

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Samuel Florman '46 TH '73
By Mary Donin
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FLORMAN: Well, I got my degree from Thayer in 1973 when I was serving as an overseer at that time and talking to Karl Long who was the dean. "Well you took a masters at Columbia." And I had taken some engineering courses at NYU. He said, "Let's add all that up together with what you had here at Dartmouth," and he said, "You know, you have more than enough to get a CE, civil engineer." I don't think they give that degree any more but that was the degree given in those days after the fifth year at Thayer. So if you look at the graduation program in 1973 you will see that I was granted my degree at that time. But when I found myself listed as the class of '73, Dartmouth '46, Thayer '73, I said, "Well that's ridiculous." So they have me listed as '46 at Thayer, I believe.

DONIN: Ok.

FORMAN: So I am '46 Dartmouth and '46 Thayer.

DONIN: In fact, I have your fiftieth reunion thing here. What did I do with it? I thought I had it. It is probably listed in there. Oh, here it is. Let's see here. Oh, no, it doesn't list the degrees. When I get back I am going to check the 2006 Alumni Directory which is the most current one and see how they have you listed because it does look a little silly to have you listed as class of '73 at Thayer. Ok, well let's back up a little bit and find out how it was back when you were in high school back in 1940 or whatever when you were thinking about college, how did you choose Dartmouth?

FLORMAN: Well, I was a city boy. And I did in the summertime go to camp in Maine, which was not untypical in those days. So I sort of liked that touch of the out-of-doors, and I had an advisor at high school who said also, "You've been in the city all your life." And he recommended Dartmouth. I went to Dartmouth to look at it. And I guess you hear this all the time: People fall in love with it. The campus, it looks exactly like the dream of a campus. And that plus everything I'd heard about it, it just struck me as a place that would be great. Also, I had done a little research, and math and science were my strengths. And I knew they had an engineering school. I knew they had a business school. And they had something in those

days called Tuck-Thayer Program. And having been a child of the Depression, I thought, well, maybe that's a way to take my mathematics and a little business. Maybe that's a course that will lead me toward making a living which seemed to be something that was worth thinking about. So put it all together, that was my choice. And happily I was accepted. It wasn't I don't believe as difficult to qualify in those days as it is today. But it still was an achievement and was something to be proud of.

DONIN: Did you apply anywhere else, or was it just Dartmouth?

FLORMAN: I must have had one or two safety schools. The idea of applying to ten, 12 schools the way a lot of youngsters do today... I was encouraged at the school that I went to to think that I had the qualifications.

DONIN: They were right.

FLORMAN: One serious school and one or two safety schools. And that was that.

DONIN: You were unusual in that you went beforehand to see it. Many of the people I've interviewed from this group in the forties applied and went sight unseen, which I would think would be terrifying. So...?

FLORMAN: Well, my then brother-in-law, who was quite a bit older, married to my sister who was older, took me on a tour, a weekend tour of several colleges. And as a matter of fact, trivia maybe, we were returning to New York on December 7th, 1941, listening to a football game on the radio when there was an interruption telling us about Pearl Harbor.

DONIN: That was actually my next question. Wow! So that's forever fixed in your mind.

FLORMAN: Yes, very, very much so.

DONIN: So I think that was the first...I mean it was right after Pearl Harbor that President [Ernest Martin] Hopkins decided that they needed to start sort of, well, running the school full time. Shortening some of these classes and getting them up and running to start in the summer of '42.

- FLORMAN: Yes. Within a month of graduating from high school, I was on my way to Hanover.
- DONIN: Mmmm. Now at that point, had you given any thought to just enlisting? Or were you not yet 18?
- FLORMAN: I was only 17. And I guess—I forget when I registered for the draft, but no. It was very strange, the early months of the war. We were in a war, but we had no television. There was plenty of censorship. The news was very slow. And there wasn't that much because things were happening far, far away. And life after the original shock seemed eerily normal. So the thought was, well, go on to college, and we'll lead our lives, and maybe this war will be over before we know it.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. When you got to Dartmouth in that summer, was there a full complement of students on the campus? Or was it depleted because so many had left to join up and go into the military.
- FLORMAN: It seemed to me like there were a lot of students. I wasn't analyzing the situation. But it seemed to me to be college, campus, students, older students, students sitting on the fence, and just everything that you think of when you're first going to college. There it was.
- DONIN: Did you have to wear a beanie and go through all the hazing stuff?
- FLORMAN: I don't remember any beanie and hazing. And it may be that the war had something to do with that or the summer. Or maybe certain things that used to go on in the fall wouldn't go on in the summer. I don't remember hazing or beanies.
- DONIN: So was it an entire class that came in that summer, or were you sort of staggering...some came in the summer and then some more came in the fall? Do you remember that?
- FLORMAN: I don't remember. I don't remember. But I had the feeling that there were a lot of people there. I don't remember a large group suddenly showing up in the fall. I think...Well, I guess you can find the figures somewhere.
- DONIN: Oh, sure.
- FLORMAN: But I would guess that much if not most of the class started right in.

DONIN: So where did you live your freshman year?

FLORMAN: I lived in Streeter Hall the whole time I was there. Even after I went into the Navy, they kept me in Streeter Hall.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And who were your roommates?

