

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The Wars Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Richard A. Wolff '49
By Mary Stelle Donin
September 19, 2008

- DONIN: You've got quite a family history of people attending Dartmouth. The first one was your dad, class of—
- WOLFF: Class of 1910.
- DONIN: Now, would you know—did he ever talk to you about why he chose to go to Dartmouth?
- WOLFF: Well, he chose to go to Dartmouth because he had heard about the school, and he had gone to Exeter, and he was up in New Hampshire and it kind of followed. He was very good in athletics, and he was on the tennis team and the golf team at the same time. So it was like that was it.
- DONIN: And I think those private schools in those days were almost like feeder schools to the Ivy colleges.
- WOLFF: That's right. That's right. They took the classics, Latin, and Greek, and you know.
- DONIN: Yes. And he probably had some classmates that were going as well.
- WOLFF: And he had some classmates. And it was just—it just fell in naturally.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Did he talk about Dartmouth when you were growing up?
- WOLFF: Did he talk about Dartmouth? Oh! [Laughter] We had a green car, we had a green house.
- DONIN: [Laughs] I see, yes. He bled green, as they say.
- WOLFF: Oh, green, green. We had to have green. And his most favorite line was—and we had four boys—his favorite line was: You can go to any college you want to. But I only pay at Dartmouth. He called that freedom of choice.

- DONIN: You were the last of three brothers. Three of his sons went, and you were the youngest to go.
- WOLFF: Yes, I was the last one. When I got in, I gave hopes to millions of boys that they could get in there because fortunately it was before the SATs.
- DONIN: Oh, yes. [Laughs]
- WOLFF: We all feel that half our class couldn't get in anymore. [Laughs]
- DONIN: That's what everybody says now. But in those days the legacy thing was really important.
- WOLFF: Oh, yes.
- DONIN: If you had a parent that went, it was pretty much understood, I think.
- WOLFF: That's right.
- DONIN: Now, did you follow your father to Exeter as well?
- WOLFF: No, I went to high school, White Plains High School. And I was very fortunate because I graduated with four or five that went to Dartmouth with me.
- DONIN: In your class?
- WOLFF: In my class.
- DONIN: Wow.
- WOLFF: And because the public schools in Westchester, the high schools, were—I won't say they're comparable to the prep schools. But they gave you a pretty good education.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. And you obviously were very familiar with Dartmouth as a place because I assume you went up there to see your brothers and visited with your dad?
- WOLFF: Yes. Well, we used to go to the Yale-Dartmouth football game was like a—that was as big as Thanksgiving. And we'd go to the

Princeton game. And we'd certainly go to the Columbia game. So it was done more through the games that were in the area. Because to drive up to Hanover was a major thing. I mean it was like almost an all-day trip going up the Boston Post Road.

DONIN: There was no highway. You went up—

WOLFF: We went up through the towns.

DONIN: Yes, yes. I even remember that.

WOLFF: And when you were up there and when we started, you always had to know somebody who had a car.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

WOLFF: And then you got really friendly with them because that was the only way to really, you know....

DONIN: Taking the train took forever.

WOLFF: Yes, the train took forever, of course. If we wanted to all visit the girls' schools. Well, that's another story.

DONIN: Yes, that is another story. We'll get to that.

WOLFF: Okay. [Laughter]

DONIN: Okay. So you arrived at Dartmouth in 1945. But weren't there like three different installations of students that went in?

WOLFF: We started in '45. We started in I think it was June. And there were three semesters. You just kept going to school all the time.

DONIN: You never got a break. You never had summers.

WOLFF: You never had a break. And also we have to remember that this was between the war, World War II and the Korean War. And you were waiting to get drafted. And you kept trying to put it off because, you know, eventually you were going to get drafted. So I was able to put it off for a few semesters. And then I finally, you know, got drafted out of Lebanon, New Hampshire. They caught me. That's right. I couldn't keep telling them I was doing this vital

work, majoring in sociology at the time. [Laughs] And my father was heading of the local selective—

DONIN: Service board?

