

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Harris Hinckley '45
By Mary Stelle Donin
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DONIN: Today is Saturday, September 25, 2010. My name is Mary Donin and we're here in Hanover, New Hampshire with Harris Hinckley, Dartmouth class of 1945 and Dartmouth Medical School, class of 1949, right?

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: So, Dr. Hinckley, the first question I always like to start out with is how is it that you ended up coming to Dartmouth? Were you following another family member or—

HINCKLEY: My father went to Dartmouth. He was in the class of 1909, so I just never thought of going anywhere else. Never applied anywhere else.

DONIN: Was this the only place—Had you seen Dartmouth as a child? I mean, did you used to come back here with your father?

HINCKLEY: I think I might have been up here one or twice, yeah, with him. But, I don't really remember that part that well. The only thing I remember right offhand is going to a Harvard-Dartmouth football game in Cambridge with him. That reminds me of one other little thing. That will be later on.

DONIN: So, growing up as a child, did your father talk a lot about Dartmouth? Was it just assumed that you were going to go to Dartmouth?

HINCKLEY: Yeah. He worked his whole—He paid his whole thing to go to Dartmouth and Harvard Law School and paid it all himself.

DONIN: Really?

HINCKLEY: Yeah. He was one of nine children, the only one who ever went to college. And I don't recall why it was that he went, but anyway.

DONIN: And were you the only one—Did you have siblings in your family?

HINCKLEY: I just had a four-year-old sister.

DONIN: And were you the first one in that generation of children in the family to go to college? Did your sister go to college?

HINCKLEY: Yeah, she went for two years, I guess.

DONIN: Okay. Which was probably expected of women in those days.

HINCKLEY: Well, I don't think she was that interested in going to school.

DONIN: Yeah, well a lot of women, I don't think, thought that they needed to go to college in those days.

HINCKLEY: Yeah. And they didn't give them much choice of what they wanted to do.

DONIN: Right, exactly. Now, when you were heading off to Dartmouth, were you already thinking about medicine?

HINCKLEY: No.

DONIN: So, that happened when you got here.

HINCKLEY: No, that happened while I was in the army.

DONIN: Oh, how interesting. How did that happen?

HINCKLEY: Well, at one point there was an opportunity to transfer to the medics while I was in the army, and so I asked to do that. So, I was transferred to a medical attachment in the field artillery, the same outfit I was already in. At the time, I was a Jeep driver. So, I went into the medics and I was only in there a few months before I was transferred back to driving a Jeep. The only thing I could ever figure out—because I liked that; I enjoyed it—the only thing was I did not get along well with the sergeant who ran it. The medical officer really did nothing except work as little as possible. He was a young—one of those guys who was just out of his internship, I guess. And he was sort of a happy-go-lucky guy and he didn't bother himself with all those things like that. But this sergeant really ran this outfit and he didn't like me. I don't know why. But, whether he figured I was some kind of threat, I don't know. I was the only one who—the only college student in that group.

Later on, after the war, we had a reunion—forty-two years later—and I went to it and lo and behold, there was the medical officer. When we got to the hotel—this was in Baltimore—we came up in a taxi. I got out of the taxi and looked up ahead and fifty feet away; it was a New York car and this man was standing outside the car. He looked down at me and said, “Harris Hinckley.” Don’t forget, this is forty-two years later. So, as soon as I got my stuff taken in, I went to find him and I said, “Why was I transferred out of the medics?” He said, “I thought—weren’t you with us the whole time?”

DONIN: So he didn’t know?

HINCKLEY: No. That’s why I say, I really think it was the sergeant who did it. I don’t know if you’ve ever watched M.A.S.H., but—Have you ever watched M.A.S.H.?

DONIN: Yes.

HINCKLEY: Well, you know, what’s-his-name would come in with a bunch of papers and just initial that, this and that. And I think that’s what he did. They just wrote up an order and had him sign it.

DONIN: And he never knew the difference, what he was signing. Oh, what a shame.

HINCKLEY: No, he didn’t care about stuff like that.

DONIN: No.

HINCKLEY: So, but anyway, that little experience, which wasn’t very long—I was still here in the States at the time—just started to kind of go around in my head. So, if we’re still on why did I decide to go to medical school, when I was in Japan at the end of the war, I began to think more about that. And so I wrote a letter to a professor in psychology here at Dartmouth, from whom I had taken a freshman course in psychology, and asked him if any testing could be done to decide whether I should even think about this. And so he wrote back and he said, “Of course.” He said, “Fine. Come up; I’ll do it for you.” So, when I got home, I called up or whatever and came over. He did some three or four tests on me and said, “Yeah. You should be able to do it.” But I wasn’t going to try to do something like that without being more sure.

