Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with John Gustafson '48
By Mary Stelle Donin
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DONIN: Now, did you have any connections to Dartmouth before you yourself attended there?

GUSTAFSON: Yes. It was interesting because when the war was underway, my father was a great fan of Bill Cunningham, who was a sportswriter for the *Boston Herald*, and Cunningham was a classmate of my father's brother in 1918. My father had an older brother who was class of '08 at Dartmouth. Cunningham talked about the V-12 thing coming along, and because it was going to be one of the units that would be at Dartmouth, he made some emphasis on that in the newspaper columns that he wrote. And so my dad was alerted to the fact that there was this V-12 Navy program and there was no guarantee you would go to Dartmouth, but signing up for it, he was kind of hoping it would be Dartmouth if I was selected.

And I was seventeen years old—February of 1943—about to be eighteen and get drafted, and so my dad and I talked about this. I was thinking if I had to get into the military, I wanted to get in the Navy. So, we went, he and I—because I was still seventeen, he had to go along because you had to have parental consent to join the military at seventeen. The army wouldn't do that. It was just the Marine Corps and the Navy that took seventeen-year-olds. Army was eighteen.

So, anyway, we went down into the Boston Garden where the recruiting office was, and we went on a Saturday morning in February. The recruiter said, "Oh we're all filled up for our quota for February, but go down the hall and see if there might be some openings to go into the Marines." I didn't know anything about the marines. I was completely ignorant about military things. So, we went down the hall. They had an opening, so I joined the Marines and went to Dartmouth—was selected for the V-12 program and was assigned to Dartmouth.

So, my connections to Dartmouth were my uncles, who were there years before I was even born, and I didn't really think

about that much, but I did have that connection. My uncle Gus graduated in ’08 and died in the epidemic of 1918, the pandemic. My uncle Al was in the class of ’18—he was a football player—and I think the First World War interrupted that because he never graduated. Anyway, that’s the connection to Dartmouth.

DONIN: That’s the connection. So, had you been there? Had you seen it before you—

GUSTAFSON: No. Nope. Never been up there. Of course, during the depression, we didn’t have an automobile. We lived in Boston, took the streetcars everywhere, and we never traveled anywhere. Very, very short trips.

DONIN: So, you arrived when?

GUSTAFSON: July first, I think it was, or very close, 1943.

DONIN: Now, where were you in your schooling at this point?

GUSTAFSON: Well, I actually would have been a senior in high school. I was a senior in high school in 1942–43. Boston city schools had a policy where if you could get admitted to a college in your senior year as a student in high school, they would let you go in the mid-year and start your college career, so that’s what I did. Now, the idea was: We’ll get these kids into college, get them started with a college education, and then they get into the army and they’ll come back. So, I enrolled at Boston University, and it was just that one semester, and then got assigned to Dartmouth for the V-12 program, and the rest is history, as they say.

DONIN: Exactly. So, they assigned—Were the Marines all in the same dorm?

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. I think they separated the Marines from the Navy. They had different dorms. I don’t remember how many marines were there; I don’t recall. Topliff Hall was full of them. There may have been some in another dorm. There must have been a couple hundred Marines, anyway.

DONIN: You were definitely way outnumbered by the Navy, though.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, the Navy was the main—because it was a Navy program, but the Marine Corps is part of the navy, so that's how it was. And it was interesting, because there was a Navy captain assigned to be the C.O. for the unit at Dartmouth, and he sort of co-ran the college along with Ernest Martin Hopkins. We didn't see much of President Hopkins, but we saw a lot of—Well, then this Naval officer was not particularly happy or popular with the college administration, and I'm not sure about this, but I think they requested that he be—

DONIN: Transferred.

GUSTAFSON: Transferred, and somebody else be assigned. So, he did get transferred and the second-in-command at Dartmouth was a Marine Corps major, who had been already in combat and was back. He had gotten the Purple Heart for something or other: a very swaggering guy with a swagger stick, you know. Always dressed to the—and he became the C.O. and we were very happy, because he was much more liberal about, you know, having liberty on weekends and stuff. It was a tough time for me, because I had never been away from home for any length of time.

DONIN: That's right, because you did your first term at BU.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, I was home, commuting. And I was horribly homesick for the first five or six weeks, because they wouldn't give us liberty to go anywhere on the weekends until we had our uniforms and we were measured up for uniforms when we arrived at Hanover, and then they had to order them from Philadelphia or someplace. They finally came, we got our uniforms, and we could then go on leave, or liberty, a weekend.

