

Dartmouth College Oral History Project  
The War Years at Dartmouth  
Interview with Alan Epstein '47  
By Mary Donin  
11/30/07

DONIN: How did you choose Dartmouth as your college?

EPSTEIN: Good question. I did know a few fellows who went to Dartmouth. But I had a cousin, Rick Shambroom, class of '46. And he was up at Dartmouth obviously. And he just raved about the school. That really started me on the path. Then—and you probably have in the files here—the booklet that was given out at that time to prospective students, and there were three pictures that really just sealed it. There was a picture of two fellows standing on the golf course with Baker Library in the background that grabbed me. Then there was a picture out at Moosilauke, with the snow and the skiers, a couple of skiers. And a professor, I think it was Professor McDonald, in a tweed jacket. The pictures just really grabbed me...combined with what Rick had told me.

DONIN: Well, being a city boy, you grew up in New York, did you consider yourself sort of an outdoorsy person? Were you looking for that kind of an experience?

EPSTEIN: Well, I did go to a camp in Pennsylvania in the summertime. Although it was primarily basketball and baseball, there was a little of that. And I've always said that if I came from Kansas or Minneapolis or someplace like that, perhaps I'd definitely want to go to Columbia or NYU. But the location of Dartmouth really was much to my taste. I was brought up on the streets of New York City.

DONIN: Yes. Nice change from that.

EPSTEIN: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: Okay. So we jump ahead. And you are up here to matriculate in the fall of 19—

EPSTEIN: No, no. Believe it or not I came in the winter or early spring—I guess it was March—of 1944.

DONIN: Oh....

EPSTEIN: And what's interesting—I just want to get this record to tell you—when I matriculated at Dartmouth.... In fact I'm quoting now from an article that was in the Dartmouth newspaper, Friday, March 17, 1944: "Class of '48 vanguard from 11 states, five sons of alumni, among new freshmen. The 31 civilian freshmen who entered Dartmouth last week, as the vanguard of the Class of '48...." And it goes on.

DONIN: Oh.

EPSTEIN: So 31 of us started the Class of '48, and then the balance came in July. And there was a rush to do these things because of the war. And we probably figured that we were all going to serve. So the more you could get of college, the better.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: I graduated from high school in January of '44 and came up here in March.

DONIN: Oh, so it was really pushing right along with no breaks in between.

EPSTEIN: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

DONIN: And of course when you got here, the V-12 was fully operational, wasn't it?

EPSTEIN: Well, I may not have the exact number, but I would guess that there were no more than 225 to 250 civilian students on campus. And that was composed of either you were 4-F, meant that you couldn't serve; or you were under 18 and weren't enlisting at the time. But the school predominantly by far was V-12 Marine Corps, etc. I think it was the biggest V-12 program in the country.

DONIN: Wow.

EPSTEIN: And from what I understand—and I learned this subsequently—that that came about because President Hopkins—Ernest Martin Hopkins—who was the president at the time, was friendly with Secretary of the Navy Knox. And he apparently, through the friendship, saw that Dartmouth had a viable program. Well, I think all the Ivy League schools did have it. But this was the biggest. And again, subsequently, you realized what a bind the College could

have been in with 225 students; it would've been very difficult to survive.

DONIN: Well, it was their way of basically staying operational by turning themselves over to military training. They couldn't have kept their doors open.

EPSTEIN: Absolutely.

DONIN: So did they house all you new incoming freshmen, did they house you all separately from the military?

EPSTEIN: It was one school, but it was two schools. And I think there were only three dormitories: Richardson, Wheeler, and Crosby Hall, which is now Blunt. I believe those were the three dorms that housed undergraduate students, civilian students. And the rest were all what they called ships of the Dartmouth Navy.

DONIN: And they called the—I mean the whole campus was sort of on a military kind of feeling with the.... Wasn't time spoken about in military terms, you know, 0800?

EPSTEIN: Well, there's no question that, as I said, 225 students as civilians. And yet my recollection is, of my undergraduate freshman days, was really with civilians. There were only 225, but we knew one another, and we were all good friends. And that's who I was with primarily. I mean there may have been Navy students in some of the classes—not all, but some of the classes. But I really lived a civilian Dartmouth experience. I mean you didn't go into the Naval dorms. And my friends were all '48s or perhaps '47s, at that point.

DONIN: At that point, you're in your first year.

EPSTEIN: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: And were you able to do the sort of traditional freshman things? I mean there were intramural sports going on and—

EPSTEIN: I would say.... Well, first of all, we did have a trip to Moosilauke.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: Which I remember quite vividly. And I question whether there were intramural sports. I mean I don't think there were. I don't recollect that.

DONIN: There weren't enough of you probably to field teams.

EPSTEIN: Yes.

DONIN: And the fraternities were shut down.

EPSTEIN: No, there were no fraternities.

DONIN: Right. What did you do for fun?

EPSTEIN: Well, that's a good question. And by the way, obviously it was an all-male school. Because of the V-12, Dartmouth had some terrific athletic teams.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: And again, thinking back that I was going to be interviewed, there's no question that a lot of the time, not in class, was going to sporting events. I mean the hockey team was incredibly good. I think they had won something like 31 games in a row. The basketball team had some of the top players really in the nation. A name like Dick McGuire, which wouldn't mean anything, but had come from St. John's, and there were others. So sports activities played a big role in activities. Of course you did have movies. And I do recall that there were some college activities such as the Minneapolis Symphony coming. But I'm not sure, I honestly don't remember if that is in my Navy days or my civilian days or just when. I also recall—I was very active in the DOC.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

EPSTEIN: And, well, you can't see them here, I have pictures taken in March of '44. And come to think of it, I think every...the truck here kind of mud-bound in the snow and of the seven people in the picture, I was the only civilian. Most of these fellows were Marines.

DONIN: Ah hah!

EPSTEIN: And some Navy. In fact the fellow named Hugh Chapin is in the pictures. And Hugh to this day is a classmate and good friend.

DONIN: So the military guys were allowed to do the DOC activities.

EPSTEIN: Well, I'm looking at this picture now, one picture. There are five of us really deep in snow at one of the cabins. And three of them are Marines—and these Marines, by the way, might have been in Guadalcanal. Many of them had had tremendous war experiences. And there were two '48s in the pictures: Dudley Wright from California and myself. So, yes, without question. They participated in various.... Certainly the sports teams were very much—heavily involved with the Navy and the Marine Corps.

DONIN: Now how about sort of Dartmouth traditions like the freshman trip or Winter Carnival, that sort of thing?

EPSTEIN: Well again, I did go to Moosilauke, and I remember that quite vividly, on a freshman trip. And I have here—here are pictures of Winter Carnival. I did not date the date, but it was probably '45. And as a matter of fact, here are Marines.

DONIN: Oh, '46, here we go.

EPSTEIN: Right. Here are Marines. The Winter Carnival of '46, and here is a picture of a Marine working on a winning statue. The prize was a keg of beer and a month's supply of Chesterfields apparently. [Laughter] But it shows a Marine in a cart being pulled by a Japanese soldier, and there's a sign pointing: Hanover.

DONIN: Fantastic.

EPSTEIN: So the point I'm making is that the Navy and Marine Corps, they got very much involved with Winter Carnival. And here's a picture, again, of the center of the campus, with the statue and some Eskimo dogs who were pulling people that wanted to be pulled.

DONIN: Fantastic.

EPSTEIN: So the traditions did remain.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: And I also have here—oh, I just saw it. Yes. Here is "Dartmouth invites you to a Christmas party." Well, just the point you made. At 2000, meaning at eight o'clock. "The night of December 20<sup>th</sup>,

President Hopkins will bring the seasons greeting to the students of Dartmouth. Good news: The inimitable Doc Fielding—" who was an entertainer, and he was wonderful"—will be on hand to head up the evening's entertainment in the gymnasium. Music, the Barbary Coast, songs Priscilla Hathaway, dance with Carolyn \_\_\_\_\_. This party is for Dartmouth students only. We might stretch a point for Pop Williamson. Refreshments! Refreshments! Present this card at the gym door for admittance." And I'm not certain when they said Dartmouth students only if they meant civilians or Navy. My gut feeling is that they meant both. Maybe you could bring out-of-towners. So here's another picture of "Sensational Indian puck chases in high gear." Hanover, February 11<sup>th</sup>," which was 1945. And they're showing the coach, and they're showing three hockey players. I know one was a Marine, and I think two were in the V-12.

DONIN: Wow.

EPSTEIN: And yet at the same time the goalie was a good friend of mine, Manny Benero, and here's a picture of him April '45; he was a civilian.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: And yet he ended up as a commander in the Navy as a career; he's now retired.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: So it was very mixed as far as that. But yet my friendships were with the people who lived at Richardson, primarily Richardson and Wheeler; not so much Crosby. Civilians.

DONIN: Right. So you sort of feel like—

EPSTEIN: I would add one other thing along those lines: I don't know if you know Richardson dorm, but there used to be a wing on the right. And my really good friend was a fellow named Dick Seebold who passed away, and he had diabetes, so he did not...he was from South Bend, Indiana; he was not in the service. And someone who still lives in Hanover and is very active in the college, John Hatheway.

DONIN: Oh!

EPSTEIN: Who was part of that group.

DONIN: Sure. Oh, that's great! John's going to be part of this project as well.

EPSTEIN: Oh, good.

DONIN: Yes.

EPSTEIN: Well, he's still a good friend. I saw him yesterday.

DONIN: Oh, nice. So how did you find life here as an urban New Yorker, you know, up here in the snow?

EPSTEIN: I was in heaven.

DONIN: Were you?

EPSTEIN: Oh, this was heaven. I mean I just... As I said, I became active in Outing Club activities. I remember another one very vividly, probably around that, almost when I got here, went white water canoeing down in White River Junction, or to the west of it with Ross McKinney.

DONIN: Oh.

EPSTEIN: And classmates. I can't tell you if they were... I know some civilians. They might have been Navy; I don't know. No, I became very active in.... Took advantage.... As President Hopkins said, "You had to take advantage. If you're up at Dartmouth, you must take advantage of the outdoor scene."

DONIN: So let's hear—I know in your email, when you introduced yourself to me, you had a crazy schedule of coming and going here. That you—

EPSTEIN: Yes. Well again, remember it was the war.

DONIN: Sure.

EPSTEIN: I did graduate from high school when I was 16, almost 17. I came to Dartmouth three terms. I mean three, bang bang bang. I mean you didn't take a summer vacation. I was here the winter of '44. Then the bulk of the class of '44 came in the spring.

DONIN: July, yes.

EPSTEIN: And the winter. And I have still some friends who are annoyed about the fact that I went to Dean Neidlinger and told him I was enlisting in the Navy right before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, which was February 22<sup>nd</sup>. And I didn't take a final in the music course, which was very difficult. But I missed that.

DONIN: They passed you anyway.

EPSTEIN: Yes. And I went to—I was sent to Great Lakes, which was out in Illinois, I don't know if it still exists, which was a boot camp. I was going to become what they called a radar technician. But I did apply for the V-12. And where the Navy was outstanding, they truly went out of their way; if you came from a school that had a V-12 program, they tried to send you back to that program. If I hadn't gone to Dartmouth, the Navy would have sent me—I was accepted in the V-12—I would've gone to the University of Louisville because that's where the fellows at Great Lakes went if they didn't have a... I went from Great Lakes, and a fellow named George \_\_\_\_\_ who ended up as my roommate or one of my roommates; he was sent from this radar technician's school in Chicago, and we were sent back to Dartmouth. He had gone to Dartmouth in the class of '47. And I was at that time class of '48. So here I am back in Hanover. And spent three terms in the V-12 program here. Again, no summer vacation. And then we were discharged in June of '46. I did take that summer off. Came back for two terms, and graduated in '47.

DONIN: So the V-12 trained you to be an officer, right? Isn't that what the training was all about?

EPSTEIN: When I was discharged and came back as a civilian, I did go into the ROTC program, which we did have here. And a number of us—I have it here somewhere—oh, I guess about 30 of us, ended up receiving a commission in the Navy.

DONIN: In the Navy, right.

EPSTEIN: And I would tell you there— Here: Navy unit commissions 24 as ensigns; most of these were '47s. But as I said, the Navy really killed themselves in that respect. The Army had a somewhat similar program. I don't think it was as good. But when different things came along, such as the Battle of the Bulge, they pulled everyone out and needed them on the front lines. And I did have a good



friend—or a friend—who was killed in Okinawa. And he was in what was the equivalent of the Army V-12 program. But he was pulled out and sent to Okinawa, and that was it. So I really feel a fond feeling toward the Navy. Now, would you like me to go on in what it was like here in the Navy?

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: You definitely—I'm going to even preface this. When the Korean War came along, thank goodness—I mean as far as I was concerned—I had been to Great Lakes. And that was during World War II. That the draft boards said: You spent at least 90 days in World War II. We have no interest in you for the Korean War. A number of my friends who were just here.... And I must tell you, when you were in the Navy here, you really were in the Navy. But the draft boards said: You really weren't in the Navy. And they said, Either you pick up your commission or go—whatever—or we're going to put you in the Army for the Korean War. So a number of my friends did pick up their commissions. By the way, I had good experiences in that brief period there in the Navy. But because I was at Great Lakes for at least 90 days or 100 days, whatever it was, that was the end of it. I have a commission, and that's the end of it. Now, being in the Navy here, you were really in the Navy. I mean, you know, you couldn't decide, well, I think I'm going to stay out late. I mean the ships were the ships, the civilians didn't come in the ships. I started—I was in Middle Mass. I had three roommates. And, you know, you had to make sure your beds and everything in the room was shipshape. They had a—I can't remember his name—but there was a Marine captain or something that came around. He was really very, very strict.

DONIN: Inspecting the rooms.

EPSTEIN: Inspecting the rooms. And, you know, we would have exercises—I don't know if it was five or six o'clock in the morning outside. I don't recall—in fact I asked a few friends—if we marched for meals. I tend to think we did. And by the way, South Thayer was, although Dick's House existed, South Thayer was the medical sickbay I guess you'd call it.

DONIN: Oh, interesting. And it was like a mess hall over there in Commons, right? Is that right?

EPSTEIN: My recollection was that we ate in Thayer. I don't—I don't recall. It could've been. I don't recall. It was one or the other. But I mean one of the courses I.... One of the regrets, of course, being in the V-12, you did take a number of courses that surely weren't liberal arts, where in a way, in retrospect, now, they were wasted courses to learn the bore of a gun or something like that. I do recall that winter of, I guess, '46 taking—you had to I think swim the pool under water, maybe coming up once. I don't remember. And I couldn't do it. So I had to—I could swim, but I couldn't dive, and that's where I lost out. I had to take swimming. Well, I want to tell you, in the winter, and it's ten below, and you're looking out the windows, and there are icicles. And you're doing this, and you're saying, oh, my gosh. It was awful. [Laughs]

DONIN: That's terrible.

EPSTEIN: But the courses were a waste unless you were going to—unless the war continued. Thank goodness it didn't.

DONIN: Yes, the training classes were a waste.

EPSTEIN: Yes. I mean they were counted as credit for a Dartmouth degree, but you weren't taking what I consider liberal arts courses.

DONIN: Sure.

EPSTEIN: So I wasted a number of courses on the Navy.

DONIN: But the classes that you did take, you were mixed in with the regular undergrads, right, with the regular civilians?

EPSTEIN: I'm thinking back. I think my English class was strictly civilians. I just have a feeling freshman English was strictly civilians. Some of the other classes, if you took an economics course, there easily could have been. Because the Navy people, you could take some civilian courses.

DONIN: Yes.

EPSTEIN: It wasn't strictly Naval courses. But you could take.... By the way, the Navy here, I feel, made it a very democratic college. I really think before World War II, you know, it was an Ivy League white-shoe—

- DONIN: Conservative.
- EPSTEIN: Conservative school. And the V-12 truly brought in people from all over the country and all backgrounds. And I think it added. Again, it just wasn't white-shoe \_\_\_\_\_.
- DONIN: And my understanding is that a lot of the V-12—a lot of the students who came here originally as V-12 students, after they finished their service, they wanted to come back to Dartmouth and complete their undergraduate degree here. Is that your experience?
- EPSTEIN: Yes. I'm not sure if they all could.
- DONIN: No, I don't think there was room. I mean once the war was over.
- EPSTEIN: But you must remember, come, say 1946 or '47, whatever, you had class of 1940, let's say, maybe even '39—
- DONIN: Sure.
- EPSTEIN: —coming back. And I remember there was I think Colonel Schilling. He was an absolute Air Force hero. But he was back on campus. Or Merrill Frost—I don't know if you know Merrill. But Merrill was in a fire and had his face completely disfigured. And he was one of the stars of the football team. So it was quite an experience. Therefore there wasn't quite as much class cohesion. There was Dartmouth cohesion that everybody.... Well, whether I'm talking the class of '47 or class of '48, there are many—or V-12 people who maybe even graduated—who didn't have quite the feeling about Dartmouth that you know if you came here and really were a part of it. Not to imply that— There were many V-12 students who became a part of Dartmouth and a very big part of Dartmouth and still are to this day. I will say Al Bildner, who you now have Bildner Hall, and who was a very close friend of mine now and then, he was in Hitchcock....
- DONIN: He wrote me a long letter with reminiscences.
- EPSTEIN: Well, Allen came here in the V-12. I believe he was going to go to Harvard. And ended up here and of course has been—he was the first president of the class of '47.
- DONIN: Mmm. Was there a distinction made between the students who came in as traditional undergrads versus those who came in through the V-12 program?

- EPSTEIN: Initially.... I can't answer that. It's too broad a question because someone may have had that kind of a feeling. But I don't think so. I think the people who were here were here. In fact fraternities did reopen. I went into a fraternity that's not here any longer—Pi Lambda Phi. And I know there were many, a number of V-12ers, there were many people who were strictly civilians, and we all got along, you know, very well.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Did your social life change once you were in the military, when you came back here? Did your idea of what was fun change? Or you were just glad to be back on campus?
- EPSTEIN: As a civilian?
- DONIN: No, once you came back.....
- EPSTEIN: Oh, came back? I was thrilled to be back here. And, yes, there was more, you know, I was in the Navy. But I did have some civilian friends, of course, from the older days. And I did, you know, see them when I could. You know you're asking about social life. There really wasn't much of a social life. I mean I do remember going down to a dance at Claremont or something or Lebanon.
- DONIN: Was your social life centered around the fraternity once it reopened?
- EPSTEIN: Oh, now we're talking as a civilian. After I came back as a civilian.
- DONIN: Right.
- EPSTEIN: Yes, I would say so.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- EPSTEIN: I would say so. And a number of those people, by the way, who came to Dartmouth in the V-12 program ended up as civilians, ended up as lifelong friends.
- DONIN: Right.
- EPSTEIN: I mean lifelong friends. And we were very fortunate that.... I eventually married Sally, and our friends married gals that we liked.

And we really, a lot of our social life revolved around Dartmouth and Dartmouth people.

DONIN: Did you meet your wife while you were a student here?

EPSTEIN: No, no, no.

DONIN: That was later.

EPSTEIN: That was later. Yes, it had nothing to do with....

DONIN: She has nothing to do with....

EPSTEIN: I mean I do remember going to two I guess they were Green Key dances, you know, and inviting somebody. One was from Wellesley. I think the other gal was from New York City. And I remember many friends would go down to Smith or—I don't remember going over to Skidmore. But I really think my life revolved around classes, actively sports-wise myself, and the sports programs of Dartmouth. And maybe some cultural things, as I told you, at Webster Hall or at Dartmouth Hall.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Well, this is where—Webster Hall is where you saw the movies?

EPSTEIN: Well, that's right because the Nugget Theater had burned down in town just prior to my coming. It was apparently quite a place. And the movies would be here at Webster Hall. And again I remember hearing the Minneapolis Symphony at Webster Hall. And hearing a political—not a political—a union figure at Dartmouth Hall.

DONIN: Hmm. Oh, of course, you had speakers there, too.

EPSTEIN: Yes.

DONIN: Yes, yes. So you were the class that came in when President Hopkins was president—President Hopkins was here when you came.

EPSTEIN: Right.

DONIN: When you graduated, it was President [John Sloan] Dickey.

EPSTEIN: Correct.

DONIN: So did you have an official—How's your throat doing?

EPSTEIN: Good. Very good.

DONIN: This is terrific. So did you have an official sort of matriculation ceremony with President Hopkins when you got here in March of '44?

EPSTEIN: As a matter of fact....

DONIN: Hmm, that scrapbook is coming in handy.

EPSTEIN: Yes. Let's get this now. By the way, here is...here we go. I have here a letter dated January 22, 1944 from Dean Robert Strong telling me that I had been accepted into the Class of '48. And it's interesting because he did ask: "It is our understanding that you wish to begin your college work in the term that will start on March 3, 1944. If your plans have changed, let me know." Then at that time I received two invitations, which I happen to have here: "Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins would have much pleasure in meeting men of the Class of '48 at eight o'clock on the evening of Thursday, July 27th, at the President's House." So obviously when I came along with the 30 other '48s, we had nothing at that point.

DONIN: Right.

EPSTEIN: But then when the class really came, that was the official opening of the class of '48. Then there's another one here. This is kind of interesting. "President and Mrs. Hopkins will hold a reception for members of the faculty and their families, officers of the V-12 unit and their families, members of the civilian college, Dartmouth men in the V-12 unit, and local Dartmouth alumni and their families on Dartmouth Night, Friday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, eight-thirty until ten, Thayer Hall."

DONIN: Oh....

EPSTEIN: So President Hopkins did mix the V-12 and the civilians.

DONIN: He put everybody together.

EPSTEIN: Everybody together, which was good.

DONIN: Yes, it is good. That it is good. So what were your impressions of President Hopkins? Did you have any?

EPSTEIN: Well, I'm a 17-year-old, and here's a man who had been president of this august college for decades. So I mean he was a very imposing figure. Not that I really had much to do with him. He would be at the—when there was a parade. Every Wednesday, I think, the V-12 and the Marines had a parade. I don't really recall even showing much interest in them when I was first a civilian.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: But then later on, when I was back here in the Navy, I certainly recall him.

DONIN: And they did formations on the Green, didn't they?

EPSTEIN: Oh, no, no, no. It was like you would see at West Point or wherever. No, they were full passing in review. And I know there's a picture somewhere with James Forrestal, who was the then secretary of the Navy, had been up here one time. A couple of men I do recall. Allan Gasner was the class of '47—a very lifelong friend who's unfortunately passed away. I remember one of the parades, he had, I guess, stupidly he had, we were at rest or something, and he kept looking up at the sun, and he fainted. So that was that. And I was very impressed. The fellow who led our unit—I don't know if at that time I was in Middle Mass. or Hitchcock—but a fellow by the name of Gene Cafiero, he was very talented, very capable. He ended up as the president of Chrysler Corp.

DONIN: Wow.

EPSTEIN: He, too, I think has passed on.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: And by the way, if you were in Middle Mass. In the Navy.... Of course today you have a parking lot behind Middle Mass. In those days there was horseshoe pitching.

DONIN: [Laughs]

EPSTEIN: And that really—again, that was a fun activity that we had, pitching horseshoes in the back of Middle Mass.

DONIN: Now were you— At that point, were they still treating freshmen as— were the upperclassmen, were there any upperclassmen?— treating you like freshmen? I mean did you have to wear a beanie and do all that stuff?

EPSTEIN: No. But you know there were a couple of older classmates who did go on with that tradition. And I won't even mention names. But I remember one gave a haircut to a friend of mine, and it was a terrible haircut. It was like a zebra's. No, there was some hazing. But, you know, how much could there be really when you had 225 civilians on campus?

DONIN: Right.

EPSTEIN: I really had the feeling that I was at Dartmouth College as an undergraduate. Then when I was in the Navy, I still had a good feeling about it. But it was a different. As I told you, we would have exercises in the morning. I don't know if they still call it the Rocks if you're sitting at a football game and you look at the mountains towards, you know, toward the hockey rink. Is it still the Rocks? But we used to have some vigorous training going over fences and—I mean high fences. Being here in the Navy was honestly "you were in the Navy."

DONIN: Right.

EPSTEIN: Alumni Hall, a good part of it was made up of different type guns, anti-aircraft guns and, you know, guns of that type. I mean the basketball court was still there. And I don't know if you know it, but we had a wonderful track in the Alumni Hall. Just before I came, Glen Cunningham, who was the miler in the nation, broke, I think, the 4:04 minute mile on the Dartmouth track. And that got a lot of publicity. You know walking over and thinking of Dartmouth in those days, the paths on the campus are much broader today, going across the campus. I remember them much more narrow. And of course I remember duckboards.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

EPSTEIN: And I don't think you have them anymore. And I don't know if it doesn't get muddy or what the situation is.



- DONIN: Well, I think, you know, the engineering of how they do the paths with all sorts of drainage built into them. They don't do the duckboards across the Green. There are duckboards in front of some of the dorms.
- EPSTEIN: Oh, really? I will tell you one other thing, and I've expressed this to a number of people, I think one of the signature beauties of Dartmouth was the ski jump.
- DONIN: Oh.
- EPSTEIN: I think that that has been eliminated and took away a real plus of Dartmouth. And I mean if you go out to the ski jump, whether it was in the Navy or the V-12 or as civilians, it was an exciting time going out there.
- DONIN: That was on Oak Hill?
- EPSTEIN: No, no, no. It was on the golf course.
- DONIN: Oh....
- EPSTEIN: Now, Oak Hill existed.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- EPSTEIN: But that was for skiing. The ski jump was out on the golf course. And if you know the golf course, it's on the back nine. And at the bottom, there's actually a T that was on a par 3 hole that went—it was a very difficult hole and difficult if you had to climb it. In fact President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower was coming here, and I think I wrote him and said, "Please if you play golf there, don't play holes 13 and 14." [Laughter] But the ski jump was wonderful, and I think.... And I was talking to somebody last night who feels that without the ski jump, that the Carnival misses something that was really quite unique at Dartmouth.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Well, it was a real level of competition that they don't have now.
- EPSTEIN: And I will tell you that I had two very good friends who were raised in Hanover, and who were— Well, one of them, Colin Stewart, ended up as an Olympic skier for Dartmouth. In fact my first experience skiing was going out to the golf course and Colin, I keep

remembering he was an Olympic skier, said, "Stand on the back of my skis and put your arms around my waist." And that was my first experience skiing.

DONIN: That's great. [Laughs]

EPSTEIN: I did not ski that much at Dartmouth. Subsequently I skied a lot when I got out of Dartmouth. But at Dartmouth I didn't really ski that much.

DONIN: Back to the time when President Hopkins was here, it's been said by some people in the classes here that it was not a welcoming place if you were a Jewish student.

EPSTEIN: Well, that's a good question. I don't want to attribute that to President Hopkins. I think the nation in the thirties and forties was a different place than America is today.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: I do remember when I was in Richardson, a fellow who I felt was quite anti-Semitic. If you read the Dartmouth newspaper, there would be advertisements in the newspaper advertising different hotels or motels, whatever they were, in the area. And they would say "restricted." And restricted basically meant no Jews or other ethnic people, I would guess. But, no, you know you kind of knew that there was a quota at Dartmouth, as there was probably at other schools. But I don't attribute that to Ernest Martin Hopkins. I think he probably felt that the quota system was a good system. You know to this day I think Dartmouth has a smaller proportion of Jewish people than other Ivy League schools. And I attribute that to the location. I think a lot of Jewish people like to be in a city, at a Columbia or a Harvard or a Pennsylvania is more appetizing. And this is an aside, too, because I just came from an Alumni Council meeting where the point was raised that we should be, even though we've made incredible strides, that we don't have as many Latinos or African-Americans. And I attribute that—we always should be trying harder to have more. But I again attribute it to the location. I mean if I was.... You know if I was a Latino, I think I would rather go to a school in Florida or California, although they're here and I'm thrilled that they're here.

DONIN: That's been raised—your point has been made by plenty of others. And in regard not only to the student population but to the faculty as

well. You know people who are used to an urban life are not necessarily attracted to teaching in a place like Dartmouth.

EPSTEIN: I'll tell you, my wife—we have two daughters who attended Dartmouth, Class of '77 and '79. And if they hadn't built the highway system and hadn't built Hopkins Center, I think my wife would have been very unhappy if the girls had come up here. And by the way, they had wonderful experiences. I do recall, by the way, when you raised about anti-Semitism, that there was a newspaper in New York called P.M. and at one point they had made a big stink about the quota system at Dartmouth. And I think President Hopkins was still the president. And, you know, we didn't touch on President Dickey. He was an unusual man. And it was exciting times with the Great Issues course. I kind of missed out on that. But the Great Issues, and he was.... In fact one reunion, I'm not sure which one, it was probably about our 15<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, our daughter and some other friends of hers at the reunion went over to the president's house and urged the president to accept women at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Hah!

EPSTEIN: Well, one daughter was the second class of women, and the other was the fourth class, and those were difficult times for women at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Yes, tough times.

EPSTEIN: It's a changed school today—to the good.

DONIN: But the women who came here in those early classes, I think they were very brave. They were like pioneers.

EPSTEIN: Yes. It was.... Well, because some of the fellows, you know, it was always looked at as a macho school, and said, Hey, I was going to an all-male school, and resented it. I only wish I was young for many reasons. But my schooling was, after the sixth grade, was 100 percent all male. So I to this day can't conceive why anyone would want to go to, say, an all-female school. I know the reasons. But I've seen one of our grandsons, and I've seen him in action in young grades interacting with gals in his class. It's so much more natural.

DONIN: But that was the trend back then, to educate them separately.

- EPSTEIN: Well, times have changed. Thank goodness!
- DONIN: Yes, thank goodness. So explain to me again how you made the transition from class of '48 to class of '47.
- EPSTEIN: Good question. And I guess I can't give you the real reason. But I think we went to.... Well, first of all, most of our truly good friends were class of '47. And I could name six or seven who today were still really our closest friends in life. They were '47ers. We went to some reunion, probably the tenth reunion, class of '48 reunion, and my wife didn't like it. She thought, these aren't really friends.
- DONIN: Oh, I didn't realize it took place that late. Oh....
- EPSTEIN: Oh, yes. I asked the college if I could change it. After all, I had graduated in '47. And Al Bildner, who's a very good friend, said, "We're not going to let you in the class." Kidding of course. And that's why we made it, because our friendships really were '47s. I eventually became president of the class, too.
- DONIN: Oh, isn't that funny.
- EPSTEIN: Yes.
- DONIN: Well, you—
- EPSTEIN: And by the way— Excuse me. I will tell you that I still have friends in the class of '48, not that many. And in times they'll say, we have a reunion coming up; why don't you come to that reunion, too? Well, I haven't. But I still have a warm feeling for many of those people.
- DONIN: But when you were here, it was just chance that you ended up interacting with people from '47.
- EPSTEIN: As a civilian, the first civilian run-around, I was strictly '48. I knew some '47s, but it was really the class of '48. The fellows in Richardson Hall and possibly in Wheeler. And then when I came back in the Navy, well, there were Navy people. I guess the ones I became friendly with were '47s.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- EPSTEIN: And then when I became a civilian again, they were really class of '47. I joined a fraternity. A lot of these fellows joined the fraternity. It

was class of '47. Early on, class of '48. Later life at college, '47. And that's how that all came about.

DONIN: And it was an easy process to make the change when you did.

EPSTEIN: Oh, yes.

DONIN: They don't care what class you're identified with.

EPSTEIN: You know what? They want you affiliated really.

DONIN: Somehow, right.

EPSTEIN: No, if I hadn't graduated in '47, then I could see where they'd say, No.... Yes, we can't. Well, I'll tell you a cute story along those lines—and I'm going to have the dates wrong. But we had—we ran into somebody who—I'm going to make this up and say he was the class of '51. And he said, "Alan and Sally, if, you know, we run into one another, I was the class of '56." What happened, he had divorced and was dating some women. And he just didn't want them to know that he was the class of '51, that he was that old. [Laughter] So whether he officially changed his class or not, I don't know. But in his mind he changed his class.

DONIN: That's really outrageous. [Laughs]

EPSTEIN: It happens.

DONIN: Yes, I guess it does. So let's see, what have I forgotten to ask you about here?

EPSTEIN: You know you've got to remember this was really a very remote school in those days. It would take eight hours to get up here. The roads weren't good. I do remember there was a group of about three or four people who were killed in an automobile accident at that time. And your prime way of getting up here was the railroad. I mean I vividly recall being on that train coming back from leave. This was the Navy primarily. Where it was you went past Greenfield, Massachusetts, and probably everyone on the train was a Navy or Marine going back to Hanover or to White River Junction.

DONIN: Hmm. Hmm.

- EPSTEIN: Which was—the train didn't come to Hanover; it went to White River.
- DONIN: Right, right. And so from New York up to White River was what, eight hours?
- EPSTEIN: It took easily—it took eight hours. Well, just to go around—I don't know if you know New Haven.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- EPSTEIN: But there's a tunnel that goes through a mountain at New Haven. It took an hour probably just to get around New Haven, you know. So....
- DONIN: It's a long haul. Very different than it is today.
- EPSTEIN: It makes a big difference.
- DONIN: Yes, yes.
- EPSTEIN: You really can fly today.
- DONIN: The access to cars also was not....
- EPSTEIN: There were no cars. In fact you know it's funny. I was thinking last night, how did we even get from White River back to Hanover? And my gut feeling is they must have had buses to take you back. And I do recall I went with—When I was in the Navy, I went up to Cannon Mountain and Old Man of the Mountain with a roommate of mine in the Navy, and we hitchhiked. And I remember vividly, you know, you had to get a lot of hitchhiking. But you know you did do it. No cars were not around. Then when the war ended, you could have cars. I don't think there were many people that had cars. But I do recall once driving over to Skidmore, and I remember a roommate of mine had a car. But there weren't that many.
- DONIN: Mm-mm. So were you on campus for VE-Day and VJ-Day?
- EPSTEIN: No. I was not here on VE-Day. I could have been here on VJ-Day. You know I've seen the pictures. I don't want to tell you something vividly that I recall; I've seen the pictures. And maybe I recall it from them. But, you know, we were kept posted. I mean the Dartmouth, and you could get newspapers. You obviously didn't have

television. But we were certainly aware of what was going on with the war.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: You know it was a difficult.... That civilian period it was difficult for a lot of the civilians. Because, you know, now, counter to today or even Vietnam, you wanted to be in the service.

DONIN: Right.

EPSTEIN: And to be up here as a civilian, surrounded by thousands of V-12ers and Marine Corps. And as I told you, some of these Navy fellows and Marine Corps had really seen action in the early forties and came back here for officers' training.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

EPSTEIN: But, you know, they, too, survived. But it was a difficult period for them. I know they felt, you know, it wasn't a good feeling.

DONIN: No. Do you think, when you came back as a civilian, were you a better student?

EPSTEIN: Hmm.

DONIN: First of all you were more mature.

EPSTEIN: Yes. Well, I started taking courses that I think were far more liberal arts and interesting. I took a course with Professor Finch in poetry—I didn't do well in it; but I enjoyed the course. And that kind of thing. And by the way, in that class was a fellow—a classmate—Phil Booth.... I don't know if you know him.

DONIN: Oh, Phillip Booth.

EPSTEIN: Philip Booth who, of course, is.... I mean it's kind of weird for me to think that I was in the poetry course with Philip Booth. Incidentally, his father was Professor Booth; he was one of my English teachers as a freshman. No, I mean it was a much—in a way it was a more interesting school because you did start having what you'd call normal activities.

DONIN: Right.

- EPSTEIN: On the campus. Besides the fraternities, there were more cultural events starting to take place.
- DONIN: What did you major in?
- EPSTEIN: Well, I'll say Naval Science, which is really.... and economics.
- DONIN: Oh, yes. Mm-hmm.
- EPSTEIN: And personally, if I had it to do over again, those would not be my majors.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Right, right.
- EPSTEIN: I'm a big believer in liberal arts education. But I wanted to blow my mind a little more than—well, in the Navy you had to. There was nothing you could do about it.
- DONIN: Right. You didn't have any choice.
- EPSTEIN: But that's why when I said I took a poetry course—
- DONIN: Sure.
- EPSTEIN: —or a history course, you know those were exciting.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. So you actually spent—how many semesters were you here all told?
- EPSTEIN: I was here eight. But I was out of here in three and a half years.
- DONIN: Well, everything was compressed.
- EPSTEIN: Yes, it really.... Well again, because of the war, everything.... Even, I must tell you that even my high school days or junior high school days were compressed, skipping. So I mean I got out of here I—when I graduated, I was 20.
- DONIN: You were still so young.
- EPSTEIN: Yes. You know when I see grandchildren who go to college now, they're liable to be over in...we happen to have one at the moment in Spain and what Professor Rassias did.



DONIN: Oh, yes.

EPSTEIN: I mean it's unbelievable, I think.

DONIN: Fantastic program.

EPSTEIN: Again, there was a war on, you know.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Exactly.

EPSTEIN: And we didn't know they were going to drop the atomic bomb.

DONIN: Mm-mmm. Mm-mmm.

EPSTEIN: So....

DONIN: Okay. I think we're done.

EPSTEIN: Good. Well, I hope it was helpful.

DONIN: It was very helpful. Yes, very helpful.

[End of Interview]