DONIN: It's a big commitment, yeah.

HINCKLEY: Yeah. Because when I was a freshman here, I used to see these medical students; they looked like old guys and they all looked so intelligent. They all wore jackets and I thought: Hm. I can't imagine anybody doing that.

DONIN: So, when did you—Let's back up and talk about your years when you first started here. So you arrived here in September of 1941, out of high school, right? In Maine.

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: So you had sort of a traditional first semester before Pearl Harbor happened.

HINCKLEY: Well, yes. It was almost over, of course. I was in New Hampshire Hall at the time and some kid came running down the hallway shouting about what had happened. I was in studying in my room in New Hampshire Hall, and that's the first I heard about it. But I was there for one more year. In other words, at the end of the first semester of my second year, I got drafted.

DONIN: And that was—By then they had accelerated the classes, right? And you were going—

HINCKLEY: Well, some people had. I didn't. I just said, I'll wait and see what happens.

DONIN: Did you go through the summer, though? Didn't they start running classes through the summer?

HINCKLEY: Some of them did, and Peter Beck probably did, because he got through in 1945, I think it said in the—Somewhere I was reading it. Well, that was the year we were supposed to graduate, and of course I wasn't even back there then.

DONIN: Right. So you got drafted at the end of your sophomore—

HINCKLEY: My first semester here, in my sophomore year.

DONIN: Yep. So off you went. And this was to the army, right?

HINCKLEY: Yeah. I didn't have a clue. They said, "What do you want to do?"

They said, "What do you want to go into?" "I don't know!" So they put me in the army.

DONIN: Was this here in Maine or was it here in Hanover?

HINCKLEY: No, it was in Maine.

DONIN: And how long were you gone?

HINCKLEY: Well, three years and two days.

DONIN: Oh, wow.

HINCKLEY: February 16, 1943 to February 18, 1946. And I was discharged in San Francisco.

DONIN: And did you know you were going to come right back to Dartmouth?

HINCKLEY: Well, I must have been planning on it, yeah.

DONIN: And what was your major at that point? Had you declared a major before you left?

HINCKLEY: No. I didn't have one. When I first—the only guidance I had in high school about anything like this was none, zero, except that my senior English teacher said, "You should go into English. You should major in English." Apparently I was her best student in English. So, I said, "Hm." So when I came up here that's what I was thinking about doing. But, I took a couple of courses in English and they were boring, boring. I don't want to do that.

DONIN: What were the courses that you enjoyed when you were here?

HINCKLEY: The courses? I don't remember any course I really enjoyed the first year. I didn't have any—I never had any biology of any sort and I didn't then. Wasn't any in high school offered. So I took what I had to take and—oh, dear. Everybody has to take—

DONIN: Had to take a foreign language. Did you have to take a foreign language?

HINCKLEY: Yeah, that's right. I took some more French; that would have been my fourth year of French. And a year of Spanish. And economics: yuck! And the other one was something really similar to that.

Absolutely so far into my understanding that I got nothing out of it. In fact, that one course, psychology, that I had taken when I was here, he did a strong interest inventory in everybody and gave us the results and told us how the class worked out. The number one interest in students at that time was economics. It was my last one. My first one happened to be religion. That was at the bottom of the list for most of them. So it was absolutely 180 degrees from the average Dartmouth student.

DONIN: But if you didn't know the results of that test, did you feel that yourself, that you were 180 degrees different?

HINCKLEY: Well, no. I just saw that when we got the results. No, I didn't know. Okay, where are we now?

DONIN: Well, we were talking about your classes when you first got here.

HINCKLEY: Oh, yeah. What I probably enjoyed the most was working for the Dartmouth Players, building sets and I worked for the radio station and did the news.

DONIN: Did you?

HINCKLEY: Yeah. I'd listen to the radio news in my room and take all these notes.

DONIN: Yeah.

HINCKLEY: And then go over there and read my notes off. The thing was all I did then was transfer it over to some dormitories and it was probably pretty poor.

DONIN: Somebody told me—In one of the interviews they said that the way they received the news was the radiator was like your antenna. Does that make sense?

HINCKLEY: I don't remember now, but I know it wasn't much of a big deal. It was kind of pretty much a brand new idea. So that was okay. But I really liked working on the sets. And the other guy that—beginning of my second year, I was made the—well, actually, because three of us were doing it—I was in charge of building sets, and the other guy who was a co-person on it was one of those people who did decide to accelerate. He was going to try to avoid the draft, I guess. So I ended up doing it and he was doing what he was doing. The

funny thing was, after the war he went into—He was married at that point and he went into doing a bunch of barn theaters in California and then he became a TV director. And I was interested in that and I went into science; he went into—

DONIN: So interesting, isn't it?