So, I went home, and I think there are pictures of me taken when I was home with my uniform on. And went back and homesickness left, and I was happy as a clam at Dartmouth. I got involved with the Outing Club and my folks had to beg me to come home after that. [Laughter]

DONIN: That's great.

GUSTAFSON: But, it was interesting: during the war, it was customary, I guess, but I had a little mailer—kind of a small suitcase-like thing—and I

sent my dirty laundry home to get it washed by my mother, and she would mail it back.

DONIN: It's amazing the number of people that remember that. What a concept. Can't imagine it today.

GUSTAFSON: Oh boy. Oh, I know. It's a different world.

DONIN: Yes, it is. So, I did cheat and I read this essay you wrote for the reunion book, and you said that a lot of your sort of homesickness recovery was due to the fact that you had discovered the Outing Club.

GUSTAFSON: Right. That's an interesting story, too, because I had always been interested in the out-of-doors, and natural history, and that sort of thing. Even as a Bostonian, I did a lot of scouting around in marshes, and woods, and stuff. So, when I went to Hanover and the beautiful, natural environment, I spotted a poster that said something about a field trip with Doug Wade, the college naturalist. And Charlie Kaufman —who was another Marine, V-12er, whom I had bumped into somehow or other and we got to know each other a little bit—he saw this poster and he said, "Hey, let's go do this!"

So, we showed up and I can remember Doug Wade. The first time I ever saw him, he was walking across the campus and I didn't know who he was, but I said, "Maybe that's him." I was sitting in front of Robinson Hall, waiting. I think that maybe that was actually a DOC trip. I think it was a one-night campout at Mt. Cardigan. And when everybody showed up to go on this trip, and the Navy would allow us to use their stake truck, you know, on weekends and stuff. Students would drive it. Dave Kendall was sort of in charge of the Outing Club at that time. He had been at Dartmouth a year or two. I think he's class of '45.

DONIN: He is.

GUSTAFSON: And he checked out everybody who was going to go on this and he said, "You can't go on this trip unless you're a member of the Outing Club." That's what the Navy required; the Navy would let their, you know, those of us in the service go on these trips, but we had to belong to the Outing Club. So, Charlie Kaufman and I went into see the secretary and pay our fifty cents, I think it was,

for membership, and then we went on this trip, and that was the first time I ever camped out overnight. I remember sleeping on the ground up there by the lean-to on Mt. Cardigan, and I'd wake up every hour or so—you know, you're not really comfortable—and I could hear the train whistles running up through the valley, through Canaan and that area.

DONIN: So, in what respect did that help you overcome your homesickness?

GUSTAFSON: Well, it's just I was just thrilled with this whole thing. I got really active, and it was part of getting involved with other things. There were the classes and we had drills and that sort of thing. We used to drill on a field that the college owned, I guess, a little bit east of town. Dean—who was the dean? Sears?

DONIN: Strong?

GUSTAFSON: No, it was dean of freshmen.

DONIN: Oh, dean of freshmen.

GUSTAFSON: Anyway, it was down near where he lived and when I came back after the war was over I roomed in his house with Jim Schwedlan [sp?]. But, we used to have to do close order drill on this field, and we'd be at attention, all lined up, and I amused myself. I could move my eyeballs. You're not supposed to at attention, but I could watch the tree swallows swooping back and forth over these troops, catching the bugs that we were stirring up, you know? I remember seeing those beautiful—I was very new to a lot of this natural history. Everything was just a real thrill to me.

DONIN: So, how much time did you have sort of interacting with the civilian students as opposed to staying within your military group?

GUSTAFSON: Well, as I recall, there were only about 140 civilians at the college, and there were a couple thousand Marines and Navy. Most all of the civilians were pre-meds or 4-F, exempted from military service. You know, we marched to meals, we ate together—the military people—so I don't think I had too much contact with civilians, except for the Outing Club. I think there were some there, but I couldn't tell you any of them right now.

It was so funny, because there was some kind of a rally and the posters that were put up talked about Doc somebody.

DONIN: Doc Fielding.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, and then there was the DOC: Dartmouth Outing Club, and I was so confused about Doc. [Laughter] What does this mean? I had no idea. And then I finally figured out he was a pre-med student and the DOC was the Outing Club.

DONIN: That's funny. So, when you arrived there in July of—What did you say?

GUSTAFSON: Forty-three is when the V-12 program started up; it started right then.

DONIN: Right. You were in the first bunch, then, that arrived.

GUSTAFSON: Very first ones, yeah. We took over the college.

DONIN: And you were all housed in Topliff and New Hampshire?