FLORMAN: Well, I had a classmate from New York from school, Howard Samuel. And he was my roommate for one term, maybe two terms. And....

DONIN: Was he from your same class at Fieldston?

FLORMAN: Yes, yes.

DONIN: Amazing. Was that on purpose? I mean they matched you up? Or you were never aware?

FLORMAN: I don't recall whether we asked for it or they just did it as something that was expedient. And he was very active in the newspaper, the *Daily Dartmouth* from the early, early days. I think he became the editor. We'd been good friends in high school. But friends and roommates are two different things. After a couple of semesters, we remained friends but no more roommates.

DONIN: Right. Time to move on to other things. So describe what your undergraduate career was like. I know you eventually joined the V-12 training program. But I don't know how chopped up your experience was there.

FLORMAN: It was, as I said before, about the war in general, it seemed very, very much like college life. Going to classes. And when the football season came around, all the whoop-de-do about games and bonfires. And I remember going to Boston to see the Harvard football game. All of the things that you think of. And going to classes. Now, somewhere along the line, and I have it written down, it was in December that I signed up with the Navy. And I remember that fall, as the term started, representatives from the various services started showing up on campus and giving presentations. And it was like going to the movies. You went...this evening the Army is telling you how wonderful the Army is and what wonderful chances, opportunities you will have if you will only sign up with them. They'll leave you in college. Then when you do go into the Army, you're going to be a four-star general before you know it.

DONIN: [Laughs] Yes.

FLORMAN: Then there were people...I know we didn't have an air force in those days. But there were special programs if you wanted to fly for the Army or if you wanted to fly for the Navy. Each of these...it was a salesmanship evening. And a lot of my classmates—and I guess maybe even those in the class ahead—would sign up. And maybe one semester, two semesters later, as the war required, all the promises were forgotten, and suddenly dozens of classmates were swept off to boot camp and were in the middle of battle before anybody really knew what had happened. Why I chose the Navy, I used to root for Navy in the Army-Navy football games. And I don't know. It was an attractive presentation or whatever. Anyhow, in December, I decided, well, all right, I have to do something. And in those days it was V-1.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FLORMAN: And that remained as a program. I don't know all the details, when V-12 became separate from V-1. And also there were people on the campus, in uniform, older men. And I remember distinctly [Byron] Wizzer White.

DONIN: The Supreme Court justice?

FLORMAN: The Supreme Court justice. At that time he was known as having been a great football player.

DONIN: Football player. University of Colorado I think it was.

FLORMAN: Well, I think you're right. I remember going to the Dartmouth Outing Club, a group of us, one evening. And who was at the next table? He had to be pointed out to me. "That's Wizzer White over there." Either they were celebrating his birthday or he was participating. Anyhow, he was in uniform. There were older men who were there in, I believe, the V-1 program. The Navy had reached some agreement with Dartmouth.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

FLORMAN: And the older people were there taking what kind of courses I do not know.

DONIN: Training to be officers, I think.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: Yes.

FLORMAN: So in any event, I signed up in December, and they had, the Navy had, the option to call us into uniform or into active duty, I guess, at their—as their need or at their pleasure. And as we saw people from the other services disappearing.... Oh, I didn't mention the Marines. They went off, too. The semester would end, or trimester, as we had since we were going around the clock so to speak, and we would get word, okay, come back. You're continuing with your course as long as you're going to study engineering. My idea of Tuck-Thayer and taking a combination course, I was told by one of the officers—I think maybe the captain whom I went to see about what kind of course I could follow—and he said, "You want to go in the supply corps and take your chances there? Or you want to be an engineer and go into the civil engineering corps? We have nothing in the Navy to suit your requirements or desires for Tuck-Thayer program." So I said, "Well, as a matter of fact, if I have to choose, engineering is my choice," Strangely, after I was in uniform, I was called in again by the—I think he was a captain, whoever was heading up the unit there—saying that he had a request from MIT or from the Navy to send one student to MIT to study meteorology.

DONIN: Huh!

FLORMAN: And looking at my transcript, I had taken the right courses, and I seemed to be equipped. And how would I like to go to MIT to be a weatherman? I said, "Sir, is that an order, or do I have a choice?" And he said—let me look at these papers. "A volunteer is required." So I said, "Well, sir, I think I can serve my country better as an engineer." And he sort of grumbled a little bit because that meant he had to find somebody else. Anyhow, there was no question but that we were there. We were destined to be engineers and required to really study engineering. And that's really what kept us there month after month or semester after semester.

DONIN: Was your course of study a combination of military stuff to meet the requirements of the Navy and liberal arts? Do you recollect?

FLORMAN: Well, when I say I enlisted in December, then I started talking about being in uniform. It wasn't until July of '43 that we were called up by

the Navy to go into uniform and be seamen. And I used to tease my father that from his paying the tuition to my suddenly receiving a monthly paycheck, it made quite a difference. So I had one year from the spring of '42 until July of '43 really as a civilian student.

DONIN: A regular civilian student, right.

FLORMAN: And I took liberal arts courses along with the preliminary science courses. After that it was pretty much Thayer School courses.

DONIN: That were focused toward your engineering degree.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: Right. But there were also...were there military courses.

