

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Alan Hall '47
By Mary Stelle Donin
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HALL: My father, who had gone to Cornell, was an engineer. And he said quite early in my life that there was no sense my going to Cornell because I was not going to be an engineer. So as things went, the logical place to go was possibly Dartmouth because beginning in the 1930s, my uncle, Lloyd K. Neidlinger was the dean of the college.

DONIN: Who knew!

HALL: [Laughs] And so that was a factor. I did not visit Hanover until 1936 when I was with my parents going to Quebec to take a boat to England in 1936 and where I lived until 1939. When I came back to the United States, when the war broke out, my schooling in England had pushed me ahead two more grades. And so when I graduated from high school in Washington, DC, in 1942, I was too young to go to college. Sixteen was not a good time and good place because the war had broken out. So at my uncle's suggestion, he said, "Well, why don't you send Alan for a PG year at a prep school?" Which is what happened. I went to Deerfield for one year. A wonderful year. And while I was there, it was pretty clear that I really was more interested in Dartmouth than any other college. I've often said that I went to Dartmouth: I went to ski, to hike, to camp, to live outdoors. And clearly Harvard, Yale, Princeton would have less desirable possibilities for that. So in July, early July, of 1943, just after my 17th birthday, I matriculated in Hanover at Dartmouth. I never thought of another college. I never have been unhappy about my Dartmouth experience—very much anyway. So it was a perfect place. And I did ski, and I did hike, and I did camping. So....

DONIN: So let's go back. You've distracted me with this Lloyd Neidlinger information. He's your uncle.

HALL: He was my uncle.

DONIN: Your mother's—

HALL: Brother.

DONIN: Brother.

HALL: Right.

DONIN: Oh, how interesting.

HALL: That's what the N in Alan N. Hall stands for.

DONIN: Oh, fascinating. I just interviewed another Neidlinger connection: Malcolm McLane.

HALL: Yes.

DONIN: Married to—

HALL: Susan.

DONIN: Your cousin.

HALL: My first cousin Susan. Yes. I had no sisters. But I had three girl cousins, three first cousins. Susan and Sally, the twins. And the older sister, Mary. So alas, all three of them now are no longer alive.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: But they were very much alive when I started my freshman year. And they provided me with more than enough knowledge and understanding of what it's like to have a sister.

DONIN: Yes, I bet they did.

HALL: So.... And of course Malcolm was here in Concord as a lawyer for many, many years.

DONIN: Right, right. And he talked lovingly about the coffee pot was always on at the Neidlingers' house.

HALL: It was indeed. My Aunt Marion didn't realize that when she had a nephew in town, he was not just going to be in town; he was going to be in the house and after a while bringing his friends. So there was practically a daily coffee club meeting in her kitchen. And she

seemed always to be there. She had made the coffee. It was a fantastic situation.

DONIN: So is it fair—is the reputation that Dean Neidlinger had as being such—what’s the right term?

HALL: Stern

DONIN: Exactly. Is that a fair reputation that he has?

HALL: Well, I carefully made sure that I never had to go before the dean when *he* wanted to see me. So I think, in those days... Well, my freshman year, Bob Strong was the dean of freshmen. So there was another person. For most of his career, he was *the* dean. And he had to deal with some hard social issues. A bunch of boys asphyxiated in a fraternity house—

DONIN: Oh!

HALL: —because of coal gas. Somebody had not closed the dampers right, and they all were found dead Sunday morning.

DONIN: Terrible! I remember reading about that.

HALL: There were a few deaths otherwise. It was a student who was badly hurt, and that finally killed him off. And so you couldn’t be sort of kind and friendly and loving and be a dean in those days. He was a wonderful father and great social company to students that he was meeting in a social fashion, as he met so many of my friends in college. But I can tell you one—my only personal experience with the dean: As I came towards the end of my junior year, I was told by the college that I would have enough credits to graduate in February. And the assumption is that’s what you do. Well, you don’t graduate from Dartmouth in February. You do it in June with the elm trees and the sunshine and all those other things. So I went to make a proposal to the dean that I have an extra semester. I would go to class; I’d be a full-time student with exams and everything. And then that would get me from February into June for graduation in 1949. And there was a pause as the dean thought about this. And he said, “The only way you can graduate in June of 1949 is to drop out of college at the end of the winter term 1949. And then you’ll be in synch for a senior year going from September to June. So I said, “What do you mean drop out?” He said, “You’ll have to drop out. You’ll have to not be officially part of the college until fall

of 1948.” I said, “So you’re telling me to drop out of college?” He said, “No. I’m telling you to drop out of college if you want to graduate in June of 1949.” I said, “I’m on my way.” [Laughs] And that’s what happened. I didn’t sign anything. It was all just this way.

