

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with William R. Epplly '44
By Mary Stelle Donin
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DONIN: How is it you chose to come to Dartmouth?

EPPLY: I'm not sure that I chose. I think that it was pretty much ordained by my older brothers and my father. We were living in New Hampshire. I was born in Manchester, New Hampshire and we were surrounded by Dartmouth people. And they were all, it seemed, in prominent—physicians and whatever they were doing at whatever age, it was a very distinguished credential to have. And especially my older brother who was then—he's ten years older than I am—and he was at MIT. And he had come into skiing just as it was beginning to be developed in New England. And he was a very good skier. MIT had no ski team, but Dartmouth did. And the Dartmouth ski team was winning everything. And he was convinced that I should and could make the Dartmouth ski team. It was a very ambitious idea. But he pushed, and I'm sure he persuaded my father to do what he could to get me into Dartmouth. And before I knew it, I was here. And very happy and fortunate to make it. And I had a wonderful time.

DONIN: Were you the first in your generation, in your family, to go? I mean you said your father came here.

EPPLY: No my father didn't go here.

DONIN: Oh, he didn't go to Dartmouth.

EPPLY: No, he didn't go to Dartmouth.

DONIN: Oh, so you—

EPPLY: My older brother, my next older brother, Roger, was class of 1941.

DONIN: I see. Okay.

EPPLY: And I was just... We almost overlapped, but he was about to be drafted into the Army because, as Bob [McLaughry] pointed out, there were war clouds all around. And so he had to leave the

college, and he joined the Army Signal Corps where he became a photographer. And eventually the personal motion picture photographer for Douglas MacArthur.

DONIN: Oh!

EPPLY: He took some of the film of that famous scene where the general wades ashore.

DONIN: Is that right?

EPPLY: My brother said that it took three colonels in full dress, who were taken out on a barge into the shallow beach and they had to step into the water and march in where the general would eventually make his appearance. He said, "We took a lot of pictures of those poor, high-ranking officers, but they never got to see their own pictures in public." Anyway, my brother Roger was ahead of me here.

DONIN: I see. Uh-huh.

EPPLY: And so I came in with... He wasn't really here long enough to establish himself. But he made a lot of friends, a lot of good friends. And I inherited some of them. And I was very fortunate to come in in a wonderful class, freshman class. It was the largest freshman class—

DONIN: Right.

EPPLY: —at that time. And with outstanding people. And let me just say the tradition at that time was for the freshmen to wear the little beanies which everybody complained about. But most people did it. And one of the duties of the Green Key, of which Bob was president, was to make sure that the freshmen wore their beanies. And we did. And we were identified and we were also, as I remember, if we weren't required, we were certainly expected, to go to all the football games.

DONIN: Yes.

EPPLY: Whether we wanted to or not. We had a freshman section, and that section was expected to be filled up for every game, which it was. And it was a wonderful way for us all to get to know each other and

to know what to cheer for and who to cheer for. And one of them was Bob and appropriately his football number was 44.

DONIN: Oh, perfect.

EPPLY: And when he ran, he ran like a deer. There were great expectations among all the football writers that Bob would be making an outstanding career for himself in college football. Unfortunately, he got a soldier injury and couldn't follow that through. But he did go in and participate as a high-ranking, eventually, Marine Corps Navy pilot and had a distinguished wartime career.

DONIN: And then came back here to finish up.

EPPLY: And then came back here. [...] Dick Willis was class of, I think, 1926. He was a very aggressive insurance man. Had a very powerful insurance agency in Manchester, New Hampshire. But he wanted to get out of that and do something for the war effort. So he enlisted in the Navy. And they assigned him to Causeway Street, which was the Naval headquarters in Boston. And it was a recruiting headquarters. And they made him a recruiting officer, which he hated. He was right back in the office, and that isn't where he wanted to be. So he talked to a former athletic director, Whitey Fuller, who was now I think a lieutenant commander in the Navy or maybe a lieutenant. Anyway, he was in charge of recruiting down there. And Dick Willis said, "If I can get you a bunch of Dartmouth candidates for Navy flight training, would you keep them together and call them the Dartmouth Squadron?" And Whitey Fuller said, "That's a great idea. We will indeed do that." Dick Willis was a very aggressive guy. While he was in college, he was a trumpet player and a piano player. And he assembled a band which used to play as the Dartmouth Barbary Coast.