WOLFF: Board in Westchester. But he would have been the first one to send me in. I mean my case never came up. I just, you know....

DONIN: When you were a freshman, some of them came in like July and some came in September?

WOLFF: Well, there were like—it was divided into like I'd say almost like four month periods.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And when we were up there, I don't know whether the class was 400 or 350 or what it was. But we had the V-12 and the V-8. And these guys would wake us up in the morning. And when we were out hitchhiking on the highways to get to the schools, they'd always pick them up because they'd be in their uniforms, you know.

DONIN: They'd leave you behind.

WOLFF: We were like chopped liver. [Laughter] Nobody cared about us.

DONIN: Those guys that came in the beginning of the summer, like in June, they matriculated under Ernest Martin Hopkins. Those guys that came later in your class, I gather John Dickey was...

WOLFF: Well, I was going to say, it was John Dickey. He started the Great Issues course. Yes.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

WOLFF: That was like mandatory. So we all knew what was going on in the world.

DONIN: In the world, yes. Do you remember matriculating and the ceremony and shaking his hand and all that?

WOLFF: Yes. Well, we all.... You know they had that picnic.

DONIN: At Storrs Pond?

WOLFF: At Storrs Pond.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And we were sort of like left out of it. I mean, you know, I mean a lot of like...One of my friends, he said he took the train up, and he got out. And, you know, you arrive at White River Junction. And it's like you're in a different foreign country or something. It was far different. And what I do remember is that in August on the streets of Hanover there, the Japanese peace surrender.

DONIN: V-J Day.

WOLFF: Oh, and everybody—We were dancing in front of Lou's. I mean everybody is there. And everybody was so happy. You know the war was over. And it was just, you know, it was just a wonderful event that I'll always remember. And it was just really, you know, you sort of got into the school. And even though the football team was made up mostly of the V-8 and the V-12 guys, who used to wake us up in the morning....

DONIN: Marching.

WOLFF: Marching and everything else.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: It was, you know, it was a wonderful time. And, you know, it was a time when, say, the only security we had was Wormwood. [Laughs] I mean he was our.... I was reading in one of the newsletters or something that now you've got a big security force. [Laughs] We just had one guy. And then we had the police chief, Ferguson, who was like, he looked like a rear admiral. He had all his braid on and everything. And then there was Tansi's where, you know, you could go down and get a beer. It was just kind of a nice, you know, friendly, friendly school.

DONIN: Yes. Low-key.

WOLFF: Low-key.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And it was during the war. We would get—I mean they would put up bulletins on the bulletin board and say, “If any of you are free this weekend, you want to go down to Green Mountain Junior College?” which is the other side—I don’t know if it’s still working, it’s still operating—the other side of Rutland. And the girls, if you get down there, would pay your whole weekend because the girls were also kind of like hurting because there weren’t any fellows around.

DONIN: So lonely.

WOLFF: Yes, yes. They were all lonely. And some of these schools were pretty isolated. So anyway, that was kind of the Dartmouth that we all had. And, you know, there were courses—I mean I don’t know whether it’s still going on—but there were courses like in history, and these guys had been teaching a long time. And then there was sociology: cops and robbers. I mean I don’t know whether they still have those kinds of courses. I always thought they kind of had them for maybe the hockey team and some of the baseball players—the football players. So you always went in there, and, you know, you’d say, gee, this course is probably going to be pretty easy because these guys are out of town all the time.

DONIN: Yes, yes. There was a course that a lot of people referred to called Cowboys and Indians.

WOLFF: Cowboys and Indians, that’s right. Cowboys and Indians.

DONIN: A history, American history course.

WOLFF: Yes, it was sort of a history of the Old West, and Lew, what the heck—

DONIN: Stilwell?

WOLFF: Stilwell, Lew Stilwell, gave the course. And it was just such a fun course.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

WOLFF: And then there was Red Merrill.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

WOLFF: And Red Merrill gave a course on, you know, crime. Oh, God, that's terrific! That's a great course.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And as I say, when you saw the hockey team in there, you knew you didn't have to study too hard, you know.

DONIN: That's right. [Laughter]

WOLFF: And then there was another course. It was a biology course. All you had to do was grow a tomato.

DONIN: Amazing.

WOLFF: And if that tomato died, you probably flunked the course. I mean things were—it was just a happy time, you know.

DONIN: Very happy time.

WOLFF: Very happy time.

DONIN: Plus I think the reality was a lot of the professors, the younger professors, were also off serving in the military.

WOLFF: That's right.

DONIN: So that there were, you know, there were guys teaching courses that they weren't really trained to teach.

WOLFF: I know.

DONIN: Because, you know, so many of their faculty were off doing military service as well.

WOLFF: And then, you know, there were like courses like Professor Gramlich.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

WOLFF: Who was the philosophy.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

WOLFF: I mean I finally got myself around... Listen I'd better start taking some courses, you know. Kind of serious courses, and that course made you think, you know.

DONIN: Right, right.

WOLFF: You know, so you got in there and I'd come back, and my father would be amazed. He says, "Boy, you're really...it's nice that you stay in Hanover." Because a lot of us would be on the road hitchhiking, although we'd hitchhike up, you know, to the girls' schools. Bennington. I mean that was—they should have given a course in that. I mean we were like experts in that.

DONIN: But nobody had cars, did they? So you guys were all hitchhiking.

WOLFF: Well, some of the ones who were more well-to-do had them or they were older classmates.

DONIN: Right.

WOLFF: You know, I mean not in our class, but maybe juniors who would drive us. And you'd have to put in, you know, very, very early that you were going to go. You'd put up a sign: Is anybody going to Boston? Or is anybody going to New York? And of course they collected \$10 from everybody for the gas. And you all had to meet someplace, you know, to get picked up to drive all the way back to Hanover through all the towns, through I think it was Connecticut 10. You know. I mean it was quite a project just to—

DONIN: Just to get out of town.

WOLFF: Just to get out of town.

DONIN: So by the time you were there in '45, and the war was winding down, then it was over. Were the sort of College traditions coming back? I mean were the fraternities opening up again? Because I think they'd all been shut down.

WOLFF: Yes, the fraternities were open. But by the same thing, there was like one Jewish fraternity, which was Phi Lam.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

WOLFF: And then there was maybe eight or ten more, you know, fraternities. And at that time there was anti-Semitism there you know. I mean if you—a very good friend of mine was Goldfine. You know, Saul Goldfine? Do you know the vicuna coat and all? You know, with Sherman Adams?

DONIN: Oh, Sherman Adams!

WOLFF: Sure, Sherman Adams.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

WOLFF: And he, for example, was—he was at Dartmouth, and his father wanted him to graduate, you know. He owned the Lebanon woolen mills and all that. And he got into—The reason I'm kind of going around in circles here is that he got into the Deke house because, you know, he was like a character. [Laughs] You know. But just the average Jewish person, there was some anti-Semitism there. Because it was really in those days, really a WASPy school.

DONIN: Very.

WOLFF: Very, very. Yes.

DONIN: Did you yourself experience any episodes of people reacting negatively to you when they found out you were Jewish?

WOLFF: I think people knew I was Jewish. I started off living off campus. And then as I—you know I've never really felt too much anti-Semitism in my whole life. Once in a while, if I was at a fraternity house, and one or two people, if they had a few drinks, you know they'd make, you know, a remark or something. Isn't it your holiday? Or something. You know. But I never really, you know, felt in my life any anti-Semitism.

DONIN: And in those days there was a quota on admissions.

WOLFF: There was a quota, and that's another thing. My father was very, very aware of the quota system. And he was president of the Fieldston School, which is a big school in New York. And he would work with Eddie Chamberlain.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

WOLFF: And they would go over the names that he wanted to get into Dartmouth, or let me say, he'd recommend. And in classes that were later, you know, I was friendly with some of the people. But my father was very close there. In fact my father was on the board that...had women.

DONIN: Voted for coeducation?

WOLFF: Yes, yes. He was on that committee.

DONIN: Was he!

WOLFF: Yes.

DONIN: Was he a trustee.

WOLFF: No, he wasn't a trustee.

DONIN: But he was on the committee.

WOLFF: He was selected. And then one of the presidents—I can't think of his name, which one. But he'd asked my father to vouch that there wasn't really a quota system there. But in those days, you know, it was just, you were trying to make everything nice, you know. There was a quota system, but you didn't want to publicize that there was a quota system. So the College has come like a long, long way with a Jewish president, [James O.] Freedman.

DONIN: Well, John Kemeny.

WOLFF: Yes, and John Kemeny, you know. So it's just changed entirely. I mean, you know, and it's changed for the better.

DONIN: Oh, indeed.

WOLFF: And then with my roommate, too. I mean he was Ray Cirrotta.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

WOLFF: He was an Italian boy.

DONIN: Right.

WOLFF: He was asked for a fraternity. But, see, he was on the junior varsity, and they scrimmaged with the—

DONIN: Was this in football?

WOLFF: Yes, football. And so was Gene Kelly, you know, all these guys, they were—there was a whole group there that was kind of like a, I would say, came from families that were comfortable. If I can use the word. And then there were a lot who worked their way.

DONIN: Right.

WOLFF: You know they worked in the dining hall.

DONIN: They had jobs.

WOLFF: They had jobs, and they couldn't get off, say, weekends. There was always— There was a woman there who was always...they were always talking about—I'd always kid them and say, "You guys were the worst waiters." And then we all had janitors making our beds. I don't know whether they still have that.

DONIN: No, they do not.

WOLFF: Oh, they don't? [Laughter] When I got in the Army, I couldn't even make my bed, you know. It was fun. I mean we used to like, you know, if we couldn't open our doors, we'd get a wire hanger and get somebody, you don't need a key or anything. And I'd come back some weekends, and there'd be newspapers all over my.... You know there were people who were all doing these pranks, you know. It was really a fun time, you know. But it was just as good as summer camp, you know. I used to when I was young, I went to summer camp.

DONIN: Now, let's go back to your Ray Cirrotta story.

WOLFF: Yes.

DONIN: It's certainly well known what happened to him. And it was one of the first things that John Dickey as a new president had to deal with because that happened when? Back in the late forties.

WOLFF: That happened, yes, in the late forties. It was something that... It wasn't the College's best time.

DONIN: No.

WOLFF: Because he had—I wasn't there. I was with Gene Kelly, and we were watching a movie. Oh, the movies. That's another thing. We all went to the Nugget. You had to go to the Nugget before you went to studies, and Gene and I went to the movies, and I came back. And there was a fellow Bob Kilmarx.

DONIN: Sure.

WOLFF: Who had the room right across the hall. And I came back, and I found Ray Cirrotta, and he was, you know, he had been beat up.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And we—I got Bob, and we helped him. Six people had visited him. I guess they had been drinking, and they came back, and he hit his head against a radiator. I don't know who punched who or what it was. And then we got a hold of Dick's House after a few hours, and he passed away with a cerebral hemorrhage. It was really sad. And everybody, you know, the six guys all...

DONIN: Were they all football players?

WOLFF: I think four of them were.

DONIN: Was there an issue over him wearing somebody's varsity sweater?

WOLFF: Varsity sweater, that's right. And he was on the junior varsity. And I think to make things worse—in fact I was talking to Gene Kelly the other, we were talking about it—and he said, "Well, he had the varsity sweater on for some reason, and I guess that didn't make such a big hit."

DONIN: And it's been said he had a difficult personality.

WOLFF: He was very outspoken, and he was in these classes where the rest of the football team was there. So he would have these discussions with the prof, and the prof, you know, I guess the other guys just, you know, resented it. And Gene was telling me that he had some ideas also. I don't know whether it was more socialism or what it was, that didn't fit in with the rest of the group. But anyway, getting back to it. Then he passed away in the morning. And then

the school got a hold of me, and we were interviewed. My father ended up coming up, you know. And there was a trial, but the trial was really just a farce, because the judge was Dartmouth, the prosecutor was Dartmouth, the defense was Dartmouth. And then the Boston papers got a hold of it. The liberal newspaper—the Italian newspaper—got a hold of it. And then a few months later, there was another trial, and I think all six were thrown out of school, and they were given suspended sentences. And six of us went down. We were pallbearers at his funeral in Linden, New Jersey. And the family didn't want any part of us, but, you know, we all drove down.