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, I'm not sure where—

DONIN: And Richardson, I think.

GUSTAFSON: There were a whole bunch of dorms that were taken over and I'm not sure—Topliff was where I was and all of the Marines were there. How many would it hold? Would it hold a couple hundred people?

DONIN: Probably. And you mentioned that you were put in rooms sort of in alphabetical order?

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, I think they assigned rooms—They went down the alphabet and assigned rooms, so I was—yeah. Who were some of the other gs that were there and then the hs started the next room or something?

DONIN: Oh, that's weird. So, who was your first roommate? Do you remember?

GUSTAFSON: I can't recall.

DONIN: Yeah, that's all right.

GUSTAFSON: We didn't become real close friends, so… Each semester was a little different.

DONIN: Yeah. So, you were there how long?

GUSTAFSON: Four semesters. Sixteen months. We had a four-month semester and a week or two between semesters. We didn't have any summer vacation. Went right through. The Navy would not move you on to officer candidate program unless you had two years of college, even in the middle of the Second World War. That's always amazed me.

DONIN: Yeah.

GUSTAFSON: And so, I was there for the four semesters, and in November of '44, that time was up and we were shipped out to Parris Island. And here we had been in uniform for over a year, pretty much knew close order drill and that sort of stuff, and we got sent to boot camp, to Parris Island, South Carolina. And, you know, every Marine has to go through boot camp. That's the way you become a Marine. But it was a little interesting, because everybody in my platoon at boot camp was a V-12er. We weren't all from Dartmouth; we were from different colleges. And the drill instructor, who was a sergeant—You know, they're pretty tough on recruits, but they treated us a little differently, because within a year, we would be second lieutenants and we might have this sergeant in our platoon, you know? So, there was a little in the back of the head—They didn't lay it on too thick.

DONIN: Well, you had a higher level of training than a normal recruit.

GUSTAFSON: At that point, yeah. We had already been in uniform, so we started off with a big advantage over somebody coming straight out of civilian life.

DONIN: So, the four semesters that you spent at Dartmouth, it was a combination of sort of traditional liberal arts stuff and—

GUSTAFSON: Right. I think it was all straight curriculum—freshman curriculum—except that we had to take a naval history course with Cheerless Richardson, who was a chemistry professor. He, evidently, was interested in the Navy enough to teach a course in naval history. I'm not sure we had anything else, except just, you know, close order drill. We had to know how to swim. And Doug Wade, by the way, although he was the college naturalist was a good swimmer and he was engaged to help coaching the swimming that we were doing. We had to be able to leap off of the side of a ship and take off our trousers and blow them up over our heads to make floating wings with them and float around for half an hour, or whatever the amount of time was.

DONIN: There are pictures here of you guys marching around on the—of course—yeah, Marine and Navy V-5 and V-12 on the Green.

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. I'm in there someplace. In fact, I think I've seen that picture and I think I was right along the outside there.

DONIN: Here's another drill I guess you had to do. This thing. Jumping off this—

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, that was—Oh, this was on land, but I don't think I did that. We had to jump off something this high, resembling a ship deck—if the ship was sinking or whatever—and we had to jump into the water. So, this was done in the pool they had built—at the swimming pool.

DONIN: In the gym. Oh, they had a tower or something.

GUSTAFSON: They had a tower, and you had to climb up. And I remember I was scared stiff at doing this. I had never been a good swimmer, but I figured if I watched anyone else do it I was going to be nervous, so I went off first. I said, "Okay, I'll go." So, I went up, jumped off, did it right, came up, and then I could relax and watch everybody else sweat about it. [Laughter]

DONIN: Good plan. I still think the Dartmouth kids today have to pass a swim test in order to graduate.

GUSTAFSON: Oh, they may. When I was at Cortland College, where I taught for twenty-five years, twenty-seven years, you couldn't graduate if you couldn't swim.

DONIN: Right. Maybe that's very common at a lot of places. So, what was there for you to do when you did get leave time? I mean, did you do the sort of typical college guy kind of stuff? Go down and visit the other schools?

GUSTAFSON: We didn't have much time. All we had were weekends, and I think we had classes Saturday morning, so it was like Saturday afternoon to Sunday. Most people, I think, stayed around. Some of them went down to visit the girls' colleges on the Connecticut River: Holyoke and Smith. I went to Boston very rarely. Between semesters we'd have a week or ten days, or maybe two weeks, and that's when I took George Hardisty with me down and we actually had a chance to go to Cape Cod one time and spend a few days there. So, he got to know my folks pretty well.