DONIN: Oh, yes!

EPPLY: They used to play on cruise ships in the summertime.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPPLY: Going to Europe and South America and all over. And eventually the band got to be so prominent that it was playing in New York City as sort of a second-level band beneath Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPPLY: It was a very outstanding thing. At any rate, Dick Willis got this organized and he got a commitment from the Navy that they would call it—or refer to it—as the Dartmouth Indian Squadron. And that they would also guarantee to keep them together until they got their wings.

DONIN: Wow.

EPPLY: And that... We got the same promise when the squadron that I was in came along a year later, which is a great commitment for the Navy to make, and they did keep it. They got us our wings, and we stayed together.

DONIN: Where did you train?

EPPLY: We trained all over. Bob started its squadron outside of Boston. We started at Kimball Union taking classroom work. And we went through all the regular bases. And I think ended up in Pensacola to get our wings—or Corpus Christi in Texas. And then we dispersed after that. We were assigned to different activities in the Navy. But the Navy had kept its promise by then.

One thing I remember about being a freshman and wearing the beanie was walking around campus before classes began and being subject to not humiliation but a certain subservience to recognize our position as pea-green freshmen. And especially on Fraternity Row. If you walked down Fraternity Row, the fraternity brothers would come out and holler at you. And you had to obey and go in and move furniture or clean up the bar or do something. And it was very effective. For me and for the fellow freshmen I was traveling with, we got a look at fraternities, what they were all about. How much fun they seemed to be, and what a great bunch of guys these were. And most of them were seniors and juniors. And they were people that we probably would not have associated with so early in our college career if it hadn't been for that little ridiculous beanie.

DONIN: Uh huh.

EPPLY: That identified us.

DONIN: It was also probably sort of a bonding experience for you and your classmates as well.

EPPLY: Oh, it was. And especially the requirement to go to the football games. I mean you never found a more vocal energetic cheering section than in those—especially at the early games where we didn't really know the opposing teams certainly, and we hardly knew our own team. But we saw our fellow classmates and upperclassmen on the field. It was a very powerful thing. And I'm not sure that the freshmen today have that kind of a bonding experience. But all of us, my friends, we enjoyed it and we wouldn't have had it any other way.

DONIN: I just found here a list that was reproduced in your Class of 1944 fiftieth reunion book that says that the freshmen rules were as follows in 1940: "Beanies must be worn at all times when outside. Frosh may not wear any prep school insignia of any kind.

EPPLY: I didn't remember that but I'm not sure that I had any.

DONIN: The frosh are confined to the backseats in the Nugget?

EPPLY: Yes, that's true. We had to sit in the back rows. But those were the best places to sit. [Laughter] Because in those days the Nugget... More sound came from the audience than came from the screen. There were all kinds of comments.

DONIN: Right. [Laughter]

EPPLY: Some not re-printable. But most of them very quick, smart and funny.

DONIN: Okay, Rule No. 4: "Frosh must sit in exclusive cheering section at football games." Just like you said.

EPPLY: Yes.

DONIN: And No. 5, "Frosh are expected to attend all rallies."

EPPLY: Oh, yes. That's right.

DONIN: These were the rallies before the games?

EPPLY: Yes.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

EPPLY: Yes, these were rallies in the evening.

DONIN: Pep rallies.

EPPLY: Yes, pep rallies.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

EPPLY: Sure. Incidentally, I never remember us being referred to as “frosh.”

DONIN: That may be a modern terminology. This was written by Fritz Heyer and he may have been using terminology.

EPPLY: Fritz Heyer was one of our best friends and he would have known what was done then.

DONIN: And your class was the second largest freshmen class in college history.

EPPLY: Is that what it was?

DONIN: Seven hundred members, 84 of whom hiked into the White Mountains and up Mount Moosilauke on the freshman trip. Did you both do that hike?

EPPLY: I don’t think so. Later we did it.

