lincoln School, which had, god knows, all points on the compass, but especially—it was the New Deal when I was in high school, you know? I

mean, my class was—this was before Dartmouth—my class went on a two-week trip through the TVA area, thanks to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The whole class: fifty kids and five or, six, seven teachers. And we became pretty earnest New Dealers, and I am to this day, you know?

DONIN: So, had you arranged with Dartmouth to come back when you left? When you finally decided to—

TALLMER: No. We just split, just like that. I mean, I told Craig Kuhn we were going and god bless you. And I may have talked to some administration person or faculty, but there was a man named Albert I. Dickerson—Albert Inskip Dickerson—who I don't remember his title. Maybe you do, but he also had taken me under his wing or vice versa when I was in school before the war.

DONIN: Was he the dean of freshmen maybe?

TALLMER: No, Bob Strong was the dean of freshmen.

DONIN: Oh. I thought Strong was the admissions guy.

TALLMER: No, I think he was the dean of freshmen before and after. I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure about anything.

DONIN: Well, we can—

TALLMER: Anyway, Al Dickerson, he was sort of nursing *The Dartmouth* along—the newspaper—before the war, too. And I suppose I must have written to him during the war and vice versa. And he, toward the end of the war when I was over in Okinawa, started writing me about coming back to school: “Dear Jerry, Dartmouth has been put on ice for the duration. We need somebody to put it back into shape and blah, blah, blah.” And he talked me—for that reason I went back to college for that one semester. I was flunking out before the war.

DONIN: Were you too busy working on *The Dartmouth*?

TALLMER: Yeah, of course. That's all I did.

DONIN: And during the war they were putting out something called *The Dartmouth Log*.

TALLMER: Yeah, I know. And he deplored that.

DONIN: Did he?

TALLMER: Yeah. I don't know if I ever saw one. I think I may have seen one copy.

DONIN: It would probably be painful for you to see.

TALLMER: I'm sure it would, and it was painful for him and that's why he talked me into coming back.

DONIN: Yeah. Oh, I see. So when you were discharged—

TALLMER: Yeah.

DONIN: You headed back to Hanover to—and that, of course, was—John Dickey was already president then.

TALLMER: He was already president. He had come in during the war. I didn't know him until then.

DONIN: You got there, right. I think he came in in the fall of '45, right after the war was over.

TALLMER: You know, it's conceivable—although I don't know—that I went from the air force, from being discharged—I was discharged up in some base in New Hampshire. I had gone in in Boston and came out in New Hampshire, and it's possible I went right to the college before I came down here to see my father. I don't know. It doesn't matter; it's not important.

DONIN: So, you were able to have three and a half years of sort of normal undergraduate college experience. Is that fair to describe it?

TALLMER: Yeah, I guess so.

DONIN: I mean, did you engage in any other outside activities other than *The Dartmouth*, or did that absorb all your time?

TALLMER: *The Dartmouth*, you're talking about? The newspaper?

DONIN: *The Dartmouth*, right.

TALLMER: That absorbed all my time.

DONIN: So, you didn't do sports, you didn't do—

TALLMER: Oh, well, yeah. Actually in an idiotic way. My first roommate at Dartmouth was a kid named Murray Latz. I called him Murray Slatz. He also was very much like me: a New York Jewish kid with big ears. So skinny and talkative and all that. And he and I—the hockey and the basketball games there then had no programs, and he and I—and I think it was his idea—started printing up little scrappy mimeographed programs for these hockey games and basketball games, supported by the merchants. You know, you'd go into the Greek guy's restaurant, whatever it was called, and yammer with the owner, who didn't understand what hockey was to be begin with, and we'd get a, you know, five-dollar ad out of it or something like that.

DONIN: So that was the beginning—

TALLMER: So that was the beginning. That was before I was on the paper, and I'll tell you why and how I got on the paper. I went up to school the first time—I mean, after the Bob Strong thing—I went up to be in school in the fall of 1938, and about less than a week, maybe less than a couple of days after I got there, came along the hurricane of 1938: a huge New England killer hurricane, when hurricanes were hurricanes. Now, I shouldn't say that. They got worse now. And a bunch of us were having lunch or dinner in College Hall, in that huge dining room. We lived upstairs over the dining room. No, at that time I didn't live there. At that time I lived in North Mass. with Murray Latz. Later on, I went into College Hall. We had eaten lunch or dinner and were coming out, and I don't know if you remember—well, remember. It was a front thing: it was a portico with columns and this and that in front of it. As we were walking out under that portico, one of the giant elm trees fell. It's funny, as I say this, a guy was killed yesterday in Central Park by a falling tree branch. This was a whole, big, huge tree fell, and it was going to squash us, but it caught on the edge of that portico and so it didn't squash us.