FLORMAN: We didn't have military courses. We had...there were military requirements: marching—

DONIN: Oh, yes, calisthenics.

FLORMAN: —in formation.

DONIN: Yes.

FLORMAN: Calisthenics. And I think even some boxing. One time in my life—

DONIN: You actually learned to be boxer, right. You described in your email you wrote to me, didn't you have to go to the top of some tower and jump into a big thing of water?

FLORMAN: Yes, yes, yes. As matter of fact, Thayer School, being at one end of the campus, and the gymnasium being at the other end of the campus, we had to, certain days of the week, sprint from one to the other.

DONIN: Whoa!

FLORMAN: To go into the pool and learn how to do a variety of things. One was they had a platform 30 or more feet above the pool. And you had to learn how to jump off a sinking ship.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

FLORMAN: And how to swim. And how to swim. I remember if you jump into the water, and you come up and there's fire on the surface of the water because of gasoline or whatever burning, how to sweep your arms around to clear the fire and then dive down under and come up again and more sweeping. So we had a certain amount of that in the pool. We had the marching, we had the calisthenics, and we had to get up in the morning. No more thinking who your roommate was going to be. We were put, as I recall, four of us, two double deckers, in a small room adjoining the living room. I think that's the way the rooms were set up.

DONIN: Oh. Mm-hmm.

FLORMAN: And I had three roommates. And I remember one in particular who came from the fleet. He was not a Dartmouth student. At this time there were—

DONIN: 'They were bringing in—right.

FLORMAN: Students and, in this case, someone who had been on active duty with the fleet. And he had a very different idea. When we had our leave on certain weekends, he had a sailor's idea of how to spend leave, as opposed to—

DONIN: An undergraduate.

FLORMAN: —an undergraduate. So he said, "You can hitch a ride to Smith." He said, "I'm going in to find a girl at Woolworth's to spend my weekend with."

DONIN: Right.

FLORMAN: So it was a strange thing. We would go to our classes just like college students. And yet we had to get up in the morning. If I never hear *Oh, What a Beautiful Morning* again. [Laughter] They would play that over the loudspeaker at six o'clock or six-thirty, whatever it was, to get us up. So it was a strange combination. I do remember one course.... Now I don't remember whether this was in the first, before I went into uniform or after, geology, Geology 13A. I'm looking at my transcript here. And I thought, well, whether I chose it or whether it was chosen for me, I don't recall. But it seemed if I was going to be a civil engineer, that was a very useful course. The professor—there were two of them—had been told that that course was going to be devoted to aerial photography and analysis of

photography from the air for military purposes. And this was the only time in my life where I really, some of us, nobody knew anything, including the professors. And I was able to point out on a couple of occasions mistakes that the professors were making in trying to figure out what this course was all about.

DONIN: Now, was the professor a regular Dartmouth teacher?

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN; Or was he somebody from the outside?

FLORMAN: No, no, no. Regular Dartmouth teacher.

DONIN: And he's trying to teach aerial photography.

FLORMAN: Yes, yes. After a lifetime of being in geology. So that was—

DONIN: I see.

FLORMAN: So that was amusing.

DONIN: Yes. Well, a number of people have remarked on the fact that the faculty was being asked to do all sorts of cock-eyed stuff that they weren't trained for. You know you had a chemistry teacher teaching, you know, Italian or whatever and that was because of the faculty themselves had enlisted or had been called up. So that they were scrambling to cover the courses that needed to be taught. So it sounds like the poor geology teacher got called to do something that he wasn't really trained for.

FLORMAN: That's absolutely true. And I think that's the only instance that I can recall.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

FLORMAN: Because the Thayer School faculty I believe were teaching engineering courses pretty much the same way as they had been teaching them before.

DONIN: Right. So the faculty there was more stable than the undergraduate faculty probably. Oh, that's interesting. Now, were you wearing a uniform at this point?

FLORMAN: One year as a civilian until December of '43. Let me see. No, December of—wait, wait, wait. Let me get it straight. Entry into active service. July of '43. So it was just one year. So once we were changed from civilian to military, we were really what you'd call able-bodied seamen, and we were given sailor uniforms. I no longer had to send my laundry home in a plastic case. I don't know how many people have told you about that. I haven't heard of it in recent years.

DONIN: No, no.

FLORMAN: But that was not unusual in those days.

DONIN: You sent it home for mom and dad to do.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: Amazing. So there was no availability of any laundry being done in Hanover? Or I guess it wasn't....

FLORMAN: I guess you could do your own and maybe there was a laundry in town. I think it was before the era of laundromats.

DONIN: Right.

FLORMAN: So I don't remember what the others did. But all I know is I was given a plastic container. And how that worked out financially with a mailman picking it up and taking it and bringing it back, I don't know. But that's what we did.

DONIN: Now at this point, were you still in Streeter Hall?

FLORMAN: Yes. Whether it was just a coincidence or they....

DONIN: Now I've heard descriptions of how the dormitories sort of became pretend Naval ships. And they called it SS Streeter.

[Pause to turn over cassette tape.]

This is great. This is really good stuff. They became, you know, the SS Streeter. And that military time was used, you know; 0800 you had to report for calisthenics or whatever. You know they really tried to sort of recreate life on a boat—or I guess you call it ship.

FLORMAN: Yes, they got us up in the morning. And, yes, we had certain not classes but events or things that we had to do.

DONIN: March to meals? Did you have to march to meals in Commons and stuff?

FLORMAN: No, no. The marching was more formal out on—

DONIN: The Green?

FLORMAN: —the Green.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FLORMAN: And this is how you march. This is how you turn. As a matter of fact, this brings to mind: You were expected to take turns and after a while shout out the orders and lead the group and show leadership qualities. And if you didn't—and there was one; I don't know if he was our classmate, but he was down at Thayer School, Joe Vitalini, a wonderful fellow with a quiet voice. And he didn't satisfy the drillmaster. And next thing we knew, he was on his way to boot camp.

DONIN: Oooh.

FLORMAN: And I, was a matter of fact, having been scared to death after seeing that, when I was challenged.... I wore braces in those days. I pulled out the braces—

DONIN: Oh!

FLORMAN: --and threw them away, impressing the officer or the petty officer in charge and I think saving my naval career. Not satisfying my dentist when I came back or to this day. Whatever lack of beauty in my teeth, I can blame on that. So there was a certain amount of military feeling that went into those marching sessions and into the gymnastics. But as far as living in the dorm, there were I think high-jinks and college stuff. I can remember opening all the windows and somebody spreading water around the floor to turn it into ice. So that we were going to have a hockey game. That sort of stuff.

DONIN: Regular college undergraduate nonsense.

FLORMAN: Right.

DONIN: [Laughs] So the undergraduate spirit lived on despite the seriousness of the naval training.

FLORMAN: Yes. And I think, within limits, the Navy people did not feel it was their job to.... As a matter of fact, I think they thought it was good for morale. And I think they had a mixed feeling about college and college kids. And if these snobby, Ivy League kids maybe sneaked a beer and carried on with some antics, that was all to the good. That was more in the spirit of the Navy. And if anything, they smiled. You know you had to be careful not to cross the line, which I found all the way through naval training. And even the Navy career. It's not exactly—it doesn't mesh with college life exactly. It doesn't mesh with civilian life. So there's always a tension there. But as I say, a certain amount of spirit and rebellion and high-jinks were...everybody liked it. The college people as well as the Navy people.

DONIN: Did you find that there was any sort of conflict or tension between you traditional civilians, who had started out there as freshmen, and these older guys that were recruited from around the country, I think, from other schools, to come to Dartmouth for their military training. I mean they were a very different crowd, I assume, than you regular civilians. I mean they were coming from all kinds of different schools.

FLORMAN: The whole idea of going to college—I mean I had grown up in New York—going to college and then going into the service, I can't say that one was more disjointed than the other. I went to Dartmouth as a freshman. And it seemed everybody I met the first week or so had gone to Deerfield.

DONIN: [Laughs] Yes.

FLORMAN: Deerfield Academy.

DONIN: Yes.

FLORMAN: And they were as strange to me as somebody coming from the fleet who grew up in Oklahoma. It was almost a.... Well, everybody said when you go into the service, you're going to meet people. That was supposed to be one of the advantages, that you meet people from all over the country. And I found that going into Dartmouth before I started meeting people in the Navy.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

FLORMAN: And it was quite different in those days. We didn't have...as I say, we had no television. Yes, we had movies showing Mickey Rooney in some small town. But basically to meet someone from the South, or to meet someone from the Midwest was an interesting experience.

DONIN: New experiences.

FLORMAN: So as I say, I had that coming into Dartmouth. And I sort of enjoyed it. Occasionally you'd meet someone you thought was an oddball or spoke in different ways. But by and large it was a positive experience both ways. I found it in coming to Dartmouth and entering the Navy and even later going overseas in the Navy and meeting all kinds of people: enlisted men who hadn't been to any kind of college and officers who'd been to Annapolis. Variety. I don't know if I'd be as patient today as I was then. But it all seemed to be a positive thing.

DONIN: Did you ever— You know back in those days, there was quota system for Jews. Did you find any negative reaction to your being Jewish at Dartmouth?

FLORMAN: It's interesting. I had an older sister who went to Vassar. And when she came home— Before she went, my father spoke to her about being Jewish and going... Vassar in those days was, I don't know, daisy chain and all kinds of high society.

DONIN: Yes.

FLORMAN: And she came home after her first vacation, and my father said, "Did you have any problems?" She said, "No, Daddy. But you know what, the Protestants hate the Catholics." [Laughter] It was very different times. And there was one interesting thing with the fraternities. They were certainly segregated. And I'm sure that he wouldn't mind.... It was very well known. Gene Bokor was a classmate of mine. Jewish. And he was rushed—I guess that's the expression—by one of the elite fraternities, and they'd never had a Jew. And it was sort of like a newsworthy item. It was a change. I did have...I think Pi Lam was the Jewish fraternity on campus. And there were a couple of them who came to me. And I said I had no interest in fraternities. They had some reaction to that. But I always

felt that the dormitory life, that the balance, compared to other campuses that I heard of, the balance was such that you could live very happily in the dormitories. I may be blind. I think that the question of prejudice is tied up somewhat with questions of snobbishness. And snobbishness was not endemic at Dartmouth. I don't know if it has been. I've found—maybe it's.... I don't know. I've found people from Princeton, I've found people from Harvard with so-called snobbish attitudes, and I never found it at Dartmouth. Maybe I was just blissfully blind to it. But I know there were quotas. I guess I found out more about that after being out of Dartmouth for a number of years than being there. And also in the Navy. I remember that out of a class of 150 in officers' training school, I found out six of us were Jewish. I found it out because on a Friday night, they announced that the following six—that all Jewish trainees were going to Friday night services; whereas so many Catholics were going on Sunday morning, and so many this and that. So I know it was in the Ivy League; it was in the world. But I didn't really feel it at Dartmouth.