DONIN: So the freshman trip wasn’t what it is today. Everybody didn’t go on a freshman trip then when you matriculated?

EPPLY: No, I don’t think we did.

DONIN: So do you remember your impressions of Ernest Martin Hopkins the first time he addressed you, which I suppose was at the matriculation ceremony, or convocation anyway.

EPPLY: I do. I was a great admirer before I got here, probably because my father knew him. And I had an uncle who went to Dartmouth, who virtually worshipped Ernest Martin Hopkins. He was a very personable man. And he gave me the feeling of confidence that I was in the right place among people of very high integrity, which I

assume—feel—that he was. And I felt that he was the perfect college president for me.

DONIN: Uh huh.

EPPLY: And I think a lot of other people felt that way, too.

DONIN: Hmm.

EPPLY: I remember one time when I had talked in his office with Dean Neidlinger. And for some reason the topic of dogs on campus came up. Dogs on campus were a major issue. There were I don't know how many hundreds of dogs, but they were everywhere.

DONIN: Really!

EPPLY: Yes. You could have a dog in your room.

DONIN: Students!

EPPLY: Students, yes. And that was about to be changed because it had gotten so out of hand. And we were reminded of that at some time I think by Dean Neidlinger. At any rate he would have been the one to enforce the rules. And I remember going into Baker Library on one awful evening of freezing rain and wind and, oh, just terrible early winter blizzard conditions. And at the door there was an old Golden Retriever dog. You know at that age where their face starts to become white and everything. And he was just covered with sleet and he was all frozen and shivering. So I let him into the library, which... That was one rule that you could not violate. You couldn't bring a dog into classroom or college buildings, aside from the dormitories. But anyway, I had him inside the library, and I was trying to dry him off and warm him up a little bit. And I couldn't. And we were just inside the door. And I looked up and Dr. Hopkins was coming along. And he came right over and he asked me some questions. He talked to all the students. Anytime he'd run into a student, he'd chat with them. And he was chatting with me. And while we were chatting, his hand went down to this dog.

DONIN: Aw....

EPPLY: He had his own dog. And he's scratching this soaking wet, freezing Golden Retriever. And I was stammering, and I said, "This is not my dog." I said, "I just saw him out there, and he was shivering, and so

I thought I'd just bring him in to dry him off a little bit." And Mr. Hopkins continued scratching him, and he said, "What dog?"

DONIN: Oh! That's a great story.

EPPLY: And then he went out. [Laughter] Yes. He was a nice man. I liked him very much. I think as a college president he was just right at that time.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPPLY: And then when we went away, as Bob pointed out, we came back and John Sloan Dickey was president. And I think *he* was the right man at that time. He was a different personality entirely. But I couldn't warm up to him very well. But I'm not sure how many people did. But you sure respected him because his thinking was right on track. He was thinking about the college and the students and making everything first class and relevant in a very difficult world. He wanted Dartmouth to be preeminent in all directions. And he was very instrumental in instituting a lot of programs that headed for that. Probably the most prominent was the Great Issues courses in which the seniors, I think, and probably qualified juniors, participated in reading relevant literature to the world's changing conditions. It was a very effective program I think. I was only involved on the fringe of it. But it seemed to be very worthwhile for the change of direction toward more serious scholarship rather than just a college education.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPPLY: It was a direction toward advanced scholarship.

DONIN: And I think also opening students' eyes to the rest of the world, as opposed to looking inward as much.

EPPLY: Right.

DONIN: As you say, a reflection of a new world that was out there.

EPPLY: Yes. That program, by the time we get back, it was aimed—as it should have been of course—at the undergraduate students. And I had the feeling, frankly, and I think it was pretty accurate, that the general feeling about us veterans with worldwide experience coming back to the college were not unwelcome. But we were

encouraged to finish our job and move on. And make room for the activities of the undergraduates. Yes. I think there were almost no studies aimed at us, as I feel. That was my feeling. The feeling I had was to decide what you want to do and get on with it because we have a whole new student body to educate. I think Dean Neidlinger as much as said that to us. He was not really tuned to our generation. He was tuned to the undergraduates. But the older ones returning, I think he was happy to have us continue our work and go on our way. Maybe that's an unfair judgment. But it's not meant to be. I think Dean Neidlinger was just the man for the job. He was tough, but he was sincere, and he was Dartmouth right through. But it was different when we came back.