DONIN: Oh.

WOLFF: It was really sad. His sisters, mother. I've never seen them since then. I wrote her. It was just—

DONIN: They didn't want anything to do with Dartmouth.

WOLFF: Yes. They didn't want anything to do with Dartmouth. And it wasn't kind of Dartmouth's finest hour. It turned the whole thing. It was just a sad thing, you know. And even in my book, in our 50th book, you know, they talk about it, you know, that that's one of the things that all of us would kind of like to forget about, but these things you never forget about. Quentin Kopp was a good friend, Gene Kelly, Ben Jacobs. I mean there's a whole bunch of, you know, he had a lot of friends. It was just a sad chapter in Dartmouth's life.

DONIN: John Dickey talks about it at length in his oral history, too.

WOLFF: Oh, is that right?

DONIN: It was a scar, I think, on his memory as well, for obvious reasons.

WOLFF: I know, I know. And my father spent about ten days up there, and he just wanted everything to be done right, you know, as far as the College, you know, intervening you know. That was his major concern, that I mean the school that you love, that they just do things right. And as everything comes out, things did turn out right. You know people learn, and they go for what's best for the school. And in the end that was best for the school.

DONIN: Right, ultimately.

WOLFF: Yes, ultimately. Having the second trial and having a trial that's a lot more fair, that wasn't just, you know, a foregone conclusion. You might not have even had the first trial.

DONIN: It's almost like the school was trying to brush it under the rug and—

WOLFF: Brush it aside because they were more concerned about their image.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And that's a sad...

DONIN: Terrible. So that happened after you came back from the service?

WOLFF: Yes, yes. And then I moved in my last year. I had about five roommates. And we were in Middle Mass Hall. And it was just—I have to say that when I came back, it was always like I was known as Cirrotta's roommate. You know that's it, you know.

DONIN: A dubious distinction.

WOLFF: Yes, yes, it was a dubious— But all these friends. You know, it was just something that... I never went back for my graduation even though I'd finished in—I guess I graduated in January with that three semester thing. So I didn't go back in June. Maybe that was part of it, you know. I just, you know, got on with my life, and that was it. Because it was a big thing in my life, you know. And it's something that I think for years I never...I sort of got it out of my mind. And my late wife wasn't too big on going up to Dartmouth, you know, with all the fraternities and—

DONIN: Rah rah!

WOLFF: And the rah rah stuff.

DONIN: Right. And the drinking.

WOLFF: But I did get her to go up because we stayed at the Grafton Inn.

DONIN: Oh, nice.

WOLFF: And then [Laughs] we went over there for the day. And we went into the Bema. I guess it's the Bema. And I walked in on a whole group,

and I thought they looked familiar. But what it turned out was I was in the wrong group. [Laughter] They were in another part of the Bema. And since that time, unfortunately, I lost my late wife. And then I met Beth, and we've become a lot more active with Dartmouth. And it's really been a big part of our lives because when I moved out here, I was selling Jansen, you know which is the really big swimwear people, and so, I really didn't know anybody. My late wife had me move out here. I immediately joined the Dartmouth Club of Oregon, and it was wonderful. I mean, starting off, we were climbing around Mount St. Helen's and I went out early in the morning one Saturday. That was the first event I... There were nine girls and two guys and me! [Laughter] And they're all walking around and I says, Geez, can we rest a little? They were all like they were up in Moosilauke. So you know, you've got some wonderful alumni living around here.

DONIN: So let me get your schedule straight. You left to go in the service and then returned, what, in 1947?

WOLFF: Yes, in 1947.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And then, as I say, I got out in January. I guess it was January '50, but we were all Class of '49.