DONIN: Word of mouth. What was the reasoning behind it?

HALL: Well, he explained that. He said, “The college is trying to get rid of the veterans.”

DONIN: Oh, yes.

HALL: The whole place has been bulging at the seams ever since 1943 and starting in 1945 when the veterans began to come back from the war. Well, I lived in what had been always a double, but there were three of us. And we lived that way for a long time. And of course Sachem Village and Occom whatever it was, the temporary veterans who were married. Sachem, Occom.

DONIN: Sachem....

HALL: It’s not Occom Village.

DONIN: Wigwam.

HALL: Wigwam Village. They were just packed with people. And the college was finding that they were beginning to get civilian young men who’d married because maybe they could get housing. So that was it. The way Pudge put it was quite straight. We’re trying to get rid of you guys. So go away. Come back in the fall. [Laughter] So I did. I mean if he gave me leeway, he was going to be faced with other people that would want the same thing.

DONIN: Right, right. Exactly.

HALL: So that was it.

DONIN: So you graduated in ’49 but you kept your... Did that impact your sort of class identity?

HALL: All veterans were given the option of picking the class, the year, in which we graduated or the class that we had matriculated with, started with or first came in with the V-12 unit or something like that.

So '47 had been a very small class in June or July of 1943. I think there were 165 civilians. And almost instantly they all disappeared.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: One after the other.

DONIN: And didn't they come in in sort of batches? Some came in June, some came in September, some came even in March, I think.

HALL: I think that may have been possible because there were high schools that were graduating. St. Paul's School had a mid-year graduation. And so if you were graduating from high school in February, then you could get a start before you got drafted. The real issue was that beginning in 1943, almost nobody was going to be deferred to stay in college unless you were studying medicine or perhaps some engineering specialists, things like that. I knew that when I started in June of 1944, I was probably out of there, and I was. There were no alternate choices.

DONIN: So you had your first year there and then—

HALL: I actually, when I left in June of '44, I was halfway through my sophomore year because I'd gone into the college when it was continuous.

DONIN: Oh, yes, starting with the.... Right, right.

HALL: So when I came back, I was 20 years old, and I was roughly halfway through my sophomore year.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. And that was pretty—I mean that was pretty normal. You weren't by any means....

HALL: Oh, no, absolutely. My roommate— I had had a— My roommate was in my Deerfield class.

DONIN: Oh, nice.

HALL: And he got drafted in the fall of '43 when he was 18. See, even with that extra PG year, I was still six months or so younger than many. So... and he got shot up in the Army in Europe and was—I remember seeing him in Walter Reed Hospital in Washington when I was on liberty once. And anyway, when I got out of the Navy, I got

a letter from him, saying are you going back to Hanover in the fall? So I wrote him back. He was living in Iowa then. And I said, sure, yes. Then he wrote back. Have you got a roommate yet? So I got on the phone and said, "No, I haven't got a roommate yet, but I know that we have to make these decisions pretty soon." He said, "Well, how would you like me to come back and be your roommate in the fall?" I said, "Sam, you're married. You've got a one-year-old kid. What are you talking about?" Well, he said basically, "I want to be a doctor, and I've done nothing intellectual, academic in three years. And if I don't come back with the opportunity to really focus, get back in the swing of things, I don't know what's going to happen. He'd been hit in the head, shot in the head.

DONIN: Oh! And survived.

HALL: He survived, but he was totally deaf in one ear. And he also said, another practical thing, "I can't get any married housing yet. But I've been told I'll be able to get housing in the winter sometime." So I said sure. So, you know, we settled down. Here was I out of the Navy, free and easy with all this GI money and the rest of it. And there was Sam grinding away with a picture of his baby son and his wife on his desk. And of course he was not the only one that came back with a wife and child, of course.

DONIN: Right, right.

HALL: There weren't many that came back and lived the bachelor life, one term anyway. So when his wife came, but then he was into one of the veterans' housing. And I shifted in with some other guys from then on 'til I graduated. But I've just laughed at that so many times. [Laughter] I was out there busy looking for girls.

DONIN: I bet you were.

HALL: And he was domestic itself. [Laughter]

DONIN: So it must have been a challenge for the college to have this amazing diversity of student body in terms of age and military experience and marital status and maturity, all making up this Dartmouth community after the war.

HALL: Right. I was laughing because some of that maturity was still in pretty immature guys, I would say.