It was interesting because George was very influential in my actually being successful in the Marine Corps program, because I was not an aggressive or forceful person. I was very much a quiet type. He confided in my folks after we had been together a couple of semesters: "I don't think Gus is going to make it because he's not assertive enough. You have to have command presence to be a leader in the marines." And so my folks alerted me to this and I worked on that. And people who know me now say, "I can't believe you were ever this mousy, shy person," because I'm very assertive. I have to be careful I don't overdo it.

DONIN: Well then you learned well in the marines.

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. I had to be able to command and command presence. It was very significant for a junior officer.

DONIN: That's a lot to learn at the age of eighteen, nineteen. What were you, eighteen, nineteen?

GUSTAFSON: Eighteen. I was eighteen when I went to Dartmouth and I was still nineteen when I went to boot camp. I turned twenty in August of '45, and the war ended, and I got my commission, all about the same week. And I thought: "Oh, the war is over. I'm going home." Ha ha. There were a lot of marines out in the Pacific who had been in combat and they weren't coming home, and I was—I remember George Hardisty and I went out pretty much together

to China. I spent almost a year in China repatriating the Japanese out of the country.

So, I didn't get out of the marines until '46. And then I decided to remain in the reserve—for what reason I really don't know—thinking the war is over and there wouldn't be any more. And then, of course, the Korean War came along and it was just after Nancy and I got engaged. The war was on in June of '50, and so I told Nancy, "I'm a reservist. I might get recalled to active duty." So, we went into the same recruiting office I had gone into to join up in Boston to see what my prospects were. They said, "Oh, you'll probably get called up in a month or so." Well, we prayed about it and we said, "We'll take our chances."

She was a graduate student at University of Wisconsin at Madison, I was at Cornell. So, we both went back to college and got a full year in. I was called up two weeks before the wedding, in June of '51, and they gave me a month to get my civilian life in order. So, we had the wedding as planned, we cut short our honeymoon, and ended up going to Quantico, where they put me into a refresher junior officers' course. I was a first lieutenant at that time.

My desk mate at the Quantico four-month program was John Glenn. Again, they had us lined up alphabetically and he was a flyboy for the marines. We got to know Annie pretty well. We carpooled. It was kind of funny because one day it was his turn to carpool and we came out after classes were over and he had left the lights on on the car; the battery was dead. When he became an astronaut, I thought: I better not tell everybody about this.

DONIN: That's a great story. Amazing. So, I'm just trying to get the chronology here. When did you return to Dartmouth?

GUSTAFSON: Well, when I was released from active duty about the end of 1946, late in the year—it was too late to go back—it was in October of '46. It was too late to back for a semester that was already underway, so I took a couple of months off and went back in the spring of '47, and then I had to do three more semesters before I could finish. So, I did the spring of '47, all of '48, graduated in '48.

DONIN: Did they give you a choice of choosing your class when you came back from the war? Or did they assign you?

GUSTAFSON: Not me. I think I was going to be graduating in ’48, so I was in the class of ’48.

DONIN: Was that your class when you started, when you came to Dartmouth?

GUSTAFSON: See, I wasn’t assigned to a class at Dartmouth. I was probably the class of ’47 at Boston University, but when I went to Dartmouth I was just in the V-12 program. There was no guarantee that—I was going to go back to BU.

DONIN: What changed your mind?

GUSTAFSON: Dartmouth. When I got up there, I said, this is where I want to be and I had already four semesters there, so… And they took us back.

DONIN: Had you arranged this before you left?

GUSTAFSON: No, I don’t think so. I must have done some correspondence when I was about to get released from the marines. They wrote back and they said, “Yeah, you’re okay. Come on back.” Because I had all of these buddies that were there and post-war activities in the Outing Club. There were lots and lots of things going on. I ended up being chairman of Cabin and Trail for a semester, mainly because the real big men on campus had graduated.

DONIN: You were also secretary of the Natural History Club.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, Doug Wade’s program, the Natural History Club. We formed—after the war, we formed the Dartmouth Ecological Society and that was when ecology was a brand new word; hardly anybody knew what it meant. But Doug was very keen about environmental stuff, and this didn’t happen when we were there during the war, so it may be beyond your interest, but the naturalist group—Brummy was in it, Schwedland, Moose Jaw Vierick. You probably know Phil Vierick lives in Bennington? He’s a class of ’48.

DONIN: Oh, I should talk to him.

GUSTAFSON: I don't know if he was in the V-12 Program.

DONIN: What's his last name?

GUSTAFSON: Vierick. Anyway, where was I going with this?