DONIN: You graduated before the actual—I mean you finished up before the actual....

WOLFF: Before the actual formal graduation.

DONIN: Right, right.

WOLFF: That's right. And most people came back. I think a lot of it also was that—well, my father enjoyed it because he got the GI Bill of Rights. He never had to— The tuition then in those days was \$2,000. [Laughs] I think he still owes me money because I never went to graduate school. I'm still waiting for it. [Laughter]

DONIN: So do you think you were a better student when you came back after the war? So you came back and you had like three terms left to complete.

WOLFF: Three things. And I was unable to take the courses that I wanted to take because I remember I'd be coming from high school, and my first English course was, my gosh, you read the Bible, and you certainly can't cheat reading the Bible. And Chaucer. I mean they gave us book after book. And you had to read it. And it was—I mean after high school. But then I was able when I came back, I took—My best course was always public speaking. I eventually ended up as a salesman. You have to talk a lot.

DONIN: What was your major?

WOLFF: Well, I was taking sociology. And I had hoped to get into the tobacco business around Hadley. My father knew somebody. And I ended up at J.P. Stevens. And Stevens was the secretary of the Army and that's also Goldfine, and the vicuna coat and all that. And my brother-in-law went to Harvard Business School and he met the treasurer, J.P. Stevens. And as I say, Bob Stevens was the secretary of Army during the war and I guess also during McCarthy. Everybody remembers the McCarthy hearings.

I took government. You know I knew I wanted to go into business. So I started off at J.P. Stevens, and I learned. That's where all the mills were, up in New England.

DONIN: Yes. They were still operating. Yes.

WOLFF: And then I spent a lot of time with M. Lowenstein, which is Springs Mills now, and all the mills went down South.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And I traveled, you know, the whole country and Puerto Rico.

DONIN: Wow.

WOLFF: Selling piece goods.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

WOLFF: So I always loved to travel. And Beth and I—my late wife and I—always traveled. And in my class I'm known as the guy who has traveled the most—

DONIN: Of anybody.

WOLFF: More than anybody. Quentin Kopp gets his name in there for everything he does but my picture is always in there for something because Beth makes great postcards.

DONIN: Sitting on a camel, right?

WOLFF: Sitting on a camel. [Laughter]

DONIN: Do you think the schedule that you and all your classmates followed, which was sort of chopped up by having to go into the service and stuff, do you think that impacted your sense of belonging to the class? I mean you didn't even go to graduation. And there were a lot of other classmates like you who didn't go to graduation.

WOLFF: Yes, I know.

DONIN: Were you ever tempted to join a different class or—

WOLFF: No, no, no. I also had my brothers up there.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: Because I think my father was trying to—you know I roomed with them like my freshman year because I think he was trying to straighten me out a little bit, and really get me to study. But I think that, you know, I sort of like eased into it. And, you know, it was such a complete—it's the first time I'd really been away from home.

DONIN: Right.

WOLFF: And I know that probably—this is another story. My father would give me an allowance for the whole year. And by November, I was all out of it. I mean there was nothing more. I said, gee, you know, can you send some more up? You know like... and he would always give me hell. "What are you doing? You should stay in Hanover. It's so beautiful." But there were no girls there. I mean all we had was like Lebanon and what's it? Colby Junior.

DONIN: Oh, Colby Junior.

WOLFF: Colby Junior College and White River Junction.

DONIN: Slim pickings.

WOLFF: And occasionally we'd go up to Montreal. You know I mean there was you know.... So my father would always say, "Why don't you ever stay in town? It's such a beautiful place." So now these people from the '70s on, I mean they had...I guess they've got the best of all worlds.

DONIN: Yes. The gorgeous place and women.

WOLFF: The gorgeous place and everything else.

DONIN: Were you conscious that some of your classmates were not really loyal to the class because of all those sort of chopped-up schedules you all kept? I mean did it impact everybody's feeling of sort of unity and belonging to one class?

