

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with DeWitt Baker '46
By Mary Donin
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DONIN: Are you a legacy? How did you choose to go there?

BAKER: That's a good question. I knew men who had graduated from Dartmouth who, when it came time to, you know, look for a college, were trying to persuade me that that was the place to go. Plus I had gone to camp for years in Vermont, so outdoors. And, some, you know, combination. I was going to a fantastic—still fantastic—public school, Bronxville High School.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

BAKER: Which at that time was on this special program where colleges didn't require the traditional course structures. They were trying to teach, cross-reference chemistry and physics and all of that. You know it was very interesting. Anyway. And something happened called World War II. So about the time I was applying, of course, we had December 7th. Anyway, I decided I really wanted to go to Dartmouth. And frankly it was the only place I applied, strangely enough. And I was fortunate enough to be accepted. So....

DONIN: So you matriculated in the fall of—

BAKER: June.

DONIN: Sorry in June.

BAKER: I took the intersession. I had signed.... When we had the catastrophe in Pearl Harbor, I signed up for the Navy. They offered a program called V-1, which said whenever they wanted me, they could take me for the Navy. And it precluded my being in the draft pool. I was committed to the Navy.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

BAKER: And my father had been in the Navy in World War I. So that was the attraction to the Navy for me. And I loved sailing and stuff. So with all of those things happening, I graduated in June of '42, and Dartmouth offered us an intersession right away. I mean I was

practically...three or four days I went to Hanover and spent the whole summer taking three courses, six days a week. You know it was a real crash kind of thing. And it was the beginning, I think, for summer programs at Dartmouth, which have never gone away. And so I went those three months and the full year and then three months again. They offered another intersession.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: So I had, you know, really 12 months solid.

DONIN: No break.

BAKER: No break. You went home for Christmas for a week, Thanksgiving we stayed in Hanover. You know we just didn't go. First off, there was no gas, no cars. It was the old Dartmouth. You went there, and you were—my words—stuck. [Laughter] No girls. Very hard to come by.

DONIN: Yes, yes. So when you arrived there in the summer of '42, where were you put—what dorm were you in?

BAKER: I was in South Mass.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

BAKER: And I was, let's put it this way, I didn't come from a wealthy family. And even at the incredibly low rates that we know we paid, I needed some help. So I worked...I worked in Thayer.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

BAKER: So during the intersession we still...they still offered— The intersession was about 200 of us as civilians of our class. Ultimately it was a little over 500 matriculated.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: But I waited on table in Thayer for my fellow classmates, which was quite an experience.

DONIN: That must be tough.

BAKER: And then the rest of the time I worked in the cafeteria bringing up stuff. And, you know, I had jobs.

DONIN: Did you get free food in exchange?

BAKER: Oh, yes, I got the free food, and that was a big boost.

DONIN: Huge, right.

BAKER: Even then, you know.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

BAKER: It was necessary.

DONIN: But I think, it seems to me at least from the number of people I've talked to from that decade, a lot of people had to work.

BAKER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. It was not.... Nobody looked down on you for having to work. You just had to work, that's all.

DONIN: Right, right.

BAKER: And you did it.

DONIN: So at the time you were there then, was the Navy there already?

BAKER: The 90-day wonders had been there.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

BAKER: And were there during that period of our civilian career.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

BAKER: You know and it was.... They were just there marching in parade on the Green before their commanding officer every Saturday or whatever day it was. But we just went about our lives. Because of the situation and the plight of the fraternities at that point in time, with so many guys going off to serve, they pledged us the second major term after the first. So I joined a fraternity for the last six or nine months.

DONIN: Because at some point the fraternities I think shut down.

- BAKER: They had to shut down, of course.
- DONIN: Yes.
- BAKER: So....
- DONIN: Now, did you have.... Of the naval guys that were there training, were they in your classes as well?
- BAKER: No. It was simply a straight course that they had, you know, perfected. It was the type of course I eventually took at Columbia midshipmen's school after I spent a year doing exactly the same thing, going 12 months straight in uniform.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. But that was a combination of sort of traditional liberal arts plus military stuff.
- BAKER: Not much military. No, they really let you proceed with your general education. No, it was really very...it was the luckiest thing in the world. I mean you look back on it. I will say it's not the way to get an education because of the no time to think about it, frankly?
- DONIN: Right.
- BAKER: And you think, when I look back at it, it was not what you would.... There's a reason for not going 12 months a year [laughs] six days a week. You know.
- DONIN: Yes, yes. Well, everything.... I mean the impression I'm getting is that everything was sort of truncated. They were just sort of trying to get you guys through as fast as possible.
- BAKER: Yes. Well, they were waiting, you know, when—they decided when you had to go to midshipmen's school. The Navy did an incredible job. They started building all these ships. And they knew how many officers they needed at certain times. And so they worked this out. And when the time came, they had the kinds of.... We got the specialized training. Well, first we went to Columbia midshipmen's school. Then we went to small boats school, anti-submarine war school, and then went to a destroyer escort. So they had it all worked out. But Dartmouth was strictly.... Well, I wanted Tuck School. So in the end I was going to Tuck School in two years, you know. I'm into Tuck School as a major. I started out as an English

major. And then decided I want to go to Tuck. So that was provided. I had two semesters...yes, I did. When I came back, again because of the speed-up and all this craziness, I was able to.... I got out in May of—well maybe it was April—of '46. A couple of my college friends, we took a trip west. His father was wealthy. He was given a little Chevrolet. So we took this trip. And I went back in June and finished up the credits I needed to graduate. Because Dartmouth gave us credits for, you know, certain of the courses we took, these specialized kinds of things.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: Which was a nice idea. But it really...it wasn't what you would get, what I would have had, had I been an undergraduate in the normal way. It was not a, certainly anything but liberal arts. [Laughs]

DONIN: It wasn't the traditional sort of....