DONIN: Saved your life.

TALLMER: It saved our lives, or, you know, quite possibly. And so later on—I don't know. I remember writing an editorial. Oh yeah, about the war, an analogy about getting in the war. And the headline was: "Into the Storm." And I talked about that hurricane and that tree and now the war, world war, and, you know, all that stuff. Well, a lot of baloney, but anyway that comes into my head, too.

DONIN: So how did you get involved in *The Dartmouth*?

TALLMER: Oh, I started to tell you that. I started telling you that because of the hurricane. The hurricane, you know, idled everything and knocked out electricity and all that stuff, but the next morning under everybody's door, there was a one-page or two-page—I think like a one-page and then a back page of it—emergency newspaper. And, you know, it was whatever the news of that moment was about surviving the storm and everything else. And down on the bottom, in small type, said, "This edition was grateful for the assistance of Charlie"—I've lost the name, but it will come back. Charlie-somebody was a schmuck freshman like me from—I don't know if he was from New York, but he was of the same ilk. And I thought to myself: If Charlie Weinberg—was that in your...? Oh, you wouldn't—

DONIN: It's in the Green Book.

TALLMER: Yeah.

DONIN: We can look him up.

TALLMER: Let's look him up and see. I hope that's the name. Yeah, I can't see that stuff.

DONIN: Esses. Got to go back further. W. Is it Weinberg, you said?

TALLMER: I think so.

DONIN: Next page. Weinberg. Charlie Weinberg.

TALLMER: That's him.

DONIN: And he's from New Rochelle.

TALLMER: Okay. And he lived down the hall in North Mass. And I thought: If this schmuck could work on a college paper—we'd been there two days or something like that—I can do it. So that's how I marched myself over and became a heeler myself.

DONIN: Yeah, but you moved up the ranks pretty fast.

TALLMER: That's right, yes.

DONIN: Who was the—Do you remember who the editor was who hired you?

TALLMER: Well, they didn't hire. They allowed you to be a heeler.

DONIN: Right.

TALLMER: I think it was O'Brien Boldt. I was class of '42 and he was class of '39? I think it was O'Brien Boldt, who was a wonderful man, young guy. Tall, idealistic. Bob Harvey was immediately before me; he was class of '41. Braden was class of '40. Tom Braden. So, it was O'Brien Boldt.

DONIN: And so that absorbed most of your sort of undergraduate activity, other than classes.

TALLMER: Yes.

DONIN: Did you get involved in Greek life at all?

TALLMER: In what?

DONIN: Greek life, fraternities?

TALLMER: No. My fraternity was *The Dartmouth*, and it was the strongest fraternity there was.

DONIN: Right. And I assume that was—

TALLMER: The guys at Pi Lambda Phi, which was the Jewish fraternity, very much wanted me to join. I just wouldn't do it. If you want to ask me if I would have joined any other fraternity, I don't know. I might have been tempted, out of ego or whatever.

DONIN: But why not the Jewish fraternity?

TALLMER: I just didn't want to be pegged.

DONIN: Yeah. Did you ever feel that people treated you differently because you were Jewish, up there?

TALLMER: One or two trivial incidents, yeah, which I've mostly expunged. And they couldn't have been all that important.

DONIN: So your social group there was, I assume, also the people—

TALLMER: It was all—as I said, we all sort of moved—four or five of us moved together on a floor over in College Hall, up over the dining room: Craig, Jim Farley, the sports editor and a wonderful, wonderful guy from Detroit—no, from Grosse Point, Michigan. Rich kid. Didn't act rich, but he was a

rich kid. Craig, and four or five other—oh, Joe Palamountain, my assistant editor, who I didn't like. But we all lived together there.

DONIN: Now, did you develop any kind of, you know, connection with any of your professors?

TALLMER: Yes, quite a few of them. Mostly Sidney Cox, who all English majors and writers knew and worshipped, and Budd Schulberg worshipped him. And I've got at least one anecdote about that. So, there was Mr. Cox, who was—Oh my god. I'll have to kill myself. I became quite close friends in school and after school with John—it will come back to me.

DONIN: It will come back to you.

TALLMER: Also an English professor. And with a philosophy professor—I should have thought of these names before I came down here.

DONIN: How about the philosophy professor might have been Rosenstock-Huessy?

TALLMER: No. I was in his class, but he was not a friend. I mean, he was not a friendship type. Not with me, anyway. I was sort of a devotee for a while, until I got wise, because he was sort of a cult figure, you know.