WOLFF: I would say that everybody sort of did their own thing. And there was so much freedom up there. We had one classmate—in fact I was talking to Gene Kelly about this the other day—he arranged his courses by when the final exams were like for the first two days so he could get away. Now maybe there wasn't any kind of supervision there. Or somebody.... You know there was so much drinking going on up there. I mean Tansi's was such a big, big part of the school.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And people took pride in, like they drank and they passed out. And then they drank again. You know which is like... You know, maybe there wasn't enough supervision or something. Or we were like you were in a war, and—the war, I'm sorry, the war was over. But it was mostly made up of the V-12 and the V-8, and that was the primary thing, in that we all tried to fit in. And there wasn't any supervision. And there was, I mean there were a lot of pranks that were going on there that weren't so nice, you know.

DONIN: Did you feel sort of separated from all the military guys that were there? That were coming back after the war? I mean, you know, a lot of those guys came to train as V-12s and V-5s and instead of going back to their colleges, a lot of them wanted to come back to Dartmouth.

WOLFF: Dartmouth, yes.

DONIN: So the campus was made up of this massively large span of different experiences. You had the traditional kids like you, who'd matriculated right out of high school.

WOLFF: High school, right.

DONIN: But then you had these older veterans types. You were a veteran as well, but these older guys...

WOLFF: Well, I was a veteran where... My mother never even saw me off because my brother was in the Marine Corps. And we got a telegram, he had elephantitis and he had malaria and he was wounded and the Purple Heart and all that. So it was different. And we went to college and as I keep saying, we weren't supervised at all. Everybody kind of did their own thing, you know, more for survival. And their contact with the V-12s and the V-8 people were on the football team or something. Or in a class. But these were usually older, you know. We were probably—

DONIN: So you didn't socialize with them at all?

WOLFF: You didn't socialize. In fact we competed with them because, as I say, we were out hitching a ride to Boston, and they had their nice uniforms on, they wouldn't pick us up. And then we also felt that sometimes they didn't root that hard for Dartmouth at some of the games because, you know, they were in the military, and maybe they didn't play so hard on the football team. I don't know, you know. They were reservists, and I guess they had their own worries, too.

DONIN: Yes, sure.

WOLFF: You know they could end up in the Korean War.

DONIN: Now did you ultimately end up joining a fraternity?

WOLFF: No, no.

DONIN: You didn't.

WOLFF: No. I didn't. By that time, you know, it was too late. You know, you just went on. And as I say, there wasn't—there weren't, the fraternities weren't as....

- DONIN: As organized yet.
- WOLFF: As organized yet and as liberal.
- DONIN: Right, right.
- WOLFF: I mean, that's the way the college was.
- DONIN: Yes.
- WOLFF: And anybody, you know, like in the Jewish community, you know, you tell them you went to Dartmouth, they said, "My God! How'd you ever get in?" You know. And my father was the only Jew in his class in 1910.
- DONIN: I'm sure.
- WOLFF: I mean that was....
- DONIN: Pretty brave of him to go.
- WOLFF: Yes. I always had a.... I can get along with anybody. And it's part of my, you know, the way we grew up. And I think a lot of it also is that we always, we belonged to—my father belonged to a country club, and he belonged to a—he founded a beach club. Even with Jews, you have German Jews and there's also a class system you know. And my father's friend, for example, was on the board... Earl Sands of J.C. Penney. You know he was close to Roosevelt, and Morgenthau was in his office. So, you know, we always felt very, very comfortable, you know. Or put another way, we were always comfortably Herb Wolff's sons. And we even gave Lincoln papers to the college.
- DONIN: Oh, yes, you mentioned that.
- WOLFF: Yes. To the archives. I got a letter in there thanking us and they were the Lincoln-Douglas debates that we all chipped in. Because my father loved, two things he loved: He loved Abraham Lincoln and he loved Sherlock Holmes.
- DONIN: Two good things to love.

WOLFF: Yes, that was two good things to love. And we always honor our father. Our father was special. What I got out of him was a sense of humor. [Laughter]

DONIN: That's good. Everybody needs a good sense of humor.

WOLFF: Particularly if you're selling.