BAKER: No. It was excellent professors, teachers.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: Some of them. Not trained to be that, but they did obviously get picked because they spotted them in training as potential trainers. So the Dartmouth experience was incredible. The 200 that started that summer had essentially been the core of our class which was huge in the end because so many of the V-12ers chose to come back to Dartmouth to finish up their degree. I had about three of my best friends, one came from the University of Wisconsin, two from the University of Chicago, and I roomed with them, you know. And that was a great experience. Plus, as I look at the makeup of this school, it was still very, very white and very, very Protestant or Catholic. And so V-12 changed that college. It was the best thing that ever happened to it, in my view.

DONIN: So it watered down that, that sort of....

BAKER: Yes, we had Boston College. We had a number of the... the sources of our V-12ers were from all over. And certainly a lot more Jewish. Not too much black because none of the universities and colleges at that time were really persuading blacks to come. We had one in our class, Todd Duncan, whose father was a famous singer. Porgy and Bess was his big hit. He was our class president. You know he stood out. And was a great guy.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: And, you know, the color was easily ignored because he was the only one. One of my roommates, who's still alive and still a best friend, was Jewish from Richmond, Mort Thalhimer. And so.... But it was a different place.

DONIN: Was it a good experience for him being Jewish?

BAKER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He was on the swimming team. Never thought about it. We didn't think about it. When I joined—I joined what was then Phi Delt, which was national and had the rules, you know, discriminatory. And we just ignored it. We had a couple, in my pledge class, a couple of people that they wouldn't normally have accepted. We said nothing about it. So it wasn't a big problem. I mean the truth is you never thought about it.

DONIN: Interesting.

BAKER: We were all doing the same. We were all marching to a drummer, you know. It's another world.

DONIN: The same, yes, yes.

BAKER: The only people that were different were the—before the Navy—the freshmen that matriculated mostly in the fall because they'd gone to very prestigious prep schools. Although where I went should have qualified me. But they came in prepped really for the first year. The average English course or even the math, they'd already been processed through it. So they were a little—that way—they were a little.... They were the ones that were able to raise hell.

DONIN: Get away with it.

BAKER: Get away with it, yes.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Was it your sense that a lot of the faculty went off to war as well?

BAKER: No. We didn't get that feeling. You know the average age of the professors was advanced middle age I'd say. And there were some quite senior. I mean the Tuck School, you know, when you look at them then, they look much older than they really are. You know it's

the same old story. Thank God! But they were.... Herluf Olsen was running the place. He'd been there already a long time.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: And there were several others that were really quite senior that didn't last too terribly long after World War II. And the undergraduate, again I'd say it was...it was rare for—there just weren't any young. Now that could have been they were drafted, heaven knows, you know.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: But you never even thought about it; they were your professors.

DONIN: What was the quality of the teaching like?

BAKER: I would say for its time it was excellent. But there was no time...the idea of associating with your professors and all, it just was very difficult to make happen. When you're taking the same course, you know, every day of the week those intersessions, you know, they gave you homework. I mean you had to lead your own independent study. And we had no money, so we'd go to the Nugget. That was a big deal, you know.

DONIN: You must have not had a lot of time between your job and your studies.

BAKER: No, you didn't. I didn't. And then with the Navy you were programmed, you know, in a different way. One of my first roommates had been an active sailor and got in. And he was really into Dartmouth because it was a chance of a lifetime for him. He never dreamed he could...and this is while the war is going on. So he was, you know, enough older to bring a different view of life to us. He was much more mature. We, through him, we became very friendly with the guy that owned The Snack, which was down on Main Street towards the hill on the west side. Which was a less glorified Indian Bowl kind of thing that was also on the same side but in town. He was just a little bit down.

DONIN: Down the hill from that?

BAKER: Yes.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: So in the Navy days, we would often.... His wife ran a bed-and-breakfast in Windsor; they lived in Windsor. So we'd go down there for the weekend, four or five of us and be treated well by his wife. Served the New England breakfast: apple pie, you know, and all that jazz. Anyway, it was nice memories.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

BAKER: But it was.... He smoked, this guy. None of the others of us ever smoked. Very interesting. None of my—never was a problem. I never roomed with a roommate that smoked.

DONIN: Just lucky.

BAKER: No, and it was not heavy. Our class, even our fraternity, smoking wasn't—beer was in, but smoking wasn't.