- DONIN: Oh, you know, I said range. Some were immature and some were clearly...
- HALL: Well, yes, it was a real problem. It was not altogether different from my freshman year because—
- DONIN: Yes, of course.
- HALL: Because when my freshman year started, there were—
- DONIN: The V-12 was there.
- HALL: Yes, the V-12. And in that V-12 group there were guys that came in from the fleet or who came from other colleges in their twenties. But the range was still pretty great. And the social difficulties were sometimes pretty strong, too. I remember—Well, the Deke house was a good example. A lot of my Deerfield classmates had gone Deke, coming back from the war. I think one of the great mistakes I made in college, after the war, was I felt superior to the fraternity life and world. So I missed out on what I think was—and still is—an important part of college life. Not one necessarily the deans are very happy about. [Laughter] But I can remember going to the Deke house, and there was a dance. Here were half a dozen guys in their late twenties, one or two of whom had been—like Malcolm, pilots.
- DONIN: Prisoners-of-war.
- HALL: Things like that. And here was a bunch of Colby Junior College, 17- and 18-year-old girls there. And I don't know that that was a good social combination necessarily. But in the classes that I took, I think all, or a great many of us, coming back, particularly those who had not been stretched very much by their military service—stretched intellectually or with responsibility—we really just gobbled up what was going on in the classroom. We just loved—I loved to go to class. I loved to read. I loved to get up there—Well, I didn't go up in the Tower Room very much. I usually went down in the Orozco place. And I can remember the last two years eating earlier and earlier at night, you know, have supper at five so I could get over for a really good session. It sounds spooky, in a way, that I became that way. But I really wanted to learn, and I really wanted to do well. Those two things. And I was in with a lot of other people with exactly the same amount of enthusiasm for learning.

DONIN: It's interesting you say that because a theme that's running through so many of these interviews is that when they came back from the war, they were far more focused and definitely better students. Definitely.

HALL: Well, I know—I had a sabbatical year at Cambridge University from 1960 to 1961. And that fall of 1960 was the first year that young British men, predominantly, did not have to fulfill their national service requirement. In other words, suddenly into the colleges were coming the 17-, the 18-year-olds fresh from Eton or whatever. And the dons at Cambridge, moaned and groaned about this audibly in the classes, in the lectures and things like that. That they had, many of them, had been teaching since 1939, you see, 20 some-odd years. Never seeing a wet-behind-the-ears freshman, so to speak. They usually came in in their twenties.

DONIN: Right, right.

HALL: And many of them of course in those days would have been young officers in the Army or the Air Force, things like that.

DONIN: Makes a big difference.

HALL: Oh, I think it does. I think it does. In 1948, after I dropped out, I went with a group of friends down to Washington when the hearings on Universal Military Training, UMT, were being held in the Congress. This was, you know, by that point the war was over, but the draft was still on. 'Forty-eight we had not yet had the Korean War. And the Congress and other people were trying to figure out something that would be better than the draft. And the idea that everybody would do it, which was the way the Brits had done it, is still, I think, a wonderful thing. I would certainly say it doesn't have to be military training; it could be working in the... a lot like the AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps kinds of things.

DONIN: Yes.

HALL: So that was certainly one of the feelings that we went through. I never joined any of the veterans' organizations. I guess it was a little bit like my feeling I didn't want to join a fraternity.

DONIN: Yes.

HALL: So that the American Legion and the VFW and the American Vets, the AVC. I just finished an obituary of a contemporary who was here, graduated from St. Paul's in '43. And most of his life after the war was as a lawyer. And he, as a young Princeton graduate, was part of the AVC trying to get rid of segregation in the—he came from Baltimore—in the hotels and the housing and things like that. You distract me so easily here.

DONIN: [Laughs] There's so much to talk about. So let's go back to that first year you were there before you went off to do your service. You were there with Ernest Martin Hopkins towards the end of his time.

HALL: He shook my hand when we went as freshmen. I have that in one of my scrapbooks there.

DONIN: Oh, great.

HALL: We can look at it later.

DONIN: Yes.

HALL: He was there.

DONIN: It seems to me that he's not given enough credit for devising this relationship with the Navy to basically keep Dartmouth running.

HALL: Oh, it was—I know that was a lifesaver for the college certainly. There were some, the V-5s, which were....

DONIN: They were pilots?

HALL: Pilot training or preflight sort of thing. Then there were medical school students who were sucked into a Navy medical program. I don't know whether you recognize the name of Doc Fielding, "Waldo Fielding." Doc Fielding was '39, '38, somewhere... Anyway, he was an entertainer. And that summer there would be these open-air entertainments. The band was still there in bits and pieces, some civilian and others. Navy, but they were all given time to get together to play music. But Doc Fielding, was unbelievable. I can remember the first time I heard him. And he was there with a microphone, and he said, "Well, I'm going to do these different kinds of imitations. And so I'll now do my imitation of Charlie McCarthy." It was perfect. They were all on records. He was mouthing the things, but he did it so skillfully in such a wonderful,

funny combination. But he could sing. I mean he was a real showman. But he was a doctor. And then we had—Well, let's see. You're talking about that freshman year. I had one black classmate. And the only other black person that I got to know—and there may have been others, but I don't remember; I can't believe there were only two, but that's possible—was Charlie Duncan, whose father was Todd Duncan, the Porgy of *Porgy and Bess*.