DONIN: The Ecology Club.

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yeah. The Ecology Club. So, we were concerned about the future of Mt. Moosilauke. Ross McKenney had built the Ravine Camp, as it was called back then, because there was a logging camp there. It was called Ravine Camp, but now it's called the Lodge because it really isn't a camp so much. But anyway, we were concerned that there were plans, very early ideas about turning Moosilauke into a big ski center, ski resort. Sherman Adams was interested in doing this sort of thing. And Tommy Dent was the phys ed professor who was overseeing the Dartmouth Outing Club.

So anyway, we got our group together and came up with a plan for Mt. Moosilauke, which was to keep it pretty well pristine. By that time, the summit house had burned, so here was a chance to recover the natural environment, even at the summit, and to use the Ravine Lodge as a base for ecological study on a very accessible mountain with alpine flora and fauna at the top. So, we made a fair effort to do this and I think Bob Monahan who was then running the Outing Club—he was a faculty person—wasn't particularly happy. Doug Wade was a visionary and a bit of a troublemaker in a sense. I mean, he was always asking questions.

So, I know the trustees of the Outing Club had us come over and make a presentation, asked us some questions. I don't know if that had any effect in the long run. The thing never happened—I mean, the whole idea of a ski center. They had already put down Hell's Highway. That had already been cleared before the war, so there was skiing going on and they had some early meets and things, but you had to walk up the mountain and to put in a lift and everything was something that we didn't think should happen and it didn't.

DONIN: It's a good thing.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. And after I graduated, I spent two or three summers—two, I guess—at the Ravine Camp as a naturalist. I was a graduate student at Cornell, but I took the summers for that and would take all the camp—big groups of campers would come in from the camps around New Hampshire and Vermont. I would hike them up the mountain. I was in great shape. I'll tell you, I could do that twice in the same day.

DONIN: Amazing. So, when had you decided to major in biology?

GUSTAFSON: Well, it was all that interest in the natural world and getting involved with Doug Wade that just made the biology a natural. Actually, when I went to BU I kind of registered—of course as a freshman it doesn't mean much, but I registered as a pre-theological student, because I had some inclinations in that direction, but Dartmouth turned me around back into biology and natural history, and that's where I really belonged.

DONIN: That's great. So, when you arrived—I mean, your class spanned two great presidents of the twentieth century.

GUSTAFSON: Yes, John Dickey.

DONIN: So when you got there, the V-12s, I assume, did not get to meet President Hopkins the way the regular civilian students did, or maybe you did.

GUSTAFSON: Occasionally he would make some presence, but no, he didn't really see us as a—I don't recall that he was, you know, greeting us as freshmen or anything like that, whereas Dickey and all of the subsequent presidents made a big deal out of the pre-semester freshman trips and all that.

DONIN: Right. So when you came back it was President Dickey as a very young president.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, I think so.

DONIN: First year into it or something.

GUSTAFSON: Great Issues and all that stuff.

DONIN: Did you have to—Had he gotten that off the ground by the time you were graduating?

GUSTAFSON: Oh, yes. I was in the Great Issues for at least a year. Well, it was a senior course.

DONIN: Senior course, right.

GUSTAFSON: And Robert Frost was there, and I got to know Robert Frost.

DONIN: Did you?

GUSTAFSON: Well, I used to sit in on his seminars. You know, he would have these evening things. By the way, in thinking of your coming I looked in my files and when my folks passed on I got some files with my name on them, and they are letters—all the letters I ever wrote from Dartmouth during the war are in this folder. My father was a filer. He kept everything. A lot of it is just, you know: what I'm doing today and please send my laundry back, or whatever. I am the oldest of three kids so I was concerned about my siblings. There's one in there where I mention that I was going to have—I had made an appointment with Robert Frost at his office, because I wanted him to autograph a book that I had bought. And I kept that appointment, talked with him one-on-one. He took the book, which was called *Come In*; it was a new issue of some of his poetry, and he autographed it. I have it in the other room. I ought to show it to you before you go. He wrote a two-line poem in there in his own handwriting, and it's this one: "We dance 'round in a ring and suppose, but the secret sits in the middle and knows."

DONIN: Oh, great.

GUSTAFSON: That subsequent—that was before that had been published. It's in his collected works. Anyway, I'm a great fan of Robert Frost, and as a matter of fact, I do—here at Cortland I've done for a number of years a Frost walk in the fall where I read his poetry and we walk through the woods. At appropriate places the poems just fit really well.

DONIN: That's wonderful. Have you seen the statue that we have of him now up in the college park?