DONIN: That's good. Well, you're not the only one. I mean others have said the same thing. They were blissfully unaware. I mean they were aware of the quotas and the restricted fraternities, but they never personally experienced any kind of prejudice or negative reaction. That's great. I think it's become more of an issue later rather than then.

FLORMAN: That could well be.

DONIN: More publicity.

FLORMAN: The fellow well-met, the outdoorsy, let's have a beer; that may be a lack of intellectual rigor perhaps. But it went with good fellowship.

DONIN: Right.

FLORMAN: And I think that that was...I'm not surprised that other people had the same reaction.

DONIN: Speaking of let's have a beer, where did you socialize? If you didn't go into the fraternities, where did you hang out with your friends, and what did you do?

- FLORMAN: I remember being in the dorm. And where we got our beer and where we.... And on weekends, we would thumb a ride to somewhere.
- DONIN: Yes.
- FLORMAN: Colby Junior College or....
- DONIN: Right.
- FLORMAN: And I think maybe...I don't know if drinking was allowed at the age of 18.
- DONIN: Well, in those days it was 18. You're right.
- FLORMAN: Yes.
- DONIN: And that makes a big difference. I mean there was none of this sneaking around with the kegs the way they have to do now at 21.
- FLORMAN: Right. And I was used to, in New York, I used to spend a lot of time. I was 17, but, you know, they....
- DONIN: Look the other way.
- FLORMAN: Look the other way. We used to go to the jazz clubs on 52nd Street. And you could get a beer and stand there all night. So I remember the dorm as being the center of social activity. Plus the weekends. Of course there was no— what's the social center that was built?
- DONIN: Oh, yes. There was no sort of student center where they could hang out.
- FLORMAN: No.
- DONIN: I guess eventually they gave up the sort of traditional Winter Carnival and Homecoming weekends during the war years. But I know you said you experienced them that first year.
- FLORMAN: That first year, yes.
- DONIN: And then I think after that they stopped for a few years. And the fraternities stopped functioning as well.

FLORMAN: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: But it was nice...I mean you got a taste of sort of traditional undergraduate life that first year.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: Okay. So let's go back to your schedule. So okay, by July of '43 you were now a naval trainee marching around in your uniform. And it was soon thereafter that you completed your undergraduate credits. I mean enough to be told that you could graduate.

FLORMAN: We were told in '44 that we qualified for a degree, and we were granted our Bachelor of Science degree. And of course the whole idea that Thayer School was the 3+2 making 5, that you weren't a graduate. You weren't an engineer until the end of your fifth year.

DONIN: Right.

FLORMAN: You were entitled to a bachelor's degree at the end of the four year. Well, they gave me, and they gave a few of us Bachelor of Science degrees. We hadn't taken enough liberal arts for a Bachelor of Arts degree. So we had the Bachelor of Science. But we still were a year shy of the Thayer School degree. And we thought, well, all right, I guess we got our degree. The Navy's going to take us even though we're not engineers. How is that going to work? And the Navy left us there for another semester. Then all of a sudden, I guess they felt enough was enough. We had four and a half years full of engineering courses, and they said, Well, in effect, you're engineers as far as we're concerned.

DONIN: Right.

FLORMAN: And off we went to officers' training school.

DONIN: And of course there was no graduation ceremony.

FLORMAN: No.

DONIN: They mailed your degree or something?

FLORMAN: I guess so.

DONIN: Yes.

FLORMAN: I don't remember when it arrived. I found this in one of the alumni—or one of the Dartmouth magazines—and this was April of '45: "According to information received here from the Navy last month, we're now anticipating a continuation of the V-12 Civil Engineering Curriculum at Thayer School until at least November 1946. Prospect is due to the Navy's plan to continue V-12 engineers in their program until graduation instead of transferring them to the Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps, as will be done with the majority of present V-12 students. So it wasn't accidental what they were doing. They very much had a plan.

DONIN: Right, right.

FLORMAN: And we went from Dartmouth two months officers' training school.

DONIN: Where were you?

FLORMAN: Right outside Providence at Quonset, Rhode Island. There was a Seabee training base there. And then that was followed— We got our commissions. And that was like a graduation. I remember we had.... It was a school. It was officers' training school, and we learned all kinds of ridiculous things. How far—well, all sorts of things. Waving flags and identifying silhouettes of planes. But anyhow, then we had a graduation. And my parents and members of the family came, and we were given our commission, which was like a graduation. Then that was followed at the same general location two months of military training: shooting antiaircraft guns and going on marches. And learning all sorts of things about being in battles, which was kind of fun actually, as ridiculous as it sounds. Sort of.... And also being tested. They would get you up in the middle of the night and ask you questions that had no answer really, just to see how you behaved. Some commanding officers, drunk, gets you all up and has you running around the tent, how long do you do it?

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

FLORMAN: And if you say, well, if the man is drunk, I'll do so-and-so. Well, do you realize what the Naval Code doesn't permit so on? And you say, Well, I continue running. Well, you can't think for yourself?

DONIN: Oh. So they're really testing you under stressful conditions.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: Interesting. And of course at this age you were still incredibly young. I mean....

FLORMAN: Well, by now I was 20.

DONIN: Yes!

FLORMAN: And to be an officer and to be in a position to lead others, that was a change.

DONIN: That was their goal.

FLORMAN: And you asked about meeting other people. When I finally did meet...we were sent out to the West Coast to go into the Pacific. And for the first time I met older men, the Seabees. At one point, the beginning of the war, the average age of the Seabees was 37. Unbelievable the number of engineers and people in the construction trades who rushed to enlist. Anyhow, I met, for the first time, older men who had been in battle in Europe and who were now being sent.... They didn't have enough points to get out or to.... Anyhow, they were on their way to the Pacific. And they were a whole different breed. Again, very interesting, but not the jolly get-together of 17- and 18-year-olds.

DONIN: Well, there's a reason they say that it made all of you grow up quickly. I mean you were experiencing things and spending time with people who were much older than you and experiencing training that was turning you into a man.

FLORMAN: I guess so. I often wonder what it would have been like to go through four years of college—five years of college—and then.... Well, sometimes.... Tom Brokaw wrote *The Greatest Generation*. In a way I feel some of us could say we were the luckiest generation because we had some very interesting and useful experiences without undergoing the horror that so many others did. When I finally did get aboard a ship and go out to the Philippines, supposedly to join the ranks of those who were going to invade Japan, my ship arrived the very day they signed the peace treaty.

DONIN: Amazing. That's great timing.

FLORMAN: I guess so.

- DONIN: But I mean that doesn't deny the fact that you were heading out there prepared to fight and to do what you had to do. You know the timing was lucky. You know the attitude that I hear from all these classes of the forties, at such a young age they were ready to go into battle and do what everybody else was doing.
- FLORMAN: I don't know how much was patriotism and how much was just being young. I have a friend who was in the Army. And he said they were being sent on a mission. They were told—I don't know—one out of three will survive. Or one out of three will not survive. He said he used to look at the fellows to the left and the right and said, gee, too bad for you, and too bad for you. Never thinking that he himself.... So in a sense....
- DONIN: Youthful... Yes.
- FLORMAN: There's an invulnerability. Or stupidity or whatever it is.... [Laughter]
- DONIN: Right.
- FLORMAN: It's a complicated thing, but it certainly was an experience that had a lot of positive sides to it.
- DONIN: So when you got through there, you didn't have to go back to Dartmouth. I mean you were done.
- FLORMAN: I was done. I did want to get my civil engineer degree. And I thought about coming back to Dartmouth. But I was in New York; I was home.
- DONIN: And all these schools are right here.
- FLORMAN: So I did two things: Number one, I felt that I really had missed out on a full college education. The liberal arts that I had taken were minimal, and frankly were not...they were introductory courses. There wasn't much there. And we had the GI Bill. And I decided to go up to Columbia and spend a year there. They had a great, great faculty there. Just to do something rather than just wander around and take classes, I signed up for a Master of Arts degree in English literature. And I had a great year. I think probably the only engineer who ever did that, at least there. And then I took some courses, engineering courses at night at NYU. As I say, many years later I finally got my engineering degree. In the meantime I had qualified

for an engineer's license, registered professional engineer in the State of New York. So I was sorry not to go back to Dartmouth. I did go up for a Winter Carnival.

DONIN: Oh, great!

FLORMAN: And I visited. And then in later years I was active at the Thayer School. I was on the board of overseers. It would have been nice to go back. I was torn. But we make decisions.

DONIN: Yes. Exactly. And you in fact accomplished what Dartmouth wants to do with their scientists and their business school people, which is give them a well-rounded education in the liberal arts, in addition to qualifying them to do engineering or business or whatever. So, you know, you ended up a well-rounded person with this Master of Arts in English. So you accomplished what Dartmouth would have wanted to accomplish.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: If you'd stayed there.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: And ultimately you got your degree anyway.

FLORMAN: Right.

DONIN: [Laughs]

FLORMAN: I think Sylvanus Thayer would have been—

DONIN: Yes, pleased.

FLORMAN: Would have been pleased.

DONIN: Right. And, you know, the fact of the matter is those courses that you took that first year and couple of months when you were still a civilian were in fact quite truncated. I mean it was not.... That first year you were there the classes were truncated. I mean they were pushing you through and shrinking the hours of course time in order to get everybody trained and on to military service. So it was good that you completed it and filled it out.

