

Dartmouth College Oral History Project  
The War Years at Dartmouth  
Interview with Frank N. Youngman '45  
By Mary Stelle Donin  
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DONIN: How did you end up coming to Dartmouth in, I guess, in the fall of 1941?

YOUNGMAN: Well, I was in prep school in Seattle, at Lakeside, and there were several of us there that had expressed an interest in going to Hanover. I wanted to play basketball. I was told I couldn't ski if I were going to play basketball. So that was out. But the whole environment of Hanover appealed to me as well as I think some of the others. So we were looking forward very much to going to Hanover. I'd never been back East beyond Chicago. So that was an experience, too, but had not a lot to do with going, although having an Eastern experience we all thought would probably be a good thing for us guys who'd lived out here all our lives.

DONIN: That's pretty brave, though. All the way across the country at what, 17 years old?

YOUNGMAN: I guess about 17, yes. But I had my roommate, [James] Doster "Doc" Rolfe. So we traveled by train, of course, and got ourselves I can't remember where—I guess Boston and took a rather rickety train up to Hanover. I can still picture that.

DONIN: Arriving in White River Junction, I guess.

YOUNGMAN: Yes, White River Junction. How we got to Hanover, I don't know.

DONIN: Now was it a tradition that a certain number of students from your boarding school would go to Dartmouth every year?

YOUNGMAN: I don't really think so. You could look it up. But I don't really recall that talking to graduates or people who had gone there or were currently there.

DONIN: Anybody in your family been there before you?

YOUNGMAN: No.

DONIN: Wow!

- YOUNGMAN: No, my parents all came from Wisconsin, graduated from there.
- DONIN: Yes, yes. But at least you felt better because you had your roommate coming with you anyway.
- YOUNGMAN: Yes, yes. That was very helpful, I think, for both of us. And we went through, you know, the usual routine of buying furniture and being harassed. [Laughs]
- DONIN: You had to wear that freshman beanie?
- YOUNGMAN: I think I still have it. If I can't find my numeral sweater, I'm not sure I can find that. [Laughter]
- DONIN: Do you have recollections of what Hanover was like when you got there? I mean that was in the fall of '41. So, you know, the United States hadn't entered the war yet. So I'm assuming it was a fairly traditional freshman first term.
- YOUNGMAN: Oh, I think it was traditional, yes. And I recall the weather was great. And you know it was just a marvelous experience. As I say, got harassed a little bit.
- DONIN: Yes. You had to carry furniture for the upperclassmen?
- YOUNGMAN: Yes, I think we got to do a little volunteer work.
- DONIN: And do you remember what dorm you were in?
- YOUNGMAN: South Fayerweather.
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- YOUNGMAN: And made some good friends there. And I'm afraid a lot of them are gone now.
- DONIN: Yes. And any memories of professors that made an impression on you when you were first there?
- YOUNGMAN: Oh, I can't remember by name. I took—I was going to be a premed, and I took a much harder course than I should have trying to get all of those credits, you know, necessary things out of the way. The

chemistry professor, which was a hard subject for me, was kind of memorable. And I had an excellent English professor, as I recall.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

YOUNGMAN: And I sat next to Jack Hemingway.

DONIN: Really!

YOUNGMAN: Who was only there I think about a year.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Was he in your class?

YOUNGMAN: Yes.

DONIN: Oh.

YOUNGMAN: And recently... He passed away not too long ago. But he was out here a lot in Sun Valley, and we'd come to Portland in our flyfishing group. And so I did see him then.

DONIN: Wow. That's daunting to be sitting next to someone with the writing prowess that's known in his family.

YOUNGMAN: Yes. Well, you know, he was 17 or 18 like me.

DONIN: Yes. Now did you get to do any sports while you were here?

YOUNGMAN: When I was in Hanover?

DONIN: Yes.

YOUNGMAN: Yes, I was on the freshman basketball team, and that's what the numerals would have been, that I would have liked to have worn.

DONIN: Right.

YOUNGMAN: And also on the freshman track team.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

YOUNGMAN: I was a hurdler and that sort of thing.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

YOUNGMAN: So I enjoyed that very much.

DONIN: Right.

YOUNGMAN: And I belonged to the Outing Club as well.

DONIN: That was a favorite for a lot of people.

YOUNGMAN: I think so.

DONIN: Yes, yes. And the memories that you had of—Did you meet President Hopkins when you matriculated?

YOUNGMAN: I did, yes. And I can still picture that. Yes.

DONIN: So the fall then of '41 was pretty regular. You guys were all having a good time.

YOUNGMAN: Yes, yes.

DONIN: Going to school. Now, were you interested in joining a fraternity at that point?

YOUNGMAN: Well, you didn't belong—join—as a freshman at that time.

DONIN: Right.

YOUNGMAN: So really I didn't give it a whole lot of thought. As it might come out later in the conversation here, I ended up at the University of Washington in the V-12 program and pledged a fraternity there.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

YOUNGMAN: Alpha Delta Phi.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So do you have memories—Do you remember when you learned about Pearl Harbor being bombed? You were there on campus then?

YOUNGMAN: We were there. And in my memorabilia I think I have the *Daily Dartmouth* where it was announced. And we were in our room, I think, and learned on the radio what had happened.