HINCKLEY: Yeah. And he directed *Father Knows Best*, I don't know if you remember that story on TV. It was Peter Tewksbury. Peter died somewhere in the last three or four or five years in Vermont. And so... Anyway, the other thing I liked when I was a freshman was singing in the glee club. But I don't remember really enjoying any of my classes, except I liked the psychology one. Mostly it was stuff I had to take. Oh, I liked language. That was a possibility I also had in my mind, of majoring in Romance languages, but I guess I didn't follow that up either.

DONIN: So did you feel well prepared for Dartmouth when you got here in terms of your academic training at high school?

HINCKLEY: Well, what I hadn't learned was how to study well. And I did not do well.

DONIN: Right. But you learned after a while.

HINCKLEY: Well, I got older and it was three and a half years later when I went back to school, and by that point I knew what I wanted to do and I started taking things I would like to do—biology—and I used to slug off these test scores of 96 and things like that at that point, and before, I was way down there.

DONIN: Do you think being away at the war made you a better student?

HINCKLEY: Oh, yeah.

DONIN: How?

HINCKLEY: Getting older and knowing what I wanted to do; being focused. And I was terrible at studying. In fact, I was married when I came back—I was married when I got home from Europe, as a matter of fact, before I went to Japan. And my wife was a real student; she was in college. She kind of said, you've got to do this.

DONIN: So she was a good influence on you.

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: So when you came back after the war, did you bring your wife with you?

HINCKLEY: Well, she was in college during the time I was in the war, but she transferred. I met her while I was in the army—while I was in the air corps for a few months. And I met her in Wisconsin. She was a freshman at the university. She came from Connecticut. But then we got married in 1945 when I got back from Europe and she transferred to Smith College, because she knew I was going to be coming back here. So the first year I was back here, she was still at Smith.

DONIN: Finishing her education.

HINCKLEY: Yeah. And then she came up here and we lived at Wigwam Circle.

DONIN: How was that?

HINCKLEY: Well, it was interesting. You know, we didn't think too much of it. It was as good as being in the army, anyway. The little apartments were made out of barracks that came out of Fort Ethan Allan in Vermont and they had space heaters in them. At night, if you happened to go out in the living room where the space heater was and the light was off you could see the thing glow in the dark, in the winter.

DONIN: And it was running on kerosene, wasn't it?

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: Must have been so dangerous.

HINCKLEY: Well, it could have been. You could have burned yourself on it. Well, it had a thing around it—

DONIN: Like a screen around it?

HINCKLEY: Yeah. But it got hot.

DONIN: So did it warm you sufficiently in the winter?

HINCKLEY: Well, yeah. It was all right.

DONIN: Winters up here, back then, they say were much colder than they are now.

HINCKLEY: I know. I had a bicycle when I came back—when I first was here and then I got another bicycle when I came back here. When I was in the medical school, one morning I came out to go to school from Wigwam Circle and got my bike. I had it out there beside the apartment. And I jumped on the bike and the pedals wouldn't move; I couldn't make them do anything. It was so cold; it had to be 30 below. It was so cold, the bicycle wouldn't run, so I ran all the way to the medical school.

DONIN: Good way to warm up.

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: So in terms of the schedule of your classes, did you do three years as an undergrad and then one year at the medical school?

HINCKLEY: Well, essentially something like that, because the first year of medical school was credited as a fourth year of college. So I was here one and a half years originally, and then I was here another whole, you know, from summer through until the next year, doing pre-med stuff. And then I started medicine. It wasn't really three years; it was more like two and a half. Yeah.

DONIN: Yeah. And did you earn credits for your time in the army towards your degree?

HINCKLEY: No. I don't think so. I don't even remember.

DONIN: Some people talk about getting credits for some of the work they did in the army towards their degree.

HINCKLEY: No.

DONIN: No?

HINCKLEY: Not what I did. There wasn't any credit for driving a jeep.

DONIN: I see. Well, you did your medic duty, though, for a couple of months.