- FLORMAN: Yes. I think it would have been odd in that year to be studying poetry seriously. There was something fitting about working on practical things at that time.
- DONIN: Well, everybody's focus was changed by the war. Now do you have any recollections of Ernest Martin Hopkins?
- FLORMAN: It was...I can't believe—Did he really meet with every freshman going into the school? I mean that was my impression. I was told you're going to meet Ernest Martin Hopkins.
- DONIN: Because he signed your matriculation card, I think.
- FLORMAN: Yes.
- DONIN: And my understanding is that John Dickey did the same.
- FLORMAN: Well, I must say that he was a daunting presence. There was nothing smiley—
- DONIN: Warm and cozy about him. [Laughs]
- FLORMAN: No, no. So I found him intimidating, but affirmative. It was: You're welcome, and we expect you to do good things. And that was about the sum and substance of it. I can't remember anything else. He had his, I guess, a vest. I don't know, he was an imposing figure.
- DONIN: Any photographs I've ever seen of him is a three-piece suit always, always. But some of that...That was the style of that time.
- FLORMAN: Yes, yes. But he seemed to be something from an earlier time.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- FLORMAN: And not at all like you envision a president today. So....
- DONIN: And they say John Dickey totally changed the sort of model because he was the sort of outdoorsman marching across the Green in his lumberjack shirt with his dog at his side.
- FLORMAN: Yes. Well, I think he was there.... I forget. Hopkins....
- DONIN: Dickey came in November of '45, I believe.

- FLORMAN: 'Forty-five. Well, I guess that was...I had just left.
- DONIN: Just left, yes. Yes, they were making the transition that fall, I believe. Let's see now if I've left anything out. Have you got anything else you want to talk about?
- FLORMAN: Let me see. You asked about our center of social activities. Brian Battey was a classmate of mine at Streeter Hall. We went into town, and we bought a beaten-up old piano.
- DONIN: Oh!
- FLORMAN: And brought that—got it back to campus. And had a dozen fellows carry it up to the third floor. And we used to play the piano.
- DONIN: That's great.
- FLORMAN: And sing. And we made some recordings in town of terrible quality. But anyhow, that was a center of activity.
- DONIN: Now did you ever go on these road trips to other schools? I mean I know you said you went down to Colby, Colby Junior College at the time. But people talk about, you know, going over to Skidmore in Saratoga Springs and down to Smith in Northampton and Mount Holyoke. I mean, they were traveling some distance, especially in the days of (a) gas rationing and (b) not very good roads, I would think.
- FLORMAN: Well, I remember hitchhiking.
- DONIN: Oh. That's even worse.
- FLORMAN: Yes. But you had to get away.
- DONIN: Right.
- FLORMAN: When I did come home to New York, I had a friend who had...I came with gas coupons.
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- FLORMAN: And I had a friend who had access to a car. And so we had—I remember some pleasant leaves in New York. But up there I remember hitchhiking, and I don't recall anybody having a car.

DONIN: No. But getting there from here, that was a long haul in those days.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: A full day.

FLORMAN: Yes, it was, to White River Junction.

DONIN: Did you ride the train ever or drive or—

FLORMAN: I took the train.

DONIN: You took the train.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: It's still a long haul. But in those days it was even longer, I'm sure.

FLORMAN: I mentioned—oh, playing soccer in my freshman year. That was....

DONIN: Oh!

FLORMAN: I played soccer in high school. And it wasn't the sport then in those days that it is today.

DONIN: Today, right.

FLORMAN: But anyhow, the high school I went to specialized in it.

DONIN: Oh!

FLORMAN: As a matter of fact, we used to play the crews from European ships when they came in.

DONIN: Oh, how interesting. Yes.

FLORMAN: Anyhow, I was looking forward to playing at Dartmouth. And went out for the freshman team. And was informed that because of the war, the freshman team would not be playing a schedule that year.

DONIN: Oooh.

- FLORMAN: Which was a disappointment. But then doing us a favor, there were just less than a dozen of us at that point, hanging around. They said, Well, we could scrimmage with the varsity. So we would go out almost every day and scrimmage with the varsity. Incidentally, I learned that soccer is a lot rougher game than I had thought in high school.
- DONIN: In high school. I bet. I bet.
- FLORMAN: And particularly the fact that we were freshmen, they took delight... Anyhow, it was a great.... I have an article from the Dartmouth newspaper. Much to our surprise we were granted at the end of the season our freshman numerals, as if there had been a team.
- DONIN: Oh, great!
- FLORMAN: And we had been on it.
- DONIN: Oh, that's wonderful.
- FLORMAN: So that was a pleasant memory.
- DONIN: But I guess some of the teams had to shut down because either they couldn't field enough people or it was gas. I mean there were a number of reasons that they had to shut down.
- FLORMAN: At the same time I think the V-12 brought some terrific athletes from other schools.
- DONIN: Yes. I've heard this, about the football team especially.
- FLORMAN: Yes, yes.
- DONIN: These older, more developed strong men. So that they made a fabulous football team.
- FLORMAN: Yes, yes. And I think Dartmouth got carried away and scheduled a game with Notre Dame a year or two after the war. I spoke to someone who played for Dartmouth; he said that was like men playing with boys.
- DONIN: Oh, dear.