- DONIN: Right. And I gather President Hopkins called everybody together in Webster Hall, in fact.
- YOUNGMAN: I don't remember that. He probably did but I don't remember being there.
- DONIN: Did everybody get all sort of geared up and say they wanted to sign up and you know, leave school? I mean....
- YOUNGMAN: Yes, I think the upperclassmen, who were really the right age at that moment, I think there was a lot of readiness to go.
- DONIN: Right. So that year at Christmas, I guess, everybody was able to go home for their regular Christmas break?
- YOUNGMAN: I think I did, yes.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. After that I think President Hopkins announced that they were going to start running the school year round. They were going to accelerate the classes so that the students could get their credits and go on to do military service.
- YOUNGMAN: Yes.
- DONIN: But your plan, of course, was to come back and—I mean do you remember what your thoughts were about joining up?
- YOUNGMAN: Yes. I came back, and I joined the V-12 program, the Navy program, here. Went to Reed College in Portland that summer.
- DONIN: Oh yes. Mm-hmm.
- YOUNGMAN: And then learned somewhere along the line that the program was going to be at the University of Washington. So I went up there as a sophomore, as a civilian still.
- DONIN: Yes.
- YOUNGMAN: And the program didn't kick in until the next year sometime.
- DONIN: Right, right.
- YOUNGMAN: So I was there at the University of Washington and graduated in three years.

DONIN: Right.

YOUNGMAN: And then went on to pre-midshipmen's school and midshipmen's school and that route.

DONIN: So what about your roommate for instance? What happened to him?

YOUNGMAN: He also did that and ended up in the Navy as well.

DONIN: Oh. So you guys followed the same....

YOUNGMAN: But we went different ways after we left Seattle.

DONIN: Now when you finished your freshman year at Dartmouth in June or whatever it was, you knew at that point that you were already assigned to go to Reed College over the summer. So Dartmouth knew you weren't coming back.

YOUNGMAN: I'm not sure they knew when I left because I'm not sure I knew.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

YOUNGMAN: But they must have notified them as soon as I signed up for the Navy.

DONIN: Right. But everybody sort of left, it seems to me, everybody left the door open about what would happen when you got out of your service. There was an option to come back to Dartmouth or to....

YOUNGMAN: At that point, yes. I had anticipated that that's what I would do.

DONIN: Right.

YOUNGMAN: And I didn't realize I'd be out in three years and have all the other things happening.

DONIN: You had all your credits done quickly.

YOUNGMAN: Yes. I just had about an hour's credit to spare. [Laughs]

- DONIN: Yes, yes. But I think that's the way they ran the program at all the schools, where they really accelerated all of you to get you finished up so that they could get you trained for service.
- YOUNGMAN: Yes.
- DONIN: What was your sense of—if you can remember—when you were leaving Dartmouth at the end of your freshman year, was it a sense that a lot of kids were, a lot of men, were dispersing to go to join up?
- YOUNGMAN: Oh, I think so.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- YOUNGMAN: You know from December to June, I think a lot had already gone.
- DONIN: Right.
- YOUNGMAN: And so, it was I think a general intention for everybody to go.
- DONIN: Yes. Sign up and go.
- YOUNGMAN: Mm-hmm.
- DONIN: Right. And did Dartmouth sort of stay in touch with you? Did you maintain any sort of connection with Dartmouth over the years through official channels or was it just through your friends that you'd made there?
- YOUNGMAN: Well, as I say, being from the West, I didn't have a lot of friends there except in South Fayer. And I remember meeting an awfully nice guy from '46 in the Navy. But, you know, we were all spread all over the place.
- DONIN: How did they manage to keep you—stay connected to you?
- YOUNGMAN: Well, probably because of the Annual Fund.
- DONIN: Oh, of course.
- YOUNGMAN: And I've contributed ever since, and I have a little cup. [Laughter] And ultimately there was a class newsletter that we've always had

and has always been very good. And of course the alumni magazine. So I think about Hanover a lot.

DONIN: Was it funny for you to have two undergraduate colleges that you felt attached to?

YOUNGMAN: Well, yes. I feel, you know, that the University of Washington was a necessity.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

YOUNGMAN: And I feel a basic—even though I was just there for that one year—basic attachment to Hanover.

DONIN: Yes. So besides your roommate you mentioned who lives in Seattle now, do you stay in touch with any members of the class?

YOUNGMAN: No, not other than recognizing names and thinking about knowing them. And knowing John Butler here. But, no, not really.

DONIN: It's a long, long away physically.

YOUNGMAN: And there weren't in those days— There were two or three people that I learned subsequently that were two or three classes ahead of me from Portland. But in those days there weren't a lot of people from here that went to Hanover.

DONIN: No. Now your offspring. Did any of them want to come East and go to Dartmouth like you?

YOUNGMAN: One daughter applied shortly after the girls were permitted. And I think in the overwhelming tide, you know, she got left behind.

DONIN: Oh, dear.

YOUNGMAN: She ultimately ended up at the University of Oregon very happily. But she would have been a good Dartmouth skier and appreciated the environment. I really appreciated my year there and wish I could have graduated.

DONIN: Yes, well, the war changed everything.

**[End of Interview]**