DONIN: Right. Well, speaking of beer, so what was your social life when you had time?

BAKER: Well, in the last year—I mean the first year—when you got into the fraternity, there was the typical, you know, Saturday night everybody'd pitch in, and they'd buy a keg of beer. And you'd just go to the basement and sing and, you know, just have the normal adolescent approach to life.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. But it was all guys.

BAKER: It was all guys. Well, Green Key, you can hopefully get somebody to come up from Smith or...that was easy. There was a rental agency off Main Street; you know that little street that goes off? Anyway, we rented cars.

DONIN: Allen Street. Was it Allen Street? Yes.

BAKER: We'd rent cars there every now and then.

DONIN: Oh, yes. And did you go road trips down there?

BAKER: No. Well, we would, no. Well, from this guy we'd get the car. And it was a big deal, you know, pile too many in the car.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

BAKER: But we had to pay for it. [Laughs] you know.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

BAKER: So we'd go off and go to Skidmore. That was our favorite spot. Smith was too stuffy. [Laughter] Anyway, and Saratoga was a much, you know, it was much....

DONIN: It's a fun town.

BAKER: It's a totally different town.

DONIN: Yes, it's a fun town.

BAKER: So we'd go there. And skiing was available. I broke my— Actually I had an accident out at Oak Hill that I just had fixed finally about 12 years ago. I had almost severed a tendon, broke the ankle, a spiral fracture, terrible sprain. I was in Dick's House for really a week or ten days before I could have a cast to get out, it was so swollen. But they couldn't see anything other than the spiral. Well, I'd almost turn a tendon. And I finally said I'm tired...so I had to have my foot rebuilt.

DONIN: Unbelievable!

BAKER: All those years.

DONIN: It took that long.

BAKER: It took that long for it to give out, you know.

DONIN: Wow!

BAKER: Anyway....

DONIN: Were you a skier and an outdoorsman before you got to Dartmouth?

BAKER: Oh, yes. I'd skied before. Not a lot because I lived in Bronxville. When I was a kid, my mother had divorced, so we lived with my grandparents in an apartment on a golf course. So in wintertime— my father was in the toy business. So I had, one thing I had, it was

in the Depression; there was no money. But I did have things like Northland Skis which you stuck your regular shoe with a rubber on under. And we got very sophisticated and cut a piece of an inner tube.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

BAKER: And made a rude, crude binding.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

BAKER: This was all cross-country or going down little nothing hills. But I did. And then my mother moved to Albany the last year I was in high school. So I roomed in Bronxville and went up occasionally. My father lived in New Rochelle. It was very interesting. I mean they broke up, and I visited my mother, but I saw him every weekend.

DONIN: Oh, nice.

BAKER: And so then late in life, she came to live with me. I had a disabled wife, my first wife had polio. And when the kids went off to college, I needed a family member in the house. So she came to live, having divorced her second husband. Anyway.... So they got together again just as friends. It was very interesting, how he could even accept her after he divorced her. And he was a man. You know in those days? I went to Reno with her to get the divorce. I was about four years old.

DONIN: Is that right?

BAKER: You had to go to Reno and spend a month to get a divorce. Fortunately my grandfather, her father, scraped up enough money for her to do it.

DONIN: So women just didn't do that in those days.

BAKER: Oh, no! And you'd never expect this woman.... I mean in her after life, I mean she divorced the second husband finally because, you know, he wanted to live in—he was in business now in Corpus Christi, and she hated it and she just said, you know, life's too short. I don't want to stay down here and rot in this humid, horrible.... Because air-conditioning wasn't that good.

DONIN: No, no. Not in those days.

BAKER: Anyway, that's not Dartmouth.

DONIN: She sounds like a modern woman.

BAKER: She was. She was. She worked, you know, modeled. She modeled for Norman Rockwell and people like that because he lived in New Rochelle where she was raised.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: But that's not Dartmouth.

DONIN: No, you're right. I'm sorry. But these diversions are fun. So....

BAKER: Fortunately for both Judith and I, when we were married, both of our parents, each of our parents, was alive.

DONIN: Oh.

BAKER: So we had...this is 25 years ago this fall.

DONIN: Oh, nice.

BAKER: So that was nice.

DONIN: For parents to see their children happily married is a gift.

BAKER: Oh, yes.

DONIN: It's a gift.

BAKER: It is.

DONIN: Okay. So let's see. Back to Dartmouth. Ernest Martin Hopkins. Any memories?

BAKER: Oh, sure. When I was there and matriculated that June or whatever it is, I had to go into his office and have an interview with him, which was very—you know you wear your tie and jacket. It was another world.

DONIN: Yes. [Laughs]

BAKER: And he was Ernest Martin Hopkins. He was not exactly the most gregarious guy. You know it was a very formal little meeting.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: And I fortunately then had John Sloan Dickey at the end.

DONIN: Oh, right. That's right. You straddled both presidents.

BAKER: And then I had...when one of my sons went, it was '78, so he had [John] Kemeny, so I got to know him a little bit. He was so impressive.

DONIN: An amazing guy.

BAKER: Yes.

DONIN: An amazing guy. So when you returned—let me just make sure I understand the chronology here.