DONIN: Was there ever any question of you being allowed to come back?

EPPLY: Oh, I don't think so.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPPLY: I never had any question about it.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPPLY: Everybody I knew assumed that if we wanted to, we'd go back.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPPLY: Part of that was reinforced by the GI Bill because no one had to worry about paying for the education that was already underway. And I don't think... I never had a feeling that the college would not honor what would be considered an obligation to consider the education—to continue the education—of their students.

DONIN: Was he ever available, or was someone ever available, to sort of counsel you about what your major should be or what courses to finish up?

EPPLY: I think there was a lot of counseling. I believe there was. Yes.

DONIN: From professors or from Neidlinger or from—

EPPLY: It was from—through the administration somehow.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

- EPPLY: I don't know. I don't remember that.
- DONIN: And you were also— Weren't you given points that served sort of as credit toward your degree? You were given points for your years of service?
- EPPLY: Yes. We were. And I've forgotten how that worked. I know that I ended up needing one semester.
- DONIN: Right.
- EPPLY: I think if it had gone strictly by academic points earned, I would have probably had to consider staying for a whole year. I was lucky. I had been an English major. And when I came back, they assigned me to Robert Frost.
- DONIN: Oh.
- EPPLY: And we had a seminar with Mr. Frost, who was really getting a little grouchy and old at that time. [Laughter] He didn't really do much. But he did give us an education in the ways of a prominent old man with a huge ego. And, you know, he used to tell us that we had to write a poem every week. We worked so hard on these poems, you know, to try to put out something worthwhile. And he'd collect them in a little pile on his desk. There were, I think, eight of us in the class. And when he'd leave at the end of the class, the papers were always still there. I'm sure he just forgot to put them in the wastebasket. [Laughter] He liked to read his own poetry, and that was a treat for us. I don't think he's the best one to read his poetry. But he certainly knew it, and it didn't take much to persuade him to read one or another. And he had written an enormous amount of poetry. So he had something to say on every subject. And I consider it a great honor to have been in his class, although I'm sure he was never aware that I was there. Sometimes he would converse with you; mostly he just sort of rambled on and talked. And I wished that I could have been recording him, then. Although I don't think he would have liked that.
- DONIN: Did he give you any grades at the end of the semester?
- EPPLY: Well, he did. Yes. The students that I knew there, they all got As. I got an A. I think he just gave us all As. [Laughter] That way he was not accountable.

DONIN: Right. Exactly.

EPPLY: It was a social gathering really.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPPLY: And it was a nice way to spend an hour or an hour and a half. If he got wound up, we'd be there a long time until he was ready to go. It was nice and it was a high point for me at that time of my Dartmouth career which was just about to be finished. I think that the most satisfaction that I had personally was fulfilling what my older brother wanted me to do. And that was to make the Dartmouth Ski Team.

DONIN: Ah ha.

EPPLY: He was persuaded that I could do that, and I was not persuaded at all. When I got to Dartmouth, the candidates for the Dartmouth Ski Team had all, it seemed, skied in Europe or gone to school in Europe, or they came from mountain states: Colorado, California. They all had competition behind them. And I didn't. I went for four years to prep school in New Jersey where there was no skiing at all. I could ski; I was a recreational skier. But I had no idea of competition. And it was frightening to see what was happening here. We had a coach who was the world champion downhill and slalom.

DONIN: Was that Mr. Prager?

EPPLY: Walter Prager, yes. He came to us from Switzerland, and a wonderful coach. Wonderful skier, just a magician on skis. But of course he could talk with these boys who had skied in Europe. And I didn't have the foggiest notion. And I didn't know anything about ski competition, especially slalom. So I did the only thing I could do which was I went down to Rand's Furniture Store, which was where the Dartmouth store is now.

DONIN: Bookstore?

EPPLY: Where they sell all the Dartmouth stuff. Mr. Rand was the furniture dealer and town undertaker.

DONIN: Right. [Laughter]

EPPLY: He had an employee named Sam Truman, who was a mulatto fellow; I don't know how he happened to come here. But he knew all the athletes. He knew every one of the athletes even before we got here as freshmen. But he didn't know me because I didn't have any athletic reputation. But I told him that I needed some slalom poles to practice. I said my roommate had bought a rug from Mr. Rand, and it came wrapped around a bamboo pole. And he said, "Oh, yes, I've got a lot of those poles." So Sam and I went down in the basement and found a stack of these bamboo poles. And he got me, I don't know, eight or ten about eight-foot poles. And he tied them up. He became very interested. What are you going to do with these? You know. And I said, "Well, I'm going to take them out and find a hill someplace where I can find a little snow and practice. I've got to know something about what I'm trying to do." So he found a couple of pieces of rope, tied up a bundle of them, and he told me where to go to find the best snow. And he said, "The best snow is on Balch Hill." He said that he had skied out there on his skis. And he said, "It's good because it's cow pasture. And the cows keep the grass chewed down so that it's going to hold the snow. It'll hold three or four inches of snow. And you can ski on that." He said, "Pretty soon." This was in October or November. He said, "Pretty soon you'll have four or five inches out there, and you can ski." And I said, "Well, how do I get there? Where is it?" Well, Balch Hill—the particular slope he was talking about faced west. It was right about in the center of Rip Road. But there was no Rip Road then.

DONIN: Mm-mmm.

EPPLY: So I had to walk out.... He told me, pointed to the way I would walk out past Hitchcock, past the old hospital, go out along the golf course, and then when you get right opposite the ski jump, you turn right and climb the hill. So I did that. I did that every day.

DONIN: After class?

EPPLY: After class. There were no... Well, there were afternoon classes, but you were finished by two. And I'd get my poles together and walk out there and set them up, and practice until it was dark. And I learned enough to get away with getting into freshman skiing. And I didn't get caught. [Laughter]

DONIN: Now I've got two pictures here of you. One is the 1944 freshman ski team and here you are on the varsity ski team.

EPPLY: Yes. I got the freshman letter—numerals. Then I got two varsity letters, mostly because I was skiing with these wonderful skiers around me. You know, that was a great privilege, was skiing with really the best skiers in the country. And they were very generous with their help. And I watched them, and I worked very hard because it was so much fun and they were such wonderful people. It was great fellowship and we had just wonderful times. We ended up as IC4A champions three years. And that was the equivalent of what would now be the NCAA.

DONIN: Now speaking of skiing, weren't there a number of Dartmouth students who actually went into military service as skiers, like in the Tenth Mountain Division?

EPPLY: Oh, yes. Many Dartmouth skiers. Most of the leadership of that Tenth Mountain were Dartmouth men. And some from Harvard. And many, I would think, probably were based on the Appalachian Mountain Club. A lot of them were mountain climbers who had gotten into skiing along the way. Oh yes, the Tenth Mountain couldn't have been organized without Dartmouth's people because there were so many of them in it. They went in with a lot of experience, even those who had not been on ski teams but had just been members of the Dartmouth Outing Club. Great sections of that outing club moved right into the Tenth Mountain Division. And we lost some. Jake Nunnemacher was a Dartmouth captain. He was killed in Italy. Most of them died in Italy. Oh, I can't think of all of them. There were a lot of them. It was a very hard, difficult experience.

DONIN: Must have been.

EPPLY: Almost... They did some heroic things. But they were doomed to competition from the Russians and the Finns and the Europeans that were against us: the Germans and the Austrians. All expert skiers and mountaineers. Real mountaineers. That made the competition and the warfare so vicious and difficult. But Dartmouth had a very strong hand in that and has always had a strong representation in the Olympics too and did very well over the years.

DONIN: Now were you active in the Outing Club while you were here?

EPPLY: Well, yes, because the Outing Club was an extension—or the ski team—was an extension of the Outing Club.

- DONIN: Oh, I didn't realize that.
- EPPLY: Yes.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. So when you came back, where did you live? As a veteran, where did you live? Oh, the same place.
- EPPLY: Yes. I was on the committee with Bob to open the fraternity houses.
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- EPPLY: Not just our Psi U house. But that's where Bob and I lived, as I remember. And a handful of others until we got the membership together and got the house cleaned up, you know. Physically they were full of cobwebs and needed cleaning. And this was true of all the fraternities on campus. There were a couple that were left, that were kept open for students in particular departments. It seems to me the SAE house stayed open during the war and that... I shouldn't be guessing. I don't know but I had the feeling that it was for engineering students, one of the sciences, maybe a medical science, something like that. But there were a few fraternities that were kept open but most of them just closed right up because it was such a complicated mess, really, of ownership. Some of the houses were owned by a national fraternity organization, some were local, and some were even, I think, were owned by the membership which would have been the students. And that of course was changing. It was a complicated thing. I think that the college had to contend with that and it was easier to close them up and then open them up when the membership justified it after the war.
- DONIN: How did you build up your membership again? I mean if there hadn't been any rushing going on to bring in new students during those years....
- EPPLY: That's a good question. That was a big problem. We had a centralized system of some sort, and I can't really remember how it worked. But the fraternities were much more open with each other about who they might be seeking for membership. But we did actually have to start from scratch and find old members, wherever they might be, and then try to build up a delegation from each of the classes, and it happened. But it was hard work. And there was a lot of invention when it came to traditions, I remember. Nobody in the

Psi U house—we couldn't find the traditional initiation thing. So we made it up. And it all worked. All the fraternities did the same thing. And it was a challenge. It was actually a very good thing to have to contend with because it brought the brothers all closer together and made everybody anxious to make the system work because there was also an antagonistic feeling against the fraternities in general from everybody. A lot of townspeople didn't want them opened again. A lot of professors thought they were a waste of time. And the administration was supportive but not about to take over and do the job for the fraternities. They left it, I would say, up to the Inter-Fraternity Council to get its own act together which eventually happened.

DONIN: Well, and John Dickey eventually stepped in—I think it was probably after you all were gone—to change the admissions policies for some of these fraternities. To open them up to...

EPPLY: Yes. I would imagine that would be exactly what was needed. Some standardization because it was pretty free-wheeling for a while there. But it got done.

DONIN: It did get done and they were back up and running.

EPPLY: Let me say too... We were talking about football earlier. It was a total change for Dartmouth College when Bob's father Tuss McLaughry came to coach football. He was a man, it seemed to many of us, totally different from Earl Blaik, who was the winning football coach. I think he taught Vince Lombardi to say that winning was the only thing. But when Tuss McLaughry came in, there was a whole different feeling of warmth, and friendliness and sportsmanship and all the highest qualities that good athletics bring out. It seemed to change the atmosphere toward football and toward all of the athletics at the college. Because he was such an outstanding man, everybody loved him. And his standards were every bit as high as any other coaches. But he had a human touch and a warmth about him that just carried over into.... He became a very highly respected and affectionately received man in the community. A great guy.

DONIN: And he must have attracted a lot of... Knowing that he was here, that must have attracted a lot of great students and players to Dartmouth.

EPPLY: And coaches. Some of those coaches that he brought to town were a scene in themselves. Wonderful guys. Yes, it is true, he attracted a great deal of respect, all of which he earned.

DONIN: How long was he here?

BOB MCLAUGHRY: Well, of course, he came in 1941 and then was three years away in the Marine Corps and then came back and his last year was 1954. About ten years, because he was getting along a little bit in age.

EPPLY: It was a great experience for me and I'm always proud to say I'm a Dartmouth man, wherever I am.

DONIN: Did you guys ever get— Did you ever get diplomas? I know there was no graduation. But how did you get—

EPPLY: We got one in the mail.

MAN: You got one in the mail.

EPPLY: I guess there's a diploma in there. I still have the little green tube.

DONIN: What was the impact on your class of all this coming and going and people being here and then away and then coming back and not graduating together? Do you think it impacted your sense of identity with the Class of '44? Or the sense of class unity? The fact that you didn't have some of these bonding experiences? All the senior traditions?