- HINCKLEY: Well, I did that for a while, but that wasn't anything.
- DONIN: Right. So when you were first here, you were under one president and then when you came back you were under a different president.
- HINCKLEY: Yeah, Hopkins was here when I first came.
- DONIN: Did you have any memories or impressions of him?
- HINCKLEY: No, not really. I just knew he was the president and Neidlinger was the dean. Neidlinger called me in one point during, I think, early in my second year, to complain that I wasn't doing very well. And actually, I think what the problem was I was getting—I figured this out later—was probably getting depressed about what was going on, you know. People were leaving here in droves, and that kind of thing was so far from what I wanted to do that I think I was still enjoying doing the shows. Unfortunately, sometimes when we were doing a show, I had an exam the next day and I didn't study for it.
- DONIN: Right. But didn't a lot of the activities—the sort of extracurricular activities that were normal—when the war started and so many of the students left, didn't some of that stuff have to stop?
- HINCKLEY: I don't know. Not what I was doing, no. The glee club was still working.
- DONIN: Kept going.
- HINCKLEY: And they were still putting on plays.
- DONIN: And the sports were all going on?
- HINCKLEY: I think so, yeah. I belonged to the Outing Club, but I don't remember doing anything with it. I never went to Moosilauke or anything like that. See, they had no freshman trip in those days.
- DONIN: Right. What about, you know, the Greek life, the fraternities?
- HINCKLEY: That wasn't very common. There was pretty much quite a minority of people in those things.
- DONIN: Well, what was your social life? Was it really centered around—

HINCKLEY: Oh, it was nothing. It was nothing, except that I was telling, you know—my social life had been working for the plays.

DONIN: The plays and the carpentry.

HINCKLEY: And the glee club.

DONIN: And the glee club.

HINCKLEY: Yeah. And I never had a date in those days. I never had a date until I met my wife in Wisconsin when I was twenty years old, almost twenty. Yeah, I was twenty years old, my first date.

DONIN: Well, I don't think that's that unusual.

HINCKLEY: Nowadays, if you got to eighth grade and you didn't have a date...

DONIN: Right. But in those days, I don't think it was that unusual.

HINCKLEY: No, it wasn't.

DONIN: No. You didn't have time.

HINCKLEY: In high school I remember going a dance and the boys were all over here and the girls were over there.

DONIN: Exactly. Now, did you have a part time job when you were here? Did you ever have to work?

HINCKLEY: No. No, I saved some money by joining an eating club, I think, when I was a sophomore, which was back and behind the grocery store, and we got food that they were going to throw away and stuff. We had a woman that cooked for us.

DONIN: Oh, how interesting.

HINCKLEY: So that was—

DONIN: Where did you eat? It was behind the store?

HINCKLEY: Yeah. You know, it was a little [inaudible], and we had perfectly good food; it just was stuff that was just about to be tossed, you know. So, it was cheap.

- DONIN: Yeah. This was when you were living in the dormitory?
- HINCKLEY: Yeah.
- DONIN: Sounds like a good thrifty way to do it. They were rationing things in those days, too, weren't they? Food?
- HINCKLEY: Well, I wasn't aware of it, but I know at home when I finally got home, I think things were rationed, yeah. The first Thanksgiving I was here. Hell, it took too long to get home from here, so I wasn't home 'til Christmas and then not again 'til summer. My mother sent me a chicken for Thanksgiving and she mailed it.
- DONIN: Oh, no.
- HINCKLEY: And when I unwrapped it, it was absolutely ruined.
- DONIN: Rotten. Yeah. Oh, what a shame. And in those days it would be a terrible thing to waste food like that.
- HINCKLEY: Oh, yeah. So, it had to go to Boston on the train and then up here on the train and then it got transferred. She never thought ahead of time how long it would take.
- DONIN: Yeah. So I guess you didn't get any turkey or chicken for that Thanksgiving. [Laughter] So then when you came back from the war, John Dickey was the president here.
- HINCKLEY: Yeah.
- DONIN: Did you have any interactions or impressions of him?
- HINCKLEY: No, except seeing him at the Great Issues course. But, you see at that point, I was working so hard at pre-med stuff that I was almost in a little world by myself. I had essentially no social life except when my wife happened to be up here. And we all had to do this Great Issues course at some point, but I don't really remember going to much of it. I still have my notes on it.
- DONIN: Oh, how interesting.
- HINCKLEY: Yeah, I've got a whole—