DONIN: Yeah. Many people in your class and other classes talk about the influence he had.

TALLMER: John Finch.

DONIN: Oh, John Finch.

TALLMER: Finch was the young guy, both before the war, during the war, and after the war, especially, and I was—with his several wives I was friendly with, and his buddy, the philosophy guy, whose name will come out of me at three o'clock in the morning. [Laughter] Sorry. And, let's see. Then after the war, I wouldn't call him a friend, but he took me under his wing, was this whacko English professor, quite a famous person because there was a novel about him and his wife. Oh, come on, Jerry, come on. He was a very august, Britishy American type. Always dressed in white. Had a white Cadillac, a white house up the road from the town. A white wife, a crazy white wife. He took Babe Fanelli and me under his wing and when we—he presented us with a typewriter to start the newspaper—when we were starting the newspaper again. And he had us—his wife had us to dinner

once or twice at their house up the River Road. Lambuth, David Lambuth. Look him up, all right? L-A-M-B-U-T-H, I think.

DONIN: I will. Okay.

TALLMER: I remember Babe and I were sitting in their elegant for Hanover living room. She was making, preparing dinner and all of a sudden she came screaming across the floor to Babe and slapped a cigarette out of his mouth. Sacrosanct house; you don't smoke here. This was long before agitation about tobacco and all that stuff.

DONIN: Now, this was after you guys returned.

TALLMER: This is after the war, yeah.

DONIN: So, Fanelli came back around the same time you did?

TALLMER: We both came back, yeah. Actually, we drove up together in his jalopy. He had a Model A Ford, or something like that. And he had just—he and his wife—oh, Jesus Christ. Well, I'll think about her name, too—had just had a baby. It was a girl he had met during the war, obviously—married during the war. And so we drove up together. He drove the car up from down here and we went back to school, yeah.

DONIN: So, did it feel odd to you all who were supposed to graduate in 1942 to be back there four years later? You were sort of the old guys.

TALLMER: No, it didn't seem odd. Well, we were relatively a little older, but no, it didn't seem odd. I remember I was a drinker in those days, and I think I got pretty plastered for graduation.

DONIN: So you actually walked with the class of '46.

TALLMER: Yeah.

DONIN: Oh, nice.

TALLMER: Yes.

DONIN: There were probably a lot of odd classes mixed up at that '46—

TALLMER: I would think so, yeah.

DONIN: That '46 graduation.

TALLMER: Yeah.

DONIN: Did you feel that you were treated differently on campus, being a veteran?

TALLMER: Maybe a little bit.

DONIN: Accorded any kind of—

TALLMER: Yeah, well at that point *The Dartmouth* newspaper was very important to bringing both the school spirit and the school itself into shape, helping to do that. So, I think there was a certain amount of increased respect, where before the war there had been violent emotions about being an interventionist, or a pacifist, or whatever. As I said to you, I thought I had pushed—I thought *The Dartmouth* under me had been the first interventionist college paper in America. I think; I believe. You'd have to show me an earlier one. After the war, all that was resolved and behind us, you know? And now it was a question of sort of figuring out what to do next, you know?

DONIN: Were you a better student when you got back?

TALLMER: No, not really. I did even less—I remember they made me—or maybe this was before the war—they made me—I flunked or was flunking physics, and they required me to go and take it again. I had a wonderful Scottish—little, old Scottish professor, who got me very interested in physics, and measuring stuff, and weighing stuff, and all that stuff. And I guess I was probably flunking two or three courses, even then, but they pushed me out and graduated me. They gave me credits for being in the war.

DONIN: Right. I think everybody was getting credits.

TALLMER: Yeah.

DONIN: And the campus must have been a real hodgepodge of different classes and the V-12ers that were training there.

TALLMER: And we had the first few black guys in school. It may have been—maybe not the first, but more than—and one of those guys—Fritz W, Alexander, also the captain of the football team—or whether he was the captain or not, he was the center on the football team—he also tried out for *The Dartmouth* and became a quite close friend of mine.

DONIN: So what class was he?

TALLMER: Well, he would have been—I don't know. He would have been '46 or '45, '46. He was there through the navy business. And one night, Max Lerner came up to lecture. Max Lerner was a quite famous New York columnist: quite radical and quite intellectual. And a lot of very— He was also hero-worshipped everywhere. And I was sort of appointed to take charge of, you know—like you're doing to me. Not interviewing, but helping. And after his lecture—which was always a fiery thing—after his lecture, we all came over to the office of *The Dartmouth* in Robinson Hall and sat ourselves down—well, I don't know. Babe, me, Mr. Lerner, and two or three other people. Lerner said, "Anybody got a bottle?" He produced a bottle, and Fritz Alexander was there, and somehow during the whole, long night's drinking and discussing, Max Lerner was asking Fritz about this and that. And he said, "You know, if I was a Negro, I would be a communist." I always remembered that.