FLORMAN: But anyhow that was.... Yes, athletics were.... From one point of view it was considered something during wartime that should be encouraged. On the other hand, you couldn't go wasting gasoline and things like that. So I'm sure that people were cut down. Speaking of athletics, in the gymnasium, they had built a few years before a track, a wooden, springy wooden track. Where Glen Cunningham, the famous miler, had broken the world's record running the mile. Although it was never recognized because he had pacer runners running with him. Anyhow, I remember going in the gym and running around that track. Not imagining I was Glen Cunningham, but that was something I remember. The other thing I remember, and this is—I still can't believe Robert Frost was there. Ed Kuhn, that fellow who was in my dorm, ended up as a head of some publishing house, had a course with Robert Frost, and would go to his home in the evenings to talk and hear him read poetry. And he said he could get me—I could come along one evening or more—and I just don't know what. I either had homework to do, or I wanted to go see a basketball game. I just can't believe I never even saw Robert Frost when I had a chance to spend an evening with him.

DONIN: But he was on campus while you were there. I guess that's right. He was there for a term, I think, teaching.

FLORMAN: I thought maybe even more.

DONIN: Or maybe two terms. Well, opportunity lost. [Laughter] You mentioned rationing of gas. Do you have memories of any other shortages. I mean I read somewhere that there was a terrible meat shortage and milk I think it was. You know foodstuffs. Any memories of that?

FLORMAN: I don't have memories. And if there were any shortages, I....

DONIN: Didn't make an impression on you if there were.

FLORMAN: It was little enough to give up during a war. We were, I think, fairly comfortable for a nation going through a war.

DONIN: Sure. And it was all sort of part of the war effort to give up these things.

FLORMAN: There was a lot of music and the USO shows and the movies, everything was so different from.... I heard somebody say war isn't

fun anymore. Well, I mean that's an awful thing to say or even think. But the positive spirit about that war.... I don't know whether it was a lot of naiveté or looking back, we have mixed feelings about it. And certainly it's been very different since. And properly so.

DONIN: It was a very patriotic spirit, it seemed, pervaded everybody's opinion.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: I mean whether or not they agreed with, you know, I mean there was the talk of the isolationists; but nonetheless, once December 7th '41 happened, it seems like everybody joined in the effort. Everybody—you know generally everybody.

FLORMAN: Yes.

DONIN: Very different.

FLORMAN: Compared to people who went to Canada during Vietnam. I don't know. Maybe.... You look back at some of those old movies, and it seems like we were almost childish in our patriotic spirit.

DONIN: I'm mostly struck by how young everybody looked. You know just out of high school. It's the same today. They look young to me today, too.

FLORMAN: Well, they are young today. But they age or get.... Well, I don't know. We could spend a long time talking about how to react to wars.

DONIN: How you deal with war. Exactly. Let's see here. How are we doing? Do you have any memories of—I mean besides the man who was teaching you, supposed to be teaching you geology but was teaching instead surveillance....

FLORMAN: Aerial pictures, yes.

DONIN: Right, surveillance. Do you have any memories of any other professors that made an impression on you?

FLORMAN: There was a professor.... Well, in Thayer School, we had wonderful.... I mean that was quite an experience. There were only six of us in our class in the last few years.

DONIN: Oh, I see.

FLORMAN: And the dean, Bill Kimball, who taught...very sweet, sweet person. Ed Brown also. I remember the nicest.... You don't think of engineering professors as being nice people. [Laughter] But they were terrific people, and the education was.... I guess today it's old-fashioned. Everything is electronics. And things that we learned, surveying, aren't even taught as professional courses today.

DONIN: Oh, I see. It's more a technical kind of thing. Yes, yes.

FLORMAN: But there was a math professor, [Robin] Robinson—I don't remember his first name. And I won second prize in a math contest. And I remember going to his home.

DONIN: Oh!

FLORMAN: The three winners were invited to his home. And he played.... We had dinner, and he played I think a Mozart symphony on the phonograph after dinner. That was a glimpse at civilized life that made an impression. There were some teachers who were not so great. I think the quality of the teaching today is better. I had English courses that were second-rate, I thought, compared to what I'd had in high school.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

FLORMAN: And some of the liberal arts courses were not great. The engineering school, as I say, had wonderful teachers. I remember Joe Ermenc, E-R-M-E-N-C, used to give thermal dynamics. He used to give us a quiz every morning.

DONIN: Oooh.

FLORMAN: Very tough but a good teacher. I thought they had excellent people.

DONIN: At Thayer, yes.

FLORMAN: At Thayer.

DONIN: You say in your email perhaps the highpoint of my Thayer experience was viewing the North Star through the scope of a transit at midnight, with the temperature plummeting towards zero.

- FLORMAN: Well, that was something to go out in the outdoors and....
- DONIN: Learn to use one of those.
- FLORMAN: Yes. But now everything is electronic. You have lasers and you snap your finger and you get all the information you need.
- DONIN: Right, right. It's like they don't use slide rules anymore, do they?
- FLORMAN: No, no.
- DONIN: I think I don't have any more questions.
- FLORMAN: I think I've talked you past the tape you're supposed to devote... If you take everybody from those years and let them talk for three or four tapes, you won't have room in the library.
- DONIN: [Laughter] All right, then. Thank you. I am going to turn this off.

[End of Interview]