BAKER: Yes.

DONIN: So you left Dartmouth after your first year to go to Columbia?

BAKER: No, I came as a civilian from June—roughly say July first to the following June 30th, two years, '42 and '43.

DONIN: Okay.

BAKER: 'Forty-three, V-12 arrived at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: In July. Then I got a uniform and went, you know, started the naval experience.

DONIN: Training.

BAKER: Yes.

DONIN: Right.

BAKER: And that when from, again, July 1 to September 30th. Then I went to Columbia midshipmen's school.

DONIN: Okay.

BAKER: And got out in October of '44. Well, I did this training and whatnot. So I went to the Pacific in '45. Joined a destroyer escort which was doing convoy kind of stuff. And also patrolling some of the bypassed Islands, in the Marshall Islands in particular. So I got all around Guam, Saipan, and all that area. But the exciting thing for me was our destroyer escort was picked to take the first surrender in the Japanese war. They had agreed that they were going to surrender, and it was going to be in Tokyo Bay. But apparently the naval authorities wanted to be as sure as they could be that they really meant it. So they had us take—sail into this lagoon on an island, well, atoll, where there were...this is a considerable garrison that had been just bypassed. They were living there. We would cover our war planes who would napalm them, you know. All that was ridiculous, you know. The guys would be out in the lagoon in outriggers that they'd made just like they had been a native. And in their loincloths just like....you know. So we got in there. It was very scary because we didn't know whether it was mined. Anyway, we got in. They came on board. And believe it or not they were all in full uniform with their swords and everything else. They had all of that.

DONIN: Oh, my God!

BAKER: And they surrendered to our ship. And then we took two more. One was Wowchi [sp] and then Wake Island we took. That one we were joined by a couple of our destroyer escorts and some Marine officers who were very anxious to, you know, go there and take it back. So it was very...I never really felt threatened. We were, but we weren't...you know. You don't think about it frankly. You just do whatever you have to do.

DONIN: I know. And you were a kid.

BAKER: Yes. Oh, yes.

DONIN: That's what....

BAKER: I turned 21 on this thing. I came on. I was anti-submarine warfare and communications officer. The crew I had in the anti-submarine warfare had to be ten years older than I was, you know. And this

fuzzy-faced kid coming aboard. It was quite an experience to get their respect.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: And, you know, show them my respect for them. Blah blah blah. This was a new thing. They'd done it all these, you know, years. They'd been on this ship. Several of them had been on for a couple of years out there.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: So, it was different. Again, from that whole experience in the Navy, you had a chance to really get to know the men you stood watch with, you know. And what are you going to talk about? I mean most of them were married, had families, had been in business. We were the first. There were another two guys that came about the same time I did.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: That were really young, you know.

DONIN: Young recruits, yes.

BAKER: Really green in every way.

DONIN: A lot of growing up went on.

BAKER: Oh, yes. Well, you really appreciated your education and the need for it, all those things.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. So you came home...you came back to Dartmouth then—

BAKER: In June of '46, when I should have been graduating.

DONIN: Right.

BAKER: Right. So I took three courses that summer. And I had enough to go back...well, to graduate and finish up my Tuck School at Tuck, so I was a Tuck '47. So I went to Tuck School for the next year.

- DONIN: And you come out not with an MBA but they called it something else, right?
- BAKER: Oh, yes. Yes. It was a master of commercial—MCS, commercial science.
- DONIN: That's right. Yes.
- BAKER: But they had already started the Tuck-Thayer thing. And I had a roommate also who happened to have come from Bronxville, who took that. But because of...he was Army, and the way it worked out, he didn't get out until '48.
- DONIN: Okay. So he was behind you.
- BAKER: Yes, because when the V-12 came, many of these people were sent to the Army. They were in whatever...they had a program similar.
- DONIN: Yes.
- BAKER: And the Marines and this Mort Thalhimer, he had signed up for the Naval Air Corps. So they wanted him to go to the Air Corps School and not stay in Dartmouth. So they left. And they all had to come back and spend at least a year to get an undergraduate degree, to finish it up.
- DONIN: So were you a different student when you came back? I mean, were you a better student or a different kind?
- BAKER: I was certainly motivated. But, you know.... Well, we had some money. The government was paying for me to be there.
- DONIN: This was the GI Bill now, right?
- BAKER: The GI Bill.
- DONIN: Sure.
- BAKER: My father would send me a little bit of money for fun, you know. He was doing well. He was in the toy business as a manufacturer's representative. And so he sent me something so that I could go skiing. And this dear friend, whom we may be seeing in a few

months, who had the car, we'd go skiing. We'd go skiing, and we had this little bit of money which made that possible.

DONIN: Sure.

BAKER: The lifts didn't cost \$90 a day.

DONIN: Right.

BAKER: [Laughs] And all that stuff. Oh, my. You didn't get your money.... The value wasn't there. You'd go to Stowe and you had to practically kill yourself to get your money out of the day ticket.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: You'd ski down, and get in a long line.

DONIN: You couldn't go right up again.