GUSTAFSON: No, I haven't seen it.

DONIN: Oh, it's charming. When you come, you must see it.

GUSTAFSON: We're going to be going through Hanover next week.

DONIN: Great.

GUSTAFSON: Well, my son, Walt—my oldest son is a Dartmouth grad, too: class of '74—and he and his wife are coming in from Seattle tomorrow and will be with us a couple of weeks, and because we have relatives in New Hampshire—my sister and my brother has a camp up in Vermont—we're going to traipse up there and I know that Walt will want to show his wife Dartmouth, you know, where he went to college. So we'll go through Hanover.

DONIN: Well, make sure you go up into—Let's turn this tape over. Make sure you take a walk up to college park above the bema there and see the statue of Frost in the woods there.

GUSTAFSON: I've stopped at his home. They've restored his home in Bennington or Shrewsbury, or wherever. Not Shrewsbury. And then he's buried in Bennington, too, I think, and I thought I would like to stop and see that. It's in a cemetery in North Bennington or someplace.

DONIN: Nice.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah.

DONIN: There's been a lot of Frost scholars in the archives lately because of the publication of this new sort of annotated book of Robert Frost's poetry that was—The fellow who produced it is a scholar at Claremont-McKenna Colleges out in California, but used our collection for a long time, for many summers.

GUSTAFSON: I was editor of *Nature Study* magazine for a long time—a small organization: American Nature Studies Society. A national group, but not very big—and on the centennial of his birth in 1974, I used a whole issue on Robert Frost and I sent a copy of it to the library in Hanover. I never got any acknowledgement for that, so I don't know if they have it or not, but I think it's worth—

DONIN: What's the name of the magazine? *Nature Study*?

GUSTAFSON: *Nature Study*, and this would be 1971—I have some other copies of it. If they lost that one or whatever, I could provide it.

DONIN: Great.

GUSTAFSON: It had an original sketch of him on the front and several essays by different people, including Doug Wade, who called Robert Frost—and he knew him. He used to meet with him and walk with him and stuff—he said, "You're a poet-ecologist," and Frost had never thought of himself as an ecologist, but he has a lot of ecological insights in his poems.

DONIN: Right. If you have an extra copy, I'd love to take one to put in the archives.

GUSTAFSON: Okay.

DONIN: I don't know if we have it or not; I can go back and look, but just to be sure, if you've got an extra, that would be great.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. Don't go without one.

DONIN: Okay. When you came back, what was life like? It must have been very different when you came back from the war and returned to Dartmouth.

GUSTAFSON: Oh yeah, it was pretty much normal college routine.

DONIN: Did you live in a dorm?

GUSTAFSON: Yes. I lived in dorms all the—No, not all the time. For the first couple of semesters, and then the last semester Jim Schwedland and I lived in Dean Stearns Morse that's his name.

DONIN: Oh, Stearns Morse.

GUSTAFSON: In his house. Schwed you know, he and I were a very odd couple because he was so out of… in some other world. He was always playing his guitar and singing. Kind of a rough and tumble kind of guy and I'm sort of prissy, you know. [Laughter] So, we were an

odd couple. So, I lived in Sibley maybe? No. Sibley was the zoology building.

DONIN: Silsby?

GUSTAFSON: Silsby. Yeah. I lived across from that. There's a row of dorms. Anyway, I've forgotten the name of the place.

DONIN: And life resumed as normal. The college traditions came back? Winter Carnival—

GUSTAFSON: —was already well into that, and Ross McKeeny and all that stuff, yeah.

DONIN: Did you ever have any interaction with President Dickey?

GUSTAFSON: No. I may have said hello to him once or twice or, you know, been to something and shook his hand. I don't recall anything special.

DONIN: The campus must have been a real sort of jumble of you mature men who had been in the war along with these, you know, right out of high school civilian kids.

GUSTAFSON: That's true. My main emphasis with the Outing Club being so strong and the Natural History Club taking up so much of my life, I didn't really excel academically because I was so involved with these other things. I mean, I managed to get through, but I wasn't a stellar student.

But there were some younger guys that came in and one of them was George Woodwell. He's class of '50, and George was very active in the Outing Club, and he entered Dartmouth in '46, I expect, when the war was already over. It turned out that I knew him, or knew his family a little bit, from Boston. He grew up near me and went to Boston Latin or Roxbury Latin or someplace. And, of course George went on to get his PhD in ecology and made a big name for himself at—Well, he's got his own institute in Wood's Hole now, but before that he worked at Stony Brook on Long Island. And he's the one that did the effect of radiation on the ecosystem.