DONIN: Oh! Huh!

HALL: And he was there for part of that year, and then he went... He got into the Navy and all the rest of it. But the, oh, God, what's his name? Eddie, Eddie, Eddie— The other fellow in my freshman class who was black, was there for part of that year. And then he got an appointment to the military academy, and he went to West Point and then his whole career was in the service, in the Army, thereafter.

DONIN: Now did you go through any sort of freshman hazing, wearing beanies, and being—

HALL: No. We were told... There was no Palaeopitus, there was no student council. There was nothing. There were, besides the 160 of us in the freshman civilian group, there were a few others that were older, you know, of one kind or another. But there was almost no attempt at the beginning of that summer to do any of those things because the administration and the faculty, people in the dorms that did the dusting and the cleaning, the kitchens, everything was totally refocused on this sudden huge influx of the Navy. I once, when I guess it was for the 25th reunion book, I tried to do some research on numbers: You know how many— Was the college bigger ultimately than it had been before the war broke out or not? It didn't really matter because almost everybody was being processed out at the end of about 18 months. And bye-bye. But the other thing which I presume was part of the Navy V-12, idea, we, the college, Dartmouth College, absorbed hundreds of young men from other colleges. One of my closest friends that freshman year was—he was a sophomore from the University of Wisconsin. And he just loved Dartmouth so much that after the war, after he got out, he came back.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: And presumably there was no Dartmouth loyalist who went to the University of Wisconsin [laughter] in his place.

DONIN: Right, right.

HALL: And so that very strange jumble. I believe the class of '47 was regarded as the largest class in the history of the college because it was a dumping spot for guys like Jim Schwedland and others that they came in. And most of them had been one or two years at another college. They picked up so many credits for midshipmen school and military service. They came back for one year, and they were going to graduate.

DONIN: They then become part of the Dartmouth Family.

HALL: Right. And sometimes among the most ardent ones. [Laughter]

DONIN: And at that point it sounds like you knew what you wanted to major in.

HALL: No, I didn't really. Well, I didn't really. One of the things about the college after the war I was disappointed by was what is now called career counseling. There was very little of it or it was not well organized or there were so many other people that were busy using up their time. I look back and I think, you know, if somebody had said, "Did you ever think of going to law school?" I might have thought about it, you know. But I didn't. By then I had my careers down to two. But I think it was not really until the beginning of my senior year that I—Well, I'd picked a major by then. And I majored in English just because I liked to read. I liked to write. And if the GI Bill was going to pay for that, I think that's great. So I took a course in satire, a senior course in satire. And part of the course was having to give a full-period presentation on some aspect of satire or certain books or a certain period. Things like that. So I prepared there, and I stood up in front of that class. And by gosh, it was fun. [Laughs]

DONIN: Well done.

HALL: And I thought that that might not be—I look back at my PG year, that one year at Deerfield—and all I remember was, you're outdoors every day. You were playing soccer, you were skiing, and so forth and so on. I guess I had a really collegial—collegiate—mentality. So by almost the end of that year, as an English major

thinking about teaching, I figured I'd better go see Mr. Boyden. And so I went down and saw Mr. Boyden. And he was too smart for his own good ultimately because he said, "Well, now, Alan, I could give you a place here, and you'd come right back, and you'd know everything, and you'd be very useful and stuff like that." But he said, "I think what you really ought to do is—"

[pause to turn over tape]

So when I talked to Mr. Boyden, he said he could give me a job. But he would be happier for me to go teach for a year or two at some other school and then get in touch with him. And it was interesting. Malcolm, when he came back out of the service, he went down for one term, I think, and ran a corridor at Deerfield.

DONIN: Was this before law school?

HALL: No, this was before—This was in the summer of '45.

DONIN: Oh, I see. Uh-huh.

HALL: In other words, he wanted to do something; I think that was it. So I thanked Mr. Boyden, and I wrote a lot of letters. And had mostly disappointing interviews. And it was very complicated because this was the spring of 1948. I did not have a car, and most of these schools were not within easy walking distance.

DONIN: Mm-mmm.

HALL: So the only one that was nearby was Clark School in Hanover. And I was not going to get a job there because that would just be more of the same, so to speak. So I finally ended up with a job at Williston Academy in Easthampton, Massachusetts, where I stayed for two years, from the fall of '49 to the spring of 1951. The other choice which I had had in the back of my mind in my senior year, was advertising. You know, get a job with an agency in New York and make millions, and you know. Three martini lunches and all that kind of stuff. But balanced against that, before I even attempted to do anything about it, I remembered growing up when I was a little boy, and my father was off to work in New York before I woke up, and he often came back after I was in bed at night. And it seemed pretty dark and gloomy as opposed to the sunny soccer meadow that was in my dreams. So anyway, I taught there, and by the end of second year, I was convinced that this was what I wanted to do.