DONIN: Did Fritz agree with him?

TALLMER: No.

DONIN: Interesting.

TALLMER: Yeah. And Fritz Alexander became a New York City judge, and quite a well-known one, and quite a Tammany person.

DONIN: So, were you on campus on December 7th, 1941?

TALLMER: I was just thinking. I'll answer in a second. Fritz, after the war, was married to a young woman, lived in the village. And I remember Fritz coming and falling for her.

DONIN: So you stayed friends with him?

TALLMER: Well, that was almost as much as I should have, or vice versa, may I say. What was your question, to go back?

DONIN: Memories of the day of Pearl Harbor.

TALLMER: Oh yeah. That was a—

DONIN: It was a Sunday.

TALLMER: Yes, but on the previous day, the day before—a Saturday—there had been a Harvard-Dartmouth football game in Cambridge, which I had gone

down to with a bunch of guys: Al Goldman, who was the business manager of *The Dartmouth*, and, I don't know, Babe. Whoever. Craig, I don't know—in a car driven by me, overloaded car driven by me, and I almost got us all killed because, you know in Boston there are those underground—what do they call them, the T?

DONIN: Yeah.

TALLMER: I saw this hole in the road and I went into it, only to see a trolley car coming straight at me. So, I had to back out. Be all that as it may, we drove back on Sunday—I drove back on Sunday with a car-full of people. Pulled up in front of College Hall, when a kid named Jack Jensen—not Jensen. That name will come to me, too. He was the son of the editor of *Time* magazine, an editor of *Time*. I think it was Jack Jessup? [John Jenness '44] He was not in our class. He was a heeler. Came running out: "Jerry, Jerry! Did you hear? The Japanese have bombed Pear Harbor!" And like everybody else in this country, I said, "Where's that?" You know? That was December 9th.

DONIN: Seventh.

TALLMER: Seventh. Right. So that was it. That's where I was December 7th.

DONIN: And President Hopkins called everybody to Webster Hall for a meeting?

TALLMER: I think so. Yeah, I think so, yeah. I never thought about that, but yes. I think he did.

DONIN: And then you put out that one-page special edition.

TALLMER: We put out two or three special editions, extras.

DONIN: Wow. Yeah, extras.

TALLMER: My story about Babe begins—the first sentence was something like: "We had put out three or four copies of the paper within two days, and now we were sitting in the coffee shop," and blah, blah, blah.

DONIN: Right. I hope I find that. You need to make your call.

TALLMER: No, that's fifteen minutes fast.

DONIN: Oh, you didn't tell me that. [Laughter] Oh, it's fifteen minutes fast. Okay. Oh, good. Ah... I lost my train of thought. So then you—okay, you left. December 9th was your twenty-first birthday and then you left.

TALLMER: Right. I thought it was appropriate.

DONIN: Yeah, very. So you enlisted in the Boston office?

TALLMER: Well, first we wanted to—we were hot health, hot to fight. First, Babe and I went to the marine corps—that was the big deal, the marine corps—recruiting place, and they took one look at our eyeglasses and said, "Sorry, fellas." [Laughter] So then we went to the navy and they did likewise. So then we went to the army. All of these things I've written in one place or another. You get to the place where you take off—you get stripped down naked, or maybe not naked at that point, and they test your eyesight. So, we're standing there. The guy says to Babe, who was in front of me: "Read this chart as far down as you can go." Babe said, "I can't read it at all." The guy said, "Well, walk toward it until you can read it." So Babe gets up and walks up to the chart, gets about this far away, and says, "E." [Laughter] So, my turn. The guy says, "Walk forward." I took one step and tripped over the doorstep. [Laughter] However, they took us in, both of us.

DONIN: Glasses and all.

TALLMER: Yeah.

DONIN: Glasses and all.

TALLMER: I went through the war losing and breaking eyeglasses. My father would airmail me or whatever a pair, which would take about four weeks to get to me, you know?

DONIN: That's a problem.

TALLMER: Yeah. But I faked it, you know? I would learn the eye charts as I walked in the room.

DONIN: Right. Now, was your sense of loyalty to your—was your sense of loyalty more directed to the college itself, or to your class, or to the Dartmouth? I mean, what is it that keeps you—

TALLMER: Well, I was very loyal to the college itself until—and I don't know the years. Oh, thank you. I'm sorry. You will know this better than I. The year that

somewhat would be called—I'm trying to find the right nice word. Conservative? Super-conservative? Ultra-conservative movement started on campus with a sort of a Bill Buckley-inspired and type newspaper, and there was some physical assaults on—I don't know. I wasn't there and I don't know. It disenchanted me, and I really have not—I would have been an undying Dartmouth nut to this day, except for that. It's turned me off and I've never turned back on. I was too busy down here. So this is as close as I have ever come in the last forty, fifty years to thinking about Dartmouth very strongly, which I regret, but—I regret it sometimes when a guy like Ed Bock, whose life and death is still Dartmouth, comes down and talks to me and brings me things, but I can't help it. I can't undo that. And then I was starting the *Village Voice*. That was a herculean labor which made running *The Dartmouth* look like high school, like grade school, like kindergarten.

DONIN: Well, it must have given you some of the skills that you needed.

TALLMER: Yes, it did. Yes. In fact, when the *Village Voice* started, I was the only guy who had had any experience at all, and my experience was *The Dartmouth*, plus four years on *The Nation* magazine, when I wasn't allowed to write anything. So. But, I mean, the two other guys who immediately started *The Voice*—Dan Wolf, the editor, and Ed Fancher, the publisher; Ed had taken a course in newspapers at the New School. That was his knowledge. Dan had not done any of those things. And I was the guy who knew something about it. Go ahead.

DONIN: So, when you got back to revive *The Dartmouth*, how did you find your staff? How did you recruit your staff?

TALLMER: I don't know. Maybe they walked in. One guy, who I know walked in, Bob—he had the same last name as a famous Dartmouth football player. Anyway, that name will come to me, too. He was like a movie actor, like a Frank Sinatra type, more or less. Not exactly. He had been—well, I never knew if it was quite true, because he was a flamboyant-type talking guy. He had been in the infantry in a church in Germany or France that caught fire and his hands were all burnt. Now, whether it was true about the church and the tower and all that, I don't know, but I did know about the hands. This guy turned out to be a good, good writer. And he would write all kinds of stuff, including columns in the manner of John Dos Passos novels with those news briefs that are stuck in the novel. I don't know. He walked himself in. As I say, Fritz Alexander walked it. Maybe it was all the guys walked in. I don't know. One person would lead to another. I don't think we made an actual overt effort to recruit. We didn't advertise for

people to come over, that I remember. And, of course, Babe Fannelli brought people in. Go ahead.

DONIN: Right.

TALLMER: And also—this is very important—I encouraged, recruited, and used women for the first time as writers on *The Dartmouth*.

DONIN: Which women?

TALLMER: One or two.

DONIN: Wives of faculty?

TALLMER: No, undergraduates.

DONIN: But there were no women then.

TALLMER: Well, then I—or maybe they were the wives, yeah. Maybe they were the wives of...

DONIN: Or wives of—there were quite a few veterans came back as married students.

TALLMER: Married students. Yeah. I remember there were at least one or two women.

DONIN: Oh, how interesting. I'll have to go look at the—

TALLMER: Excuse me. Maybe I'm mixing up *The Villager*—not *The Villager*—*The Village Voice* and *The Dartmouth*. Maybe—I know we had many, many, many women writers on *The Village Voice*.

DONIN: Sure. I'll go back and look at the old editions.

TALLMER: But I think—I'm pretty sure I'm right about *The Dartmouth*. It was at least one or two. Yeah, go back and look.

DONIN: I'll look and I'll let you know.

TALLMER: Let me know if I'm crazy.

DONIN: Now, I think we should finish up because you've got to do your call.

TALLMER: Yep.

DONIN: So, any closing thoughts about Dartmouth?

TALLMER: Well, I'm eternally grateful for what—I hate to say what it did for me; that's ridiculous and stupid. I'm eternally grateful for having been there then, and for having survived it, and having gone back. And I regret that I no longer am closely tied to it. Obviously, I wouldn't be what I am if it hadn't been for Dartmouth; I would have been something else. Maybe, you know, a bond salesman or something hideous like that. [Laughter]

DONIN: But you must have enjoyed writing in high school. I mean, you knew that was your calling when you got there.

TALLMER: I didn't really know it. Yes, I had been on the high school magazine called the *Laurette*, at Lincoln School. I don't know if I was the editor or just a writer for it. But I didn't figure to make my life writing, as it turned out, but I do—writing and editing; I'm 50-50 anyway. But certainly *The Dartmouth* and Dartmouth College gave me—opened that up for me. I don't know. I guess the word for it is ambiguous. I'm glad I went. That's all I can say.

DONIN: Good. Thank you.

TALLMER: Thank you. Now, where will this all appear? In what files or...

[End of interview]