EPPLY: In our last reunion book, I couldn't think of anything to write. So I just started writing, and that's what I wrote about. And it essentially was the fact that before the war, we were not together long enough to get to know very many of our large class. And that now since the war, we know each other better, we have more lasting friendships because we've had more time to get to know each other than we could have before the war. And the person responsible primarily for that, I think, was Fritz Heyer, who wrote the article about the frosh. He was a very emotional guy. Very strong, tough guy. Boxer. A fighter for physical and intellectual causes. He just kept kicking all of us to pay attention to the class. And he wrote endless letters to everybody. And he was secretary of the class for a long time. And he kept insisting that people get in touch with one another, whether we had known each other beforehand or not. And I would say that

almost singlehandedly he brought the Class of '44 together after the war.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPPLY: And a lot of people who had never really cared about being a member of a class became strongly attracted to the idea of having a strong Dartmouth class background. And that's what has made the Class of '44 now at least one of if not the outstanding alumni body that it is. We have as a group contributed unbelievable money and effort and continue in our leadership now under Eric Barradale and classmates like Dick Whiting and so many others—Bill Craig who's no longer with us—have just brought this class back from the brink, really. It could very easily have just disintegrated, disappeared. We never had a commencement and now we have outstanding meetings, reunions and common efforts for the benefit of the college which are the envy of a good many of the other classes. We're very lucky. I consider myself one of the luckiest members of the class. I had a chance to associate with wonderful people at different ages. You know, starting around the age 16 or 17 years old doing great things with experts at what they did and then I must express a feeling of gratitude to the whole wartime experience for forcing me to grow up. I was a very immature student when I came to Dartmouth and those years and the years since have just helped me to find my footing in a difficult world. I am very grateful. Very lucky for everybody who got me into Dartmouth and I don't know who they were. I didn't even remember the application but I guess I did one. Sent one in.

DONIN: Let's see, the dean of admissions then was Robert Strong?

EPPLY: Dean of freshmen.

DONIN: Oh, he was dean of freshmen.

DONIN: Did you have a favorite teacher? Professor?

EPPLY: I had a very important teacher in freshman math: Mr. Goldstein. I was terrible in math. And I worked so hard. I had been a pretty good student in prep school. But I hadn't confronted this kind of college math. And Professor Goldstein was so patient with me. It must have been very difficult because I couldn't get any part of it. And then slowly I did begin to come out of the fog. And Professor Goldstein got me aside one day about, oh, I don't know, a month

after the class was started, and he said, "I see you working very, very hard on this. Is there any way I can help you with the work?" And I said, "You're helping me with the work. You're doing everything anybody could do. And I am beginning to see the light, I believe." And he said, "I think you are, too." And he said, "If you stick with it, I guarantee we'll get through it together."

DONIN: Hmm. Nice.

EPPLY: And he got me through freshman math. And without his patience and understanding, I could never have done it. Not all professors are that humble. There are a lot of powerful egos among professors. [Laughter]

DONIN: Indeed.

EPPLY: He didn't exercise his at all. He was just so helpful. And I had other professors that I liked very much. Ed Booth was an English professor. His strong point was vocabulary. Great point for freshman. He pointed out that the people in the world around us, and this was a proven fact, he said, "who make the most money have the highest vocabularies." He said, "That is a fact." And I asked my brother at MIT to look into that because I thought that seems too simple. You know I've got a dictionary. Now he looked up, and he found that the records at Stevens Institute in Newark, New Jersey, which specialized in that sort of study, said indeed the highest, the most prominent business people and people of very high income all had in common one thing: that was a very large vocabulary. And it's still true.

I just wish people like Fritz Heyer were here because he would go on and on because he was so dedicated to this class and to the college. He had something to say about everything and it all accumulated in our time. He passed away a few years ago.

DONIN: Did he also work for the college?

EPPLY: Oh yes. He was director of public programs.

DONIN: That's what it was. I knew his name was familiar.

EPPLY: We had been in Navy flight training together too. He was part of our second Indian Squadron and I knew him very well. He was a very devoted man to his friends and he considered his class his

friends. So he dedicated his life to them really. And he was funny besides

[End of Interview]