BAKER: Well, and there was only one chair, you know. That was it. But it was great. So I don't know whether.... I think I felt when...the education I got at Bronxville was really unique. I was really well prepared for, you know, going on. I just wish I'd had more time to enjoy it.

DONIN: To enjoy it, yes.

BAKER: I think... I see kids being able to go off and do overseas study. It's the enrichment part of it is so....

DONIN: Fantastic.

BAKER: Fantastic, right.

DONIN: Extensive research.

BAKER: So that was the cost of World War II, you know.

DONIN: Yes, yes. So let's go back to the V-12 training for a minute, though. Let's talk about what it was actually like to be in the V-12? I mean did they put you in a different dormitory, and did you—

BAKER: No, they took the whole place over. I mean there were a few civilians. I don't know which one, but we took over practically every

dormitory, as far as I remember. And the Marines were down in Topliff. And there was Marine and V-12. The Marines had something. I guess they called it V-12, or at least something.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. V-12, yes.

BAKER: So I mean they were very exclusive, you know. Macho guys.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: But it was not.... I mean we had to do calisthenics. That was torture in the winter. They'd get you out there. These chief petty officers, who were the guys that took care of us. We had our physical ed which was probably more structured than if you were there as a private student.

DONIN: Didn't you —

BAKER: We had to pass in review. We had to march.

DONIN: Right.

BAKER: We marched to Thayer Dining Hall.

DONIN: To meals right? Yes.

BAKER: Yes.

DONIN: And they called it the mess hall.

BAKER: Mess hall. Oh, all that baloney.

DONIN: And didn't they announce the time as, you know, 0800 or whatever?

BAKER: Oh, yes, 2100. Oh, sure. Oh, yes. All that.

DONIN: And the dorms actually became known as ships?

BAKER: No. Maybe they were afterwards. See, I was the first class.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: And it could have changed. Gotten more...well, they learned. They didn't really—Hey, it's incredible that it worked as well. I mean the college worked with them. And as I say, at least my class we were able to pursue our studies. We took—astronomy, maybe we got into that because of Navy....

DONIN: Yes, you must have had some military training, military classes.

BAKER: Not really. I mean because of your asking about this, I was thinking about it. I haven't talked to anybody else. But I really don't...We went up to what's his name, Professor Goddard, up there at the Observatory.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

BAKER: And I think maybe we had a good geography class, which may have been because of the Navy; it was well taught, it was very good.

DONIN: Did they worry about language? I mean were you supposed to learn a language or anything?

BAKER: No. That to me, as far as I can see, that just disappeared, that requirement at that time. Well, whether it was the lack of teachers.... There was no— Well, it was a different war. We weren't going to learn Japanese because there was nobody there that could teach it. And the Navy is at sea. It's not quite the same problem that the Marines and/or particularly the Army had.

DONIN: Right.

BAKER: So I'm not aware of that at all. I had started Spanish my first year. I had a pretty good. A really excellent—French indoctrination that I didn't realize. If I really was smart, I should have gone on with that, you know, and really owned it. But I didn't. And then because I had this ankle. And also I had a bout with virus pneumonia up there. You know that was just when they invented—or they discovered—penicillin.

DONIN: Penicillin.

BAKER: But it didn't work on that.

DONIN: Wow! Oh, because it was viral.

BAKER: Viral. And I don't what...I think they'd just started diagnosing it, frankly. So I spent too many weeks in Dick's House. So one of the courses I dropped was Spanish.

DONIN: Oh.

BAKER: That second half—well, halfway through whatever term it was. So I lost those credits. But that was a—and that was the course. I mean I was just—I couldn't catch up. And the—I can't remember his name—he agreed. [Laughs]

DONIN: The dean?

BAKER: Well, Dean—Strong?

DONIN: Strong?

BAKER: Yes.

DONIN: Yes. So when you came back, had President Dickey started the Great Issues course yet?

BAKER: Yes.

DONIN: Oh.

BAKER: I think it had just.... Well, maybe it wasn't. Maybe it was the year after.

DONIN: So you didn't take it.

BAKER: Well, I went to Tuck School.

DONIN: Mmm, that's right.

BAKER: So I wouldn't have taken it.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: We were busy enough down there.

DONIN: Sure. Yes, yes. So that was probably just....

BAKER: I was in Wheeler, you know, living there. And Stell Hall was operating.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

BAKER: Yes.

DONIN: And things were beginning at that point, I guess, to go back to normal in the sense that the fraternities were going to start up.

BAKER: Yes, our fraternity had started up. In that summer session, I stayed in the fraternity house. It was resurrecting itself. And the reunions were going on as we were there, early on. They had lot of, you know, they never stopped having reunions. So there were reunions. And so the people would come—I remember—would come to the fraternity house, ex-members.

DONIN: And weren't there a lot of soldiers returning with wives, married?

BAKER: Oh, yes. Well, I was just going to mention it. We had several of my friends who had married. So they were going into Sachem Village which was just going up. I mean it wasn't all done, but there were....

DONIN: Literally they slapped that stuff up, you know.

BAKER: Well, it was prefab.

DONIN: Prefab housing, yes.

BAKER: Which we had a lot of.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: I mean from the war.