And that's what I then did. My last class met in the spring of 1992. That was 40 years at St. Paul's School and two years at Williston. And then there was one year getting my master's degree at Penn where I taught freshman composition.

DONIN: Uh-huh. But you feel like it was sort of hit-or-miss because the college didn't really....

HALL: Well, the college really didn't seem to have any connections with prep schools either.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: In the career office there or whoever it was. So I just had to—

DONIN: Do it yourself.

HALL: Do it myself. And it was like the lack of counseling when I came back in the fall of '46, I made disastrous choices of classes.

DONIN: Oh.

HALL: In the science and math areas, which were not my strong suits. But they were presented to me as this is, you know, this is what you did in freshman year before you went in the service. Now you're back, you've got to finish those things up. And as a result, I... Well, I flunked the second half of math, of calculus. And the college said at that time, you can have two years of science or two years of math or one year of each. And so I had, before I left for the Navy, I had had one year of math, half of which I flunked, and half of one year of physics. So I came back, and I thought, alright, I'll take something else. Botany. I wish I'd started in botany. Biology or things like that. I'm probably one of the few males in the world who never took a junior high school course in biology or human relations or whatever it's called because I'd attended school in England where of course no one had to know anything like that.

DONIN: No.

HALL: Because there were no young women in the world.

DONIN: Right, right. [Laughs]

HALL: So anyway, the counseling, the way the college did those things, just disappointed me. And as I say, teaching was a logical one. And it fitted in perfectly. But I could have been a history major. Or I could have done any number of others: sociology, psychology. I'd taken the freshman courses in those. And I ended up teaching. And it was good because at the end of the second year at Williston, where I was very happy—by then I was married—I still had some GI Bill left.

DONIN: Oh.

HALL: And the government said, if you want to use up your GI Bill, you have to be in a program by July 1, 1951. That was it. Yes. Well, so I told the headmaster of Williston that I was very happy there, and they'd given us a wonderful, brand-new apartment, everything was perfect except I had to be doing this. Now, maybe I could've continued to teach and going to UMass or Amherst or something in night school. But, no, I didn't know, and I doubt they would have done that. They wanted to get rid of the GIs. So I wrote to a number of places to see about what this involved and so forth and so on. And by great good luck, Harvard turned me down. I say that now. At the time I was a little miffed, you know. Harvard was graduate school and all that jazz. Mary had taught—had worked—in Boston the year before we were married. So moving into Boston, she thought, could be a pretty happy situation. But here again, the university didn't sort of explain things. Because I applied for a master of arts degree, not for an ed degree in the ed school. Not an MED. For a master of arts. And they turned me down for that. I learned later I should have applied for a Ph.D., done my year, gotten my MA, and then said bye-bye.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: But I didn't know that. Didn't know the politics or didn't know the pattern of it. I'm afraid I was a little snooty about the ed school then, where one of my sons went and was very happy. And I discovered that was the key—I learned. He graduated in the '70s. He'd been teaching at... gone to Bowdoin. So he started to take—He lives in Milton, Mass, so he could commute. And he discovered once you get accepted at the ed school, you have maybe two courses you have to take. The rest of the entire curriculum of the university is available to you.

DONIN: Yes.

HALL: They don't seem to talk about that very much.

DONIN: Yes. Those are things they don't actually put in the catalog.

HALL: So anyway, the year at Penn was very happy because Mary's family lives in Chester County outside of Philadelphia. And so we were out there every weekend.

DONIN: Oh, perfect.

HALL: And we had a nice apartment in town in walking distance of the university. She had been an economics honors graduate from Mount Holyoke, and she picked up a year's job at the Wharton School very easily. So we had money coming in. I used up the GI Bill, but there was enough to get to the end. And the only unfortunate thing was the University of Pennsylvania said, "Well, we'll hire you as an instructor in English. But if we do that, then you have to give up your GI Bill. Or if you want to have your GI Bill, you can be an English instructor, but we won't pay you." Well, the GI Bill had money for books and things, so I stuck with that. And I had a freshman course of composition to teach, which convinced me that I would never want to teach in college again.

DONIN: Oh, then that was probably a worthwhile experience.

HALL: It was. It was a worthwhile experience because we really were able to connect with Mary's family. Her young brother was a senior at Haverford, and he was home on and off. Her older sister was the wife of the headmaster of a Quaker school on the Main Line. So we had a good year for that kind of activity, too.