He did a long-term research project where he—and this was at the height of the nuclear age. You know, we were moving forward with that, and he devised a system where uranium or some radioactive material would be in this cylinder and it would be raised up out of its container in the ground for so many hours a day or whatever, and it would irradiate the ecosystem. This was in a natural woodland ecosystem on Long Island. And then he kept track of that, and it's interesting: the radiation killed the more advanced plants and trees first, and the ones that survived were the more primitive things. You know, the lichens and the mosses and things.

DONIN: Interesting.

GUSTAFSON: Interesting, yeah. He was an early proponent of cutting back on greenhouse gases. He gave several papers here at Cornell. He's been over to speak at the AAAS meetings, science meetings, national meetings. Picking up on the Hawaiian research over a long time, showing a steady increase in CO2 in the atmosphere; every year it went up a little bit. It would go down in the spring and summer when the trees were coming on and then it would shoot up and it always went up a little higher than the year before. He said, "This is not good."

DONIN: And all of this started at Dartmouth.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. He was one of the non-V-12 guys, but I think the majority of us had been there: Kendall and Brummy were in the navy, Quilly Brazel, Charlie Kauffman, George Hardisty and I were marines. There were a couple of civilians. Al Hall may have been a civilian; I'm not sure. No, he was in the marines. No, not Al Hall. Brown. What's his first name?

DONIN: He was a civilian?

GUSTAFSON: No, he was a marine pilot. Can't think of his first name. I should because he was killed in a glider accident after he graduated.

DONIN: How ironic.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. You know, they're supposed to put down the clip on the thing that goes over your—you know, the cockpit control, and he didn't clip it right or something and he got up in the air and it

flopped back. Knocked him out of the air. But, Al Hall was a civilian, I think, and he was very active in the Outing Club group and we kept in contact.

DONIN: He's class of '48?

GUSTAFSON: Yeah.

DONIN: Was that your sort of prime social group, the Outing Club group? Not other marines?

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. We did this IOCA thing down at Smith or Mt. Holyoke and that was the only time I had any contact with females. I mean, I had no girlfriends at Dartmouth at all.

DONIN: You were totally focused on the outdoor stuff.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. Some of the guys came with girlfriends from back home and that sort of thing, but a lot of us, I think, were pretty footloose right through college.

DONIN: Well, you were still young.

GUSTAFSON: Oh yeah, sure. I was into three years of graduate school before I met my wife and had very little—It was interesting because I got admitted into Cornell, and Brumstead was coming out. He was already admitted. And Suki had been a Cornell student, so she said, "Oh, Gus, I know a lot of nice girls at Cornell so we'll fix you up." And I did date some there, but none of those ever worked out. But, anyway, she was trying to be helpful. [Laughter]

DONIN: Always necessary. Now, when you came back then you were on the GI Bill to finish college.

GUSTAFSON: Oh yes. The GI Bill took me right through graduate school.

DONIN: Did it really? Wow.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. When I was at Cornell I had a teaching assistantship as well and my dad had a major change in his employment and was out of work for a while and I actually sent money home when I was at Cornell.

DONIN: Wow. That's terrific. Did you get any sort of part-time paying jobs while you were at Dartmouth after the war?

GUSTAFSON: No. When I worked summers at the Ravine Camp, I think they may have paid me a little bit of money. Of course, it was room and board—I got that free—and I think… But that was after I graduated.

DONIN: Yeah. And, of course, by the time you came back, they weren't running—I think '46 was the last summer term that they ran.

GUSTAFSON: Before they went to the quarter system or something like that.

DONIN: Right. So, you had your summers off.

GUSTAFSON: Yes, and that's why I was at the—

DONIN: At the Ravine Camp. Okay, I see.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. Also, there was the New Hampshire Conservation Camp down near Manchester, and Doug Wade was involved with that. In fact, he was one of the people that started it. It was sort of a camp for high school kids, but it was conservation-oriented, and he engaged Brumstead and Schwedland and me to be counselors or to help with that program.

DONIN: So, the Outing Club was really the backbone of your experience at Dartmouth.

GUSTAFSON: Right. And this is the year for the hundredth anniversary of the Outing Club: 1908–2008.

DONIN: Yes, I think they were working on a—I assume they're working on some sort of event, or has it already happened?

GUSTAFSON: I haven't heard about it, so I don't know if it's happened or not. I hope it hasn't happened. It might be something I'd be interested in—

DONIN: Attending.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah. When we go up there next week, I'll try to make a call at Robinson and see what's going on.