DONIN: Yes. Right. So you didn't go to graduation. Did you ever get a diploma?

WOLFF: Yes.

DONIN: Did they mail it to you?

WOLFF: Yes, they mailed it to me.

DONIN: When did you get it?

MRS. WOLFF: Tell her when you got it.

WOLFF: I got it about two years ago.

DONIN: Was this when you went back for a reunion and they—

WOLFF: Yes. I stopped in at the office at Parkhurst Hall, and I asked them. I said, "If you could find my diploma you know." So they sent me a diploma.

DONIN: Did they!

WOLFF: Yes.

DONIN: Oh, that's great. Yes. That's great.

WOLFF: Yes, you know, that was nice. I figure maybe the way the market was going, I might have to go out and give my resume. I'd better work on my resume. [Laughter]

DONIN: So did you ever live in a dorm?

WOLFF: Oh, yes.

DONIN: You said you lived with your brothers the first year.

WOLFF: The first semester I lived in Butterfield.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And then I guess what was the end of my freshman year, the start of my sophomore year, then I moved on Wheelock Street, you know, down the hill.

DONIN: Down the hill?

WOLFF: Down the hill.

DONIN: And that's when you were with your brother?

WOLFF: And that's when I was with my brother. And then Cirotta started coming down. And then I moved in—

DONIN: That's right.

WOLFF: I moved in with Cirotta to Middle Mass.

DONIN: Yes.

WOLFF: And then the rest of my time I was at Middle Mass. And then I moved in my senior year with about six roommates.

DONIN: Off campus?

WOLFF: On Middle Mass.

DONIN: Oh, nice.

WOLFF: In Middle Mass. Yes, we had like hockey sticks holding up. We all had couches and everything. It was quite a scene there. And you know they'd have parties, you know, for exam week on top of the ski jump in the spring. I mean kind of thank God the girls are gone party. So I got a lot more social. And I was really the happiest I think probably my senior year.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

WOLFF: Because everything was behind me. The Cirotta thing was behind me. And it looked like I was going to graduate, and I graduated. As I

said, I gave hopes to thousands of boys you can get through Dartmouth. [Laughter] Without Dad giving a fountain or anything.

DONIN: Right, right. Exactly. Your dad must have been delighted, too.

WOLFF: Oh, he was happy. In fact my late wife went to Vassar. She was honors. And we went up to graduation and he says, "Well, between the two of you, you probably had a good high C." [Laughter] But, you know, courses for me up there, you know, one thing I found, like you had to take your requirements, and one of them was like geology. So we would start out there. And you'd start walking. And by the time you got up to where the prof was giving you, you know, they were off again. And a lot of people in my class were taking geology just for like a gut course. And I was struggling through this thing. I had to find where the oil was and the sandstone and all that stuff. So I had a little trouble with that. And then another one was Spanish.

DONIN: Oh, you had a language requirement.

WOLFF: Oh, you had a language requirement. But you could only ask the question in Spanish. So how could I ask a question? I could hardly speak English. [Laughter] So, you know, I was speaking.... So anyway, I took, you know, those were my two hardest courses, which were for other people just—I mean that was their easy course.

DONIN: But you made it.

WOLFF: Yes, you made it, and I just found out that probably the best thing that I did that got me through there is I didn't study in the room.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

WOLFF: I went to the library and looked at the Orozco murals. I mean just went into the stacks. Right after, you know, either before the movie or after the movie because we went to that movie every night. And I told Gene Kelly when I spoke to him the other day, I said, "Do you remember the movie that we saw together when Ray had, you know, all those problems?" He says no. He says, "What was it?" I said, "It was Frank Sinatra in 'The Kissing Bandit.'"

DONIN: I can't believe you remember that.

WOLFF: I remember that, Frank Sinatra. So I asked... You always asked when you left the theater, I mean if you went to the second show, and people had seen the first show, "How was the movie?" They'd say it was an Italian Western. [Laughs] That could describe... I mean if you liked Italian Westerns, that was your movie.

DONIN: Yes, yes. Great. OK, I think we're done.

[End of Interview]