DONIN: So how did you make the transition to St. Paul's?

HALL: Well, as the spring of 1952 approached, there was a need for getting a job. There was more of a need to getting a job because there's a baby on the way by then. And so I wrote, I don't know—I must have written 40 letters, all over. I wrote out to schools in California and Colorado just because I thought they might be interested in somebody from the East or whatever it was like that. I went for interviews at Andover in the middle of the summer of 1951 before I had started Penn, and had a very nice letter. The guy said, "Well, let me know. When you're ready to come, let me know." Well, of course, by the time I did that, he'd already found people probably

over and over again. I did get a letter from St. Paul's School saying, "Terribly sorry, full for next year." Well, that was somewhat discouraging. Then—and I can't remember now how much later—there was a telegram from St. Paul's School to me, saying, "Are you still available for teaching job? If so, wire back." So I did. And they said come up such-and-such for a visit. So I came up and was interviewed. And Mr. Kittredge, who was the rector then, a very colorful character, he said—although he obviously knew the answer—"Where was it you went to college, Mr. Hall?" And I said, "Well, I was a Dartmouth graduate, Mr. Kittredge." And he said, "Oh! Dartmouth! New blood! New blood!" Because when I came in 1952 in the fall, I discovered that probably of the hundred teachers at St. Paul's School then, probably 70 of them had graduated from Yale or Harvard or Princeton. It was nearing the end of the very insular world of St. Paul's School. But they were the only ones that gave me a job. So I was happy to accept it.

DONIN: Yes, indeed.

HALL: Now, it turned out—I discovered later—why there as a vacancy. In fact there were two vacancies because at some point in that '51-52 academic year, two young faculty members had run away.

DONIN: Together?

HALL: I don't know whether they ran away together or not. But just one day they weren't there.

DONIN: How odd.

HALL: How odd indeed. St. Paul's School is big on plaques and things like that. And each year there's a plaque put up for the class graduating. And on that in various complicated symbolic ways, there are references to events of that year. And the plaque for 1951-52 has a picture of two academic figures. They're wearing gowns, and they're wearing mortarboards. They are seated on a black sheep.

DONIN: Hilarious!

HALL: Talking about the black sheep of the faculty family. These two guys ran away. [Laughter] So that was how I got to St. Paul's School. And my time there was very, very happy. I taught a lot. I had the good luck of moving in and out of administrative posts. And of

those, the one that was the most rewarding was I was the director of the advanced studies program, which is the summer school for New Hampshire high school students. I did that twice, and that was great fun.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. When you work in a school like that, are you always employed over the summer?

HALL: Well, when I first came, the first summer of 1953, literally the grass grew up through the bricks on the walks of St. Paul's School. The school closed down. If you were a bachelor, the hot water heater in your dorm shut down because the boys weren't there. So you had to use your tea kettle.

DONIN: Oh, my!

HALL: Of course there were no meals. And so a fair number of faculty, they were off doing summer programs. The master of arts at Middlebury was a very favorite summer program; five summers there, and you got an MA. The one year, which I did, which I was so glad of, it was done, and it was out of the way. And, you know, by the third summer, you're getting sort of a little bit bored. And you know there's two more to go. And what do you do?

DONIN: That's a long haul, five summers.

HALL: A lot of the other faculty either had summer homes of their own or had parents or grandparents or other family members. So that there was only one other couple, and that was the school chaplain. And I figured he was there because he was probably too poor to go anywhere.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

HALL: So I figured I can't stand that. So when I was able to, for the first time in 1956, I went back to Williston and taught in their summer school.

DONIN: Oh.

HALL: As I had before I left for the university. But that was a remedial summer school.

DONIN: Oh.

- HALL: And that's a very difficult life in some respects because most of the boys that came, and some were from Williston and others were from other schools, they didn't want to be there. Most of them were there because they were lazy. A few of them were dull or had other kinds of problems. And so you were there sort of grinding it out.
- DONIN: It's a struggle. It's a real struggle.
- HALL: I had one year I taught three boys in 11th grade English. One was the son of the vice president of Liberia. So was just a big, happy-go-lucky black fellow with not much brains; an incredible soccer player. And the second one was an Afghan. He wanted to study medicine, and I've often wondered whatever happened to him, particularly in these last few years. And the third was a Siberian boy. So Liberia, Afghanistan and Siberia. And our major text for the summer was Macbeth. [Laughs]
- DONIN: Oh. That's tough going.
- HALL: Yes. Looking back on it now, it seems like— Well, it was still fun. I think maybe the reason I survived so many of the complications of independent school life was I was having fun. I didn't take any of it too seriously. I avoided initiating myself into political situations. I ended up being in political situations, but I didn't start it. I was not that ambitious. I discovered I didn't have to be. If I just sat still, trouble was going to come find me.
- DONIN: [Laughs] Find you. Okay. That was a little detour. Let's see now. So just to get back into the Dartmouth thing.
- HALL: Yes.
- DONIN: When you returned from the Pacific and all these other places you were in—goodness—returned to the US in late 1945.... Oh, no, sorry. You returned to Hanover in the fall of '46; that's right. Oh, you were a Rufus Church Scholar.
- HALL: Yes, I finally got my act together, got out of the lab and got out of the math department. And except for that unhappy calculus hanging over my head, I probably would have been Phi Beta, my average.
- DONIN: Right, right.