DONIN: And Wigwam Circle, too.

BAKER: Oh, absolutely.

DONIN: Yes. And apparently they retrofitted the Fayerweathers as well.

BAKER: Yes. Again, I wasn't too aware of that because I didn't have any friends that went into that. And the summer was, you know, I was over on Webster Avenue. I wasn't in that area.

DONIN: Right.

BAKER: But when the fall came, that's when a couple of my friends came back with wives.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And that must have been when there was a real influx of students returning.

BAKER: Oh, there was.

DONIN: And the college must have been really packed to the gills at that point.

BAKER: I guess it was. Again, because I went down to—

DONIN: Down at Tuck, yes.

BAKER: I was in a sequestered, small, you know, very precious area at the time.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

BAKER: And they were, the professors down there, were so thrilled with us as a group of students because they were seeing just a totally different kind of student, totally involved.

DONIN: Focused.

BAKER: More real. Well, real questions, blah blah blah. They'd been away for, some of them, three, four, five years because they just came in. They could have been a '44 coming in and needed a '47 to graduate from Tuck.

DONIN: Were you ever tempted to change your class because you didn't graduate with '46?

BAKER: No. No, no.

DONIN: No.

BAKER: We had it at our 50th reunion.

DONIN: I know, I know that.

BAKER: It was great, you know.

DONIN: It is great. They finally gave that thing out. Because there wasn't it— There was no graduation.

BAKER: They held one, but it was so small. I mean there's got to be 25 people that attended. You know it was a joke.

DONIN: Right.

BAKER: So we had ours at our 50th reunion.

DONIN: Did you return— Apparently they had a reunion, a 50th reunion, for the V-12, too.

BAKER: Yes, I was back for that.

DONIN: Oh. That must have been great.

BAKER: It was a lot of fun. Well, it was 50th sort of, you know, it overlapped because there were so many of us. The most heartening thing for Dartmouth was all...I mean the men that came back there came from good schools.

DONIN: Sure.

BAKER: The V-12 experience wasn't exactly normal Dartmouth. And yet they chose to come back there.

DONIN: They wanted to come back.

BAKER: They wanted to come back. So our class, up until maybe I don't know when, we were the largest class they ever had for years and years because of all of these people.

DONIN: And they just joined that class because that was the year they came in.

BAKER: Yes.

- DONIN: Why do you think so many of the sort of non-Dartmouth people wanted to come back to Dartmouth rather than go back to their original schools after the war?
- BAKER: It's got to be.... I mean University of Wisconsin has got a beautiful campus, but it's big.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- BAKER: Huge. And Dartmouth was small. Certainly Boston University, Boston College, University of Chicago; they're huge. And I think they found the—I have to believe— In that short period of the V-12, they made a lot of very close friends because you're really thrown together in that Navy experience, you know. Every room was double bunk beds. You know there was no furniture except desks and sleeping.
- DONIN: Right.
- BAKER: And shoe polish [laughter] and stuff like that. You know that was a part, you had to polish your shoes otherwise you'd get thrown in the brig.
- DONIN: Yes, yes. So where was the brig?
- BAKER: I don't know. [Laughs] Wormwood had it.
- DONIN: Oh, Wormwood. I've heard about him.
- BAKER: Gosh. What a character. [Laughter] Well, we used the Dartmouth Canoe Club in the Navy. And we'd go up the Pompanoosuc River, which was very rural then and still is. Sleep, do an overnight, things like that. This guy that had the car had a father who was head of Brown & Williamson, the British tobacco company down in Louisville. And so he would send Tim every now and then a bottle of Old Granddad, something like that. So we'd go up in the woods and imbibe it. And that's all flooded now.
- DONIN: Yes.
- BAKER: All that area is covered.
- DONIN: Yes. Oh, look, that clock has come on.

- BAKER: Oh, yes.
- DONIN: Oh, that's so pretty.
- BAKER: Isn't it?
- DONIN: Yes. Oh, I lost my train of thought.
- BAKER: Well, we're back in....
- DONIN: Okay, so you're back.
- BAKER: With the older crowd.
- DONIN: Do you think your sense of sort of class unity or cohesiveness was impacted by the fact that you guys were all sort of coming back at different times and graduating at different times?
- BAKER: I think it's possible. I think it probably was. But, yes, I mean we had a reunion up in Wisconsin about two years ago or three years ago when we got a guy from Wisconsin who didn't... He went back to the University of Wisconsin. He was a farmer, and it was the smart thing for him to do because he wanted to get an agricultural. But we had this Hartnett guy, the Louisville guy. We had a fellow by the name of Reinertsen who came from the Chicago area, and Bob Nelson. And we all got together up there. And we've been, you know, talking to each other for all these years. Now none of them started with me at Dartmouth. None of them. They all are V-12.
- DONIN: Amazing.
- BAKER: Yes, it is. They've all come back to reunions. Not always because they're far away; it's not exactly easy. And so we...it's strange. Our class, our minis, we've had a mini forever, '46. And, you know, it's kept the class together. But there's a hardcore of us, most of whom were there the summer of '42. Not even the gang that came in in the fall. Really the core of the place was the summer of '42, the 200 or so. Not to say that there weren't plenty. But because a lot of them were football players and all, they had to be up there for summer practice and all that stuff.
- DONIN: So of that core...so of that group that was there this fall, when I came to do my little outreach, my little recruiting speech, were most of those guys V-12 guys?

BAKER: No.

DONIN: No?

BAKER: No, they were really all our original, from our original 200. Now, you know, some of them live around there. They chose to—

DONIN: They didn't have to—right. They didn't have to travel.

BAKER: Burlington for one. The de Weeses, who really never were part of our class, you know, it's a strange relationship. But he's very much a Dartmouth alumnus. Chip Coleman was basketball; he's always been in New Jersey, but he's always going... A lot of our departed people, a lot of them were in Massachusetts, logically. So they were the people that sort of kept things.... Reg Pierce, Pierce's Inn. I mean he was a big advertising executive making a fortune at that time and chose to go up there and do what they did all those years. And they galvanized.... What's his name? The guy who was at Tuck School. Oh, God! Anyway, it doesn't affect. But it was the hardcore people and still is.

DONIN: Who go back there to live, you mean?

BAKER: No, come back for the minis.

DONIN: Oh, come back for the minis, right, right. But there is a trend of alums who seem to come back there to live, too.

BAKER: Oh, that's true. Yes.

DONIN: Amazing.

BAKER: Yes. It's very true. It wouldn't be my choice.

DONIN: No, well....

BAKER: I mean I love it, and I think the cultural experience that's available there is tremendous. I mean you're experiencing it. But you are working, which keeps you busy.

DONIN: Right.

BAKER: But I can't see...I think the winters are tough, you know, I don't care what anyone says.

DONIN: [Laughs] I know.

BAKER: We've had this unusually warm period. I don't know whether it's a change or not. I mean I couldn't live anywhere but New York.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: We're busy all the time, as much as we want to be.

DONIN: Right.

BAKER: And it's all—it's just there to be taken.

DONIN: It's everything—yes.

BAKER: Everything.

DONIN: Everything in the world literally. But there is this phenomenon of alums of all ages...

BAKER: Well, the same somewhat with Cornell. Judith's... They have that same senior living complex in Ithaca.

DONIN: Up in Ithaca?

BAKER: Yes. I think that was one of their first.

DONIN: Kendal?

BAKER: Kendall, that's right. I think Dartmouth was, you know, after the original one up there.

DONIN: Well, they target these educational communities.

BAKER: Yes. Oh, it's smart.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: It really is. But if you can't afford to go to Florida or somewhere—which I wouldn't want to do for all the tea in China. In the wintertime, forget it, you know.

DONIN: This is perfect right here for the wintertime, for all the time.

BAKER: Do you know Ned Lebow?

DONIN: No.

BAKER: He's the Freedman Professor, James Freedman.

DONIN: Oh?

BAKER: He's a political science—fantastic guy. We met him on this.... We went on this trip.

DONIN: How do you spell his last name?

BAKER: L-E-B-O-W.

DONIN: Oh, just like it sounds.

BAKER: Anyway, he—I think he lives in Lyme. But anyway, we met him on this, again, last year, because we'd never been—we'd always wanted to go to the Canary Islands and that whole area. And the logic of going there and driving around it just seemed crazy. So Dartmouth offered this trip which we took, and he was the lecturer. And he was really very, very good and a very good salesperson for Dartmouth. Because these are mixed schools. And you know it's not just.... So he's living up there. But he manages because of that kind of a chair he has.

DONIN: Sure.

BAKER: He teaches in London at Cambridge. So he gets to move around, and he takes a lot of these trips.

DONIN: That's key, I think.

BAKER: Yes.

DONIN: Key.

BAKER: He's brilliant. He writes, he, you know, publishes; he does all that.

DONIN: I went and spent some time at Kendal because there's so many Dartmouth alums from your age range there. And most of them say the only reason a place like Kendal works in a location like Hanover is—the only way it can work—is if you have someplace else to go besides just being there.

BAKER: Yes, 12 months a year.

DONIN: Yes. It doesn't work otherwise.

BAKER: Right.

DONIN: And it doesn't have to necessarily be Florida. It can be just a change of scenery of some kind.

BAKER: Oh, yes. But I think for winter it's just—

DONIN: It's tough.

BAKER: Too tough.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: I mean how many.... You look out there at the snow on the ground, and it's great. Week after month it's not so great. [Laughs]

DONIN: Right. [Laughs] Come March it doesn't look so great.

BAKER: When I was there, snow was, oh, you know, just part of life.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: And cold. Holy Moses!

DONIN: Well, and it's—speaking of cold, I guess President Hopkins developed this relationship with the Navy, and this agreement with them that they would come up and use it as a training school, really as a way of keeping the college going.

BAKER: Oh, it was a life support.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: Well, and what I just abhor right now, what these write-in candidates for the trustees have done to the school, it's despicable.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: And I have to say, though, I'm in the class that has a lot of very conservative people.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: Who I think probably didn't vote for the new constitution, voted against it.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: I can't...after all that, all that effort. Anyway, it's one of the—very, very disappointing. The publicity! They've done some job getting this supposed major battle out.

DONIN: Dartmouth is very good at washing its dirty laundry in public, it seems to me.

BAKER: Well, it started with Buckley and the whole thing way back and the *Review*. And when the *Wall Street Journal* puts us on their editorial page, that's pretty sick.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: And what the hell are they talking about in the college. Oooh!

DONIN: It's not good.

BAKER: No.

DONIN: Not good. Terrible waste of resources on the part of the college.

BAKER: So anyway, the whole experience, V-12, was.... I mean when you think of me getting graduated when I should have and had all that experience packed in; it's unbelievable. I mean I saw the country. I saw a great part—I didn't see Europe; I saw the Pacific.

DONIN: The Pacific, yes.

BAKER: And a lot of islands, a lot of atolls, lot of water. [Laughs]

DONIN: And an undergraduate and a graduate degree.

BAKER: That's right.

DONIN: All packed into five years.

BAKER: Exactly. It was just very hard to believe. So anyway, I feel very fortunate. I certainly picked the right school. [Laughs] In every way. Now, I have one son that's graduated from there; he's a lawyer, an attorney. He's been doing that for 20 years. He made lots of money; he hates it. He hated the law, the billing. Now he's a big executive at this bank, Washington Mutual, you know. And I think.... Well, he's too far away. He's always been in California. So it's very hard. Those of us who live within Hanover being reachable, it's a much stronger connection than if you're way out. But they have certainly done a wonderful job raising money.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. They have.

BAKER: They have. And I think the need-blind, all those things are making it all worthwhile.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. They're working hard at it.

BAKER: They'll have to continue because it's a....

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: So what else would you like to know?

DONIN: Well, I feel like we've pretty well covered it.

BAKER: You know the big thing I saw because I was going to see you, was that the Navy, the naval imprint on the year that I was in uniform there was not all that pervasive. Things like calisthenics. Oh, they subjected us to short arm inspection once or twice.

DONIN: What does that mean?

BAKER: That's look for venereal disease. You had to stand in the hallway with your clothes off. And the guy comes around and inspects your privates to make sure you don't have....

DONIN: This is before you're inducted?

BAKER: No, no, this is when we're going to school there.

DONIN: Oh!

BAKER: So that was one experience that wouldn't have occurred had the Navy.... But there weren't many like that. Dick's House was the sick bay. I mean you had to go there. You had to go to the sick bay I think it was in Middle Mass maybe where a corpsman—medical—would say. You've got a temperature, you better go up there. I mean Fletcher was there. You could get anything you wanted from him: whiskey or anything. What a character that man was.

DONIN: So the Navy didn't really impose all of its sort of strictness and....

BAKER: Uh-uh. Well, you had curfew. You had to get up when they came on the last speaker or however they got us up in the morning. And you had to go do the calisthenics, and you had to march to three meals a day. And you had to polish your shoes. You had to dress properly.

DONIN: Were you saluting all day long to your officers?

BAKER: Oh, no. Well, any officer, you had to salute. Yes. All that.

DONIN: In your classes, though, you were mixed up with civilian students.

BAKER: I don't.... There probably were, but I'm not aware of who they were. Certainly at Tuck School, I don't remember anybody that wasn't in uniform when I was going down there in the first year. No, the civilian quotient, we were mostly, everybody that came there, was taken in my class. It was preordained.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: Obviously there were a few. And where they lived, I don't remember.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BAKER: And where they ate, I don't remember. Maybe they ate in the—I just don't know where.

DONIN: Well, if you went to Thayer maybe they went to the one that's in front of Thayer that's now called College—

BAKER: College Hall it was.

DONIN: College Hall.

BAKER: Yes. Now it's the name of the people—yes. We were in College Hall and Thayer.

DONIN: Oh, you were in both.

BAKER: Yes, we were in both.

DONIN: So who knows—

BAKER: Well, we ate.... When I was first there, there were plates and trays. When the Navy came, it was the metal partitioned trays. So that's a little different. Obviously there wasn't the choice in food that you had at Thayer.

DONIN: Right, right.

BAKER: So that's different. But it's nothing in your life that they really imposed upon you, I felt. I mean when you really got hit was at midshipmen's school where they hazed you, all that stuff. I mean I was on the tenth floor of John Jay, and it was the hottest summer on record in New York until a few years ago. And you had to run up and down the stairs. That's the way you got up and got down, you know. And blah blah blah. They took joy in making you feel like dirt.

DONIN: And that was part of the training.

BAKER: That was part of the training. They still do it, I'm sure.

DONIN: Oh, I'm sure they do.

BAKER: My, God!

DONIN: I'm sure they do.

BAKER: Now there's gals getting the treatment.

DONIN: Yes, yes, Exactly.

BAKER: So I don't really.... I was very fortunate. I got paid to go to school.

DONIN: Yes.

BAKER: It wasn't very much, but it was more than I'd ever had before.

DONIN: Right, right. Exactly. It got you out of that dining hall job.

BAKER: It got me out of that dining hall job, that's right.

DONIN: I guess we're done.

[End of Interview]