DONIN: Right.

GUSTAFSON: Anyway, I came back. Brummy and I were up there, we flew up with one of Brummy's brothers-in-law; he was a flying farmer. This was when they dedicated a plaque to Doug Wade. Doug was the unsung hero, you know. The college never treated him too well. He only had a masters degree, and he was in this academic—it was actually an extracurricular program, the college naturalists. Dartmouth was great in that regard. They had a resident artist: Paul Sample; a naturalist; a poet-in-residence. They weren't to teach. They were to just be there, have seminars, open house, whatever. So, all this extracurricular stuff. Ross McKenney was another one. Fantastic…

DONIN: Resources.

GUSTAFSON: Resources, yeah.

DONIN: So you were never attracted to the fraternity life.

GUSTAFSON: No. It was very low key when I first went there during the war. I don't think—

DONIN: They were shut down.

GUSTAFSON: They were all shut down except for maybe one, and when I came back, it was the Outing Club. I don't think very many of the guys in the Outing Club were fraternity people. There may have been a couple. I don't recall. They never made a big deal out of it, and it was certainly long before *Animal House*. [Laughter]

DONIN: Thank goodness.

GUSTAFSON: Things were pretty straight-laced in those days. By the way, sitting in this room, you can probably see the Winter Carnival poster from 1948.

DONIN: That exact poster is in my boss's office, too.

GUSTAFSON: Okay, well, when I was still a student there, there were some of these—when I came back, I guess, to work the summers, the Outing Club—The basement of Robinson Hall had a bunch of old

copies of these and I picked up three or four of them. They were rolled up in the attic and my youngest daughter, years ago, found them when she was here one time, and she smuggled it off and had it framed.

DONIN: Isn't that great.

GUSTAFSON: And she has another one, too, that I think she kept. Yeah, it's at her place.

DONIN: It's a great way to preserve them, because otherwise they just sort of evaporate. So, do you think your sense of sort of class loyalty or allegiance—

GUSTAFSON: Identity, yeah.

DONIN: Identity. Was that impacted either in a positive way or a negative way by the fact that, you know, you were on campus, then you were off campus, and then you were assigned this class sort of as an afterthought. You were assigned to '48.

GUSTAFSON: I never really thought about that much, but I think that class loyalty was very low. It was, you know, the fact that I was in the class of '48 didn't really mean much to me. One of the reasons why reunions have been marginal in my experience is because I don't really know too many of my classmates. There's maybe—Phil Vierick is one that was very active in the Outing Club, and we called him Moose Jaw, because he went to Alaska one summer and came back and talked about his trip and he mentioned Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and we thought that was such a funny name. And he always talked like he had marbles in his mouth so we called him Moose Jaw. And his younger brother Les Vierick went to Alaska, too. Yeah, it was class loyalty. I contributed to the class every year. You know, that sort of thing.

DONIN: It sounds to me like the Outing Club was really your—that was your core group.

GUSTAFSON: That was the thing that really kept me connected to Dartmouth. There's no question about it.

DONIN: Yeah.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah.

DONIN: Well what could be better than to be connected through the Outing Club given that that's such a big part of what life in Hanover is about.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah.

DONIN: Did President Dickey at that point, had he become that sort of big man on campus, always out in his workman's shirt, shoveling snow with his dog by his side.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, I think so.

DONIN: And showed up, I guess, at Moosilauke in the Lodge.

GUSTAFSON: Yeah, I have a picture of him talking to the group at the Lodge. Yeah.

DONIN: Right. So that identity became fixed pretty early on.

GUSTAFSON: And I'm glad because I think subsequent presidents have felt obligated to be involved even though they might not have been that interested in what the Outing Club does. But it's a way of bonding freshmen to the college in a very powerful way. And I followed up on that. When I became a professor here at Cortland, the Biology Club was fairly active and I was the one who organized twelve spring vacation trips to Florida or to the Outer Banks of North Carolina because Doug Wade had done that with us. There's a picture of us walking on the beach at Ocracoke; now this was the Outer Banks when it was pristine. You know, all skinny dipping, you didn't wear any clothes. And we picked up this palm leaf. Have you seen that picture?

DONIN: No.

GUSTAFSON: I think I've got it right here. It turned out to be published in the alumni magazine. You look me up in the alumni magazine.

DONIN: What year was it?

GUSTAFSON: Because I wrote an article in ’48 or ’49 or whatever about that trip and maybe it was even later than that. Oh there I am. Look at that.

DONIN: Oh, what a handsome guy! [Laughter]

[End of Interview]