- HALL: And I even aspired to try for a Rhodes Scholarship. But I knew that that was just more of a laugh than anything else. I was not a match for someone like Malcolm.
- DONIN: Right. Exactly. And when you returned, you had a new president; it was John Dickey.
- HALL: John Dickey, yes.
- DONIN: Did you have any interactions with him?
- HALL: Well, I think the main one, which was the most interesting, was with the Great Issues course. Or as some unkind people used to call it "Gray Tissues." [Laughter] I thought it was great. I thought it was so intelligent to get the seniors together, regardless of what they were majoring in, making them read the *New York Times*. I remember how excited I was; I learned how to read the *New York Times*. The really big story was always going to be on the left. And the second one is going to be on the right. And all of that. And the visiting speakers we had. And I forget now who the sort of section men were, young teachers. But they all seemed to be very excited about it. And so that was, I felt, a great contribution to the college, done by President Dickey.
- DONIN: Right.
- HALL: And he was— He was interested enough in the Outing Club that he came out. And that was my big thing when I was a student.
- DONIN: Was that your main sort of activity?
- HALL: That was it. That was my main, main one. Remember I told you I wanted to ski, I wanted to hike. Yes, I was a fairly important figure, I guess, in my era. I got quite a bit of space in the DOC history that was written.
- DONIN: I haven't read it. I should go back and look at it.
- HALL: You should do that.
- DONIN: Yes.
- HALL: And, you know, you always have what-ifs in your life. And when I left the college at the dean's request, you know, what am I going to

do? Well, I had two or three things which almost worked out, one of which was to go to Cuba, to the University of Havana, where I would learn more Spanish and more culture and things like that because—and this is not too important anymore—but much of the thirties, before we went to England, my father, beginning in about 1928 was very involved in Central and South America. He was basically what you'd call these days, he was a sound engineer. And all over Central and South America at that point were hundreds of movie theaters dying to get sound equipment for sound movies. And the Western Electric Company, for which he worked, was one of the major manufacturers of sound. So he was traveling all over, supervising this kind of a thing. So that we had a very comfortable Depression. There weren't any problems. I went twice to Puerto Rico with him and my mother. But most of the time he was hopping by plane around, things like that and we stayed home. But I was intrigued about the idea of business in Mexico, in South America, Spanish-speaking. And this was a time when Nelson Rockefeller, staunch Dartmouth alumnus, was very much involved with a big corporation that was known by its initials, which I can't pull out right away. But which was encouraging activity with Central and South America and things like that. In high school, when I was in Washington, DC, I'd taken a course in Latin American history and had even written and presented a paper at the Pan-American Union there.

DONIN: Oh, my!

HALL: So I had a few sort of exciting things to do. But, alas, another side of me, that dark side of the coin, I went and worked at Sun Valley.

DONIN: [Laughs] Good for you.

HALL: I skied from eight o'clock in the morning 'til four o'clock in the afternoon, and I washed dishes from five p.m. until midnight.

DONIN: That's great.

HALL: Things like that. And then I also ended up mountain climbing again and doing other things. But I forget how we got to there.

DONIN: Well, I was asking about the Outing Club.

HALL: Oh, the Outing Club, right. That spring, when I was in Sun Valley, I got a call from John Rand, who was the manager at the club. And

he said, “Is there any way that you could come back and live in Hanover during the rest of the spring and through the summer until school starts? Because if you can do it, you will be elected president of the Dartmouth Outing Club through the end of your senior year.” Well, I couldn’t, you know, I couldn’t do that. I couldn’t come back to Hanover. I didn’t really want to come back to Hanover even for that job. So I came back in the fall just as enthusiastic about the Outing Club and no great what-ifs particularly. But I co-managed the ski team. I was on the—I had been on Cabin & Trail. I did the Winter Sports Council. I called square dances for the Intercollegiate Outing Club Association.

DONIN: Great, great.

HALL: All those things.

DONIN: So it sounds like you had a— Despite the sort of mixed-up population that as on campus, it sounds like you had a pretty traditional second half of your time at Dartmouth: taking advantage of the activities that you enjoyed, and buckling down to studies. And not being impacted so much by some of the friction that we hear about that existed on campus because of the diversity of the population of students.

HALL: Really! Well, [laughs] I guess I’m a good example—I was not particularly aware of it. There were not, I don’t recall, after the war, many more minorities. There were certainly problems of veterans agitating down in White River Junction where the new hospital was being built.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: There certainly was a level of drinking which had not been there when the Navy was there.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: Understandable. And I’m not sure that our kind of drinking was worse than the binge drinking problems which have developed since then.

DONIN: Right, right. Well, there’s been talk of the challenge that Dean Neidlinger faced. You know it’s one thing to be the stern dean and discipline an 18-year-old; it’s another thing to face a 21-year-old

veteran who's seen very serious military responsibility on the other side of the world, who has to come back to a very closed traditional college campus.

HALL: Yes. Well, I can understand that. There were times I think when the administration, not simply the dean's office, but the president with—we didn't have a provost—the dean of faculty, I guess, things like that, were worried that they were not meeting the needs of veterans. Or at least the economic or the intellectual. These people were coming back, and they needed jobs when they got out.

DONIN: Yes.

HALL: How could we maintain the liberal arts and yet be the trade school. And certainly Tuck and Thayer and the medical school came up in their interests and expectations and availability. Except it wasn't as available because there were so many people trying for. But those were just snowflakes under my skis.

DONIN: Right, right.

HALL: You know I had lots of parties, lots of fun, lots of dates. I seem to have spent an inordinate amount of time and money on travel.

DONIN: I was going to say, did you engage in lots of road trips?

HALL: Well, I used the Boston & Maine. I didn't have a car.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: I didn't have a car 'til I got married. So that I was certainly— I had—it sounds like boasting—but I had quite a few girls.

DONIN: [Laughs] Great.

HALL: That attracted me at least as far down as Connecticut College.

DONIN: Sure, sure.

HALL: Wellesley, Smith, Holyoke of course. And in the great tradition I dated Smith and married Mount Holyoke.

DONIN: Great. [Laughter]

HALL: And of course I had two—or actually four; wonderful things. First of all, my three cousins, with Mary starting her sophomore year in '46 at Holyoke. And with Susan starting her freshman year a year after that, I had built-in connections there. And I had, I don't know how many times I was told, you are a lucky SOB with an aunt and uncle that have a house in Hanover.

DONIN: Indeed.

HALL: And Pudge and Marion were always delighted, you know.

[pause to change tape]

DONIN: So your aunt and uncle were always delighted to—

HALL: Yes, always delighted to entertain my young ladies. And since in some instances they overlapped with their daughter—or daughters.... Sally went out west to Colorado, and we never saw her again, so to speak. That consumed a lot of, as I say, time and energy and money.

DONIN: But in a good way. I mean that's supposed to be part of the traditional college experience.

HALL: Well, I think it was. Certainly that freshman year there was no Carnival. They called it Winter Weekend. There was no Green Key.

DONIN: No Homecoming?

HALL: Well, the word Homecoming grates me a little bit. We used to talk after the war about Dartmouth Night.

DONIN: Oh, I think it was called Dartmouth Night. That's right.

HALL: It was. The Homecoming is what Wisconsin and Minnesota and other places have. [Laughter] But there was often a different girl for each of those three weekends.

DONIN: Amazing.

HALL: Well, I loved to dance. That was one thing. I loved to dance before I even went to Deerfield, when I was in high school. I was a good dancer, so that I could have a good time dancing without being...

DONIN: Now, where did you put these young women up? I mean did they stay at the dean's house?

HALL: They stayed at Pudge and Marion's, yes.

DONIN: Yes. That really was like a home away from home.

HALL: Oh, it was indeed. It was great.

DONIN: Wonderful. It's funny because everybody else, whenever the subject comes up, they shake their head gravely and say, "You did not want to be called into the dean's office."

HALL: [Laughs] Well, he was my uncle.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: He was my mother's brother. He was my other uncle's brother. I had known him since I was an infant.

DONIN: Right. [Laughs]

HALL: So it was a different relationship. And I think they enjoyed seeing the progress of a Dartmouth student who was also a nephew.

DONIN: Right.

HALL: And who had his slips and troubles and difficulties, but by and large was turning out to be a fairly acceptable family member.

DONIN: And you must have been as close to a son—watching a son go through Dartmouth—as they were ever going to have.

HALL: Yes. I think that was certainly true also. So that was all very lively, pleasant activity. And of course... I'll tell you this. I guess it will not.... Well, I'd prefer it didn't appear in tape anyway.

DONIN: Well, if you don't want it on the tape, we shouldn't say it because I have no way of editing it out. [Laughs]

HALL: Why don't you stop the tape for just a minute?

[End of Interview]