- DONIN: Notebook?
- HINCKLEY: A whole printed outline of it and, you know, who the speakers were.
- DONIN: Well, that must have been the early days of the Great Issues course.
- HINCKLEY: It was.
- DONIN: Because he only got it started in the late forties, I think.
- HINCKLEY: Well, I think it was—well, late forties—well, this was 1946 I was here, back here. And it was—I don't remember if it was started in my sophomore year. It might have, but I'm not positive about that. I mean, not my sophomore year. That was before the war.
- DONIN: Usually I think it was reserved for the seniors, but you weren't—
- HINCKLEY: It was supposed to be for seniors, so it may have been during that—well, it couldn't have been the first year in medical school because I wouldn't have had any time, so it must have been during that pre-med year that I was there.
- DONIN: The end of when you were finishing up your pre-med courses.
- HINCKLEY: Yeah.
- DONIN: So you had a pretty full plate there.
- HINCKLEY: Yeah. That was—I've often thought I wouldn't want to do that again.
- DONIN: Right. Work that hard. Yeah. And of course, when you got back here after the war, the campus must have been very different. I mean, crowded with lots of people returning from the war and married people like you.
- HINCKLEY: Yeah.
- DONIN: And a funny sort of mixture of older students who had been off to war for two or three years, and then these brand-new fresh out of high school freshmen. Were you aware of these two different sort of groups that were here together on campus?

- HINCKLEY: Sure. And that pre-med stuff I was doing, I was often in a class with freshmen and those poor guys didn't know what was going on when we had them, because we were getting such great grades and they were down where I would have been when I was a freshman. And somebody stole my lab notebook one day for a lab course I had, two days before an exam, because apparently they may have seen my notes. They were all printed and outlined, and it reappeared two days after the exam. And I still got a 96 on the exam without studying.
- DONIN: Amazing. It's clear you made the right choice about medicine.
- HINCKLEY: I think so, yeah. And I really enjoyed family practice, too.
- DONIN: You enjoyed it, too. That's great. So after you left—When you left Dartmouth, did you all have a graduation ceremony?
- HINCKLEY: Yeah, it was a group thing, I guess, because it was all those classes, those of us and—
- DONIN: So it was '49.
- HINCKLEY: Yeah.
- DONIN: So you graduated with the regular forty-niners.
- HINCKLEY: Yeah, and the other people.
- DONIN: And all the other people. Were you ever tempted to migrate from one class—from your class of '45 to, say, the class of '49 or anything?
- HINCKLEY: No.
- DONIN: I gather some people did that, but... You know, they changed their class affiliation.
- HINCKLEY: Well, the class of '49 was when I went from medical school.
- DONIN: Oh, right.
- HINCKLEY: It was the class of '47 that I finished up and then I got—It was 1947 when I started medical school.

DONIN: Right. So you really finished up your undergrad work in '47.

HINCKLEY: Yeah. That was one whole year from the summer of '46 to the summer of '47.

DONIN: Right. So you sort of maintained your sense of identity with the class of '45, though.

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: Right. Do you think your class or any of those wartime classes, do you think the war had an impact on your sense of belonging to the class, or your sense of—

HINCKLEY: Oh sure, because I knew practically nobody at that point. There were two people in my class who went to medical school during the war that came to Portland. One was a guy—he died about three years ago—he was a dermatologist. And the other one just died a week ago: Howard Sawyer, who became an anesthesiologist and was working at the Maine Medical Center in Portland. He's been retired for years because he was in a M.A.S.H. unit during the Korean War, the one that the guy wrote the book about. The doctor, he was in that particular M.A.S.H. outfit and it was just in the Portland paper about a week ago, something like that. It didn't even say it was a doctor; it said Howard Sawyer in Florida died and it had to be who it was.

So, those are the only—no, John White was very busy with the class after the war. And he lived in Maine. He came from Maine. I knew him somewhat, but I probably knew the guy who was the dermatologist better than anybody.

DONIN: So you really—The friendships that you took away from your experience here sound like they were more medical than they were undergrad.

HINCKLEY: Oh, yeah.

DONIN: But now you seem to have become involved with the class, since you've graduated, though. Have you been active keeping up with the class, the '45 class?

HINCKLEY: No. The last time we came to a reunion was twenty-something years ago, I think.

DONIN: For your fiftieth, maybe?

HINCKLEY: I don't know. This is the sixty-fifth. I don't know; I can't remember for sure. And I've just been saying to my wife, I'd like to get up there again sometime. I haven't seen the place for quite a long time. We never got around to it. And then when this came up, I thought, "Oh, well, okay. I might just as well do it right now." No. There are a lot of these guys that have been going to mini reunions for years. It just didn't appeal to me to do that; I'm not that much of a joiner, I guess. You know, I'm kind of an individual. So I never went to any of those.

DONIN: But that hasn't affected your loyalty to Dartmouth, though.

HINCKLEY: No. The biggest surprise, of course, was when it started admitting women. I've often said, