

Dartmouth College Oral History Project  
The War Years at Dartmouth  
Interview with Philip Brooks '43 TU '46  
By Mary Stelle Donin  
September 26, 2008

DONIN: Did you come to Dartmouth because of any family connections?

BROOKS: Yes, yes.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

BROOKS: My father was a graduate in 1910. And I have some other forbearers before that. And I can't tell you time and place. But a couple of them at least. One went to the medical school; that was probably a Lyman Brooks. And there was another one, might have been a Nathaniel—I can't pin it down. But there were several other Brookses up a generation before my dad who had come to Dartmouth. And he'd grown up in Charlestown, New Hampshire.

DONIN: Oh, close by.

BROOKS: Close by, yes.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

BROOKS: And I wanted to come here.

DONIN: And you did want to come. So there was never any question that there'd be anyplace else you wanted to go.

BROOKS: Well, there were a lot of questions about my capabilities to make it to Dartmouth. [Laughter]

DONIN: Right. But had you seen the college before you came?

BROOKS: Yes, I had seen it on one or two occasions. Yes. And I had gone to Harvard-Dartmouth football games with my father in Cambridge. We lived in greater Boston. Well, and another facet of that, the high school principal where I went to high school was a Dartmouth graduate.

DONIN: Oh!

- BROOKS: And he did a remarkable job. He got five of us out of Framingham High School in the class of 1943.
- DONIN: My goodness! That's unusual.
- BROOKS: Sad part is I'm the only one left.
- DONON: Oh dear. Yes. So you had classmates coming up here with you as well. But you guys were strangers when you were put in the dorm together.
- BROOKS: Absolutely. Yes, yes. Well, I think we were... I don't know how it all worked out. The third guy was from Rochester, New Hampshire, Leon Chapman. And I'll make this comment because I think it's interesting. Here's a guy who came out of nowhere in Buffalo, Wyoming. Leon Chapman was the son of a man whose real name was Jalowsky. He was a Lithuanian. He was running an ice business in Rochester, New Hampshire.
- DONIN: Right.
- BROOKS: And I was the one who grew up in suburban Boston, and nothing remarkable. But we all came from such different backgrounds.
- DONIN: Very different backgrounds, yes.
- BROOKS: And we roomed together for three years. Then of course we went to Tuck, so Leon transferred to some other guys. But the three of us stayed together while we were....
- DONIN: When you got here, were you also planning on doing business and going on to Tuck?
- BROOKS: I sort of started out as a major in economics I guess is what you'd call it. And then as we worked our way through, I thought, yes, Tuck is what I want to do. Yes.
- DONIN: Did you guys ever have classes together?
- BROOKS: At Tuck we did.
- DONIN: No, but as undergraduates?

BROOKS: No.

DONIN: How did your experience differ from Mr. Donaldson's that we've heard about? I mean did you enjoy any particular classes as a freshman or—

BROOKS: Well, as a freshman, as I said, I got in on the skin of my teeth. I was the fifth guy out of the high school. And I think I can thank Mayo Magoon who was the principal of the high school that helped get me in. But one of the classes I really enjoyed and almost became a disaster for me was freshman algebra and calculus, I guess it was.

DONIN: Oh, gee.

BROOKS: What was the guy's name? Silverman, I think. He was a very brilliant teacher. And I was sailing along getting A's. The only thing I was any good at, and the only thing I was getting A's in, and then the final exam came, and I drew some kind of a blank and got a D I remember on the exam. He called me in and sympathized with me and so on and so forth, and gave me a C for the course. But I always remember that because I really enjoyed the subject, and I just drew a blank.

DONIN: I guess that can happen.

BROOKS: Something happened.

DONIN: It can happen.

BROOKS: I had great difficulty with social science, which was one of the required courses in freshman, because I'd never been challenged in high school to write or express yourself you know.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BROOKS: Enough on that.

DONIN: Well, that's what you were here for.

BROOKS: Yes. Right.

DONIN: To learn to write. And you did.

BROOKS: I finally did. It took a while, you know.

DONIN: Now you wore your beanie and had the same sort of experiences Mr. Donaldson did?

BROOKS: One thing I did have. I came up here before school started with one of my classmates from high school who was coming to the college, Ted Woodward. And we were bringing some furniture and stuff up here. He knew where he was going to be, which was in New Hampshire. And I knew I was going to be in South Fayerweather, I think. And we were starting to unload this car somewhere around the Green, and these two guys came up and grabbed us. And put us to work lugging stuff for them.

DONIN: Oh.

BROOKS: So what turned out we thought was going to be a short day while we left some stuff, we spent all day working for these two guys. One of them I remember was a fellow by the name of [inaudible], and he was a junior that year, and he was a football player. He played—he was a tackle. He was a letterman on the team.

DONIN: Couldn't say no to him very easily.

BROOKS: I didn't know that at the time. [Laughter] And I can't tell you who the other guy was. But the two of them had a good time putting Ted and me to work.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Now do you have memories of the matriculation ceremony with President Hopkins?

BROOKS: Being somewhat in awe of him, yes.

DONIN: Did you decide to go out for a fraternity?

BROOKS: Yes, I did, much to my father's annoyance.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BROOKS: But he didn't have much excuse because he'd been a fraternity man.

DONIN: Did you join the same one as him?

BROOKS: No, no, I did not.

DONIN: Why did he disapprove?

BROOKS: Well, he thought it was a waste of money, which we didn't have. And he was right. And he also felt that maybe I hadn't researched it well enough, understand the implications of what I was getting into. But I did, I joined. And he was good about it. And of course one of the things I think he really was worried about, and he was dead right, the fraternity was in financial trouble. But most of them were at that time.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BROOKS: And so that led to a little extra money. And since he was paying my way; I was not on scholarship.

DONIN: Did you have a part-time job?

BROOKS: No, I didn't. No.

DONIN: You were one of the other half that didn't have to work.

BROOKS: Hanging in there, hoping I was going to make it.

DONIN: Right, right. Now weren't you on the inter-dormitory council or something like that?

BROOKS: Yes, yes.

DONIN: What did that involve?

BROOKS: Well, you're supposed to be responsible for seeing that the dormitory remained orderly and so forth and so on. And the girls didn't come in at wrong hours.

DONIN: Oh.

BROOKS: And the only thing I do remember—I can't tell you who it was, but just as well—but there was one cut-up in the dormitory that was in trouble. And I know I was called over by Dean Strong at the time to discuss this unruly character. And I tried to be a good soldier and do what he asked me to do.

DONIN: Did you ever rein him in? Did you ever rein this guy in?

- BROOKS: Well, it seems to me he flunked out.
- DONIN: Ah hah! Well, that solves the problem. [Laughter]
- DONIN: Well, speaking of the deans, did you interact much with Dean Strong and Dean Neidlinger?
- BROOKS: No, not very much. I had met Dean Strong before I came to college because he was on a speaking tour for the college that I'd gone to. But I had a lot of very high regard for him. Neidlinger was kind of— We were all a little bit scared of him, I think.
- DONALDSON: You didn't see him unless you were in trouble.
- BROOKS: Yes.
- DONIN: Oh, you didn't want to see him.
- BROOKS: Yes.
- DONIN: [Laughs] And did you do anything in the way of athletics?
- BROOKS: I tried to make the tennis team, and I never led it, you know....
- DONIN: But was there, what do you call it, intramural sports that you played?
- BROOKS: Yes, I was pretty active in that. Yes. Played baseball and touch football. The one thing I am grateful for with the tennis coach was he got me into squash. I'd never seen a squash court. I didn't know what the game was all about. And I played squash. And it carried over for me as an activity in the business world because it was something that half an hour of exercise on a squash court was pretty great.
- DONIN: It's a good workout.
- BROOKS: Yes, good workout.
- DONIN: And was your social life focused around the fraternities or more with your roommates and friends?

- BROOKS: I used the fraternity as a place to put up a date. And also I think I put up a date of yours once there. Maybe one of Lip's there once. So I was kind of the flunky. I had the facility that the women had to—
- DONIN: To stay in.
- BROOKS: To stay in.
- DONIN: Right, right. Yes, that's a challenge to find a place to put the dates. So you cleared out the fraternities, and they slept there?
- BROOKS: That's right. Yes.
- DONIN; Uh-huh. Yes.
- BROOKS: That's what happened, yes.
- DONIN: Now, who was the—it was a funny name—the guy who was the sort of security officer, the policeman, that chased everyone around?
- BROOKS: Oh, Wormwood.
- DONIN: Oh, Wormwood, yes.
- BROOKS: The steely-eyed Wormwood. [Laughter] Do you know that story?
- DONIN: No.
- BROOKS: You know it better than I do. Was he on the cover of *Time* magazine? No, he was written up in *Time* magazine.
- DONIN: Was he!
- BROOKS: When we were in college. And he was described as the steely-eyed Wormwood. [Laughter]
- DONIN: So you were with your roommate and friend here, Bing Donaldson, on December 7, 1941, right? Coming back— You went to the movies.
- DONALDSON: No, he wasn't there. No.

DONIN: Oh, you weren't with him.

BROOKS: No, I wasn't there. I think I was right here on campus. We were talking about that, and I honestly can't remember where I was. But what I remember is thinking about it in the dormitory room and calling my folks. Probably the only time I ever made a long distance call home, to tell them: "Don't worry. I'm not going to sign up tomorrow." [Laughs]

DONIN: Oh, yes. Good.

BROOKS: But that's about all I remember at the time. And then, of course, the recruiters were around here. I signed up for the— Well, we created this—and I don't know who was the real organizing spirit, and I don't think that book I brought with me really tells you that story. But anyway, we decided to have a Dartmouth squadron.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

BROOKS: And it was going to be a Dartmouth squadron to go in the Army Air Corps. And I signed up for it. So I was one of the—I don't know whether there were 40 of us or 45 of us; some number like that.

DONIN: Yes.

BROOKS: That signed up and went off to service. And I ended up in navigation because I couldn't pass the eye test as a pilot. But they would take me as a navigator. So that's where I ended up.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Now the squadron when you went off for training, you didn't stay together, the Dartmouth—

BROOKS: No, we went to Nashville as a group. Nashville was a staging center. And then that's where we peeled off. Well, most of the guys stayed together and went to Kelly—not Kelly, but whatever the field was there in Alabama. Ah.

DONIN: It'll come to you.

BROOKS: I'll think of it. But I think whatever our number was—say it was 40—37 or 38 guys went to Maxwell Field, I guess it was, and three of us went to navigation school in Monroe, Louisiana, because we couldn't pass the eye test.



DONIN: I see.

BROOKS: And of course the irony of it was that we graduated. And just before we were graduating, some of these guys were washing out of pilot training and were coming over to navigation school. So we had a leg up on some of our—

DONIN: Yes, your classmates.

BROOKS: Some of our classmates.

DONIN: Yes, yes. Now did you sign up. Was that after you— I mean graduation, you were in the same situation, graduating in December of '42.

BROOKS: Yes.

DONIN: Did you sign up right after that? Is that how that worked?

BROOKS: Yes, yes. I was off to Nashville I would say in, yes, January of '43.

DONIN: Mmm.

BROOKS: That's right, '43. And, yes, because I got my wings in August of '43 and went overseas in December of '43. Well, it was a recall mission. And I was in what was called a third division. There were three divisions of bombers, and the ATF was the first and the third. The first and third divisions were B-17's; the second division was B-24's. I was in the third division with B-17's. The day of the Berlin raid. The first one that took place, our operations officer was leading the third division. And we took off, and we're about crossing the Channel, and there was a recall. And these guys started peeling off, and we kept going. And we went to Berlin. By the time we got to Berlin, we were something like—don't hold me to the exact number—but about 30 aircraft. Started out probably six or seven hundred; there were 30 aircraft that made it to Berlin. And we lost a couple of planes coming back. Going in, we got hit pretty bad and lost a waist gunner was killed on our plane.

DONIN: On your plane!

BROOKS: But anyway that's the story of the first Berlin raid. And I saw Colonel Mumford who was the guy leading us, many years later as a civilian. I was a civilian; he was still in the military. But I didn't

hesitate to remind him of his goof on how he had violated the rules and so forth. He chuckled with me.

DONIN: So you were lucky to be alive.

BROOKS: Well, it was a crazy, crazy setup. One of the fortunate things that happened to us, even though there was a recall, when we got to Berlin itself and up came the Messerschmidts, what shows up but a squadron of P'51 Mustangs. These were the American craft. And why they were there, I don't know, because the mission had been recalled.

DONIN: Right.

BROOKS: But somebody must have told them there were a few that were going on, so they showed up. And they kind of— They gave us a little cover that probably saved us from, you know....

DONIN: I should say. So when you got back, you had— Did you have any Tuck under your belt already? Yes.

BROOKS: Yes.

DONIN: You did.

BROOKS: Yes, I had the first year at Tuck.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

BROOKS: And what had happened, I got out in September... What was that— no, it was September—that's right. September. Because when I came back from Europe, they sent us out to the West Coast to Victorville, California, because they thought we were going to... We were supposed to take over, our group was supposed to take over, a base out there. And those guys were going to go out to the Japanese war because this was still before the end of the war. So I ended up out there. And then I got out in—actually got out in early September. Headed up to Hanover to see the place. And while I was up there, I don't know how we got in contact with each other, but you were out, and I said, "You've got to come up here."

DONALDSON: Well, I called you.

BROOKS: Yes, I guess I told him about the deal, that I was able to.... I couldn't come in as a regular student because the place was crowded. But if I picked certain courses, I could take those as long....

DONIN: It was okay.

BROOKS: Yes. So that's what I did, and I told him about it, and so he came.

DONIN: Did you find a place to live that was on campus? Or were you in a—

BROOKS: Well, yes, I was in a dormitory, and I was put in a dormitory, Woodward Hall, what we called the Gold Coast in those days.

DONIN: So you were glad to see your friend Bing get back here so you guys could....

BROOKS: Yes. So that gave me an excuse to get out of that living with this kid who was very sad.

DONIN: Yes, hard to watch.

BROOKS: So where did you guys go to live?

DONIN: Well, we found.... Where did we go?

DONALDSON: Topliff.

BROOKS: Topliff, yes.

DONIN: Oh, they still put you in dorms? Wow!

BROOKS: Oh, yes. Yes.

DONALDSON: Well, there weren't too many people there.

DONIN: So this was '45. Yes, I guess it wasn't too crowded yet.

BROOKS: V-12 and V-5 guys were gone.

DONIN: Yes, yes. That's true.

DONALDSON: And there weren't too many people in the college. They were all getting called into the service.

- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- BROOKS: Now mainly what we were doing was we were marking time for that, as I said, that semester because Tuck was kind of run dry at that point.
- DONIN: Yes, yes. Now you had thoughts about Mr. Dickey that I told you to save for this tape.
- BROOKS: Oh, I was going to tell you. It's interesting about Dickey. This was the forerunner to his—
- DONIN: Great Issues?
- BROOKS: Great Issues, yes. And I think it was kind of a test to see whether it was going to fly.
- DONIN: Oh, right.
- BROOKS: And I was invited to attend this. Oh, I know why I was invited because you know this guy Pelenyi? He was a professor; his background was as ambassador to Hungary or someplace like that. And he was on campus. And when Dickey started this thing, I guess he asked a few—asked some of the professors for kids who might like to take this in. That's how I got in on this thing anyway. And it was interesting. He had Sherman Adams up here. And, of course, he was a congressman at the time. Anyway, so that was kind of an introduction. And Dickey was very much the presence as he was sort of unfolding this idea that he had.
- DONIN: Yes. Mm-mmm. So you were in on the ground floor.
- BROOKS: Yes.
- DONIN: The first go-around.
- BROOKS: We met over in Sanborn House I think was where we met.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- BROOKS: Because it was a small group.
- DONIN: Yes, yes.

BROOKS: Ten or 12 guys.

DONIN: Interesting. So do you feel like you were a better student or a different student when you got back because you'd sort of grown up, matured, and....

BROOKS: Well, yes, I think so. And the thing that I really relished that semester we had in the college because you always felt after you left college there were certain courses that you wish you'd taken.

DONIN: Mmm.

BROOKS: And it gave you an opportunity to take. As I say, I took three or four courses. As I said, as long as you didn't interfere with the regular attendees, there was room for you.

DONIN: Right. That's terrific.

BROOKS: And it was. It was great.

**[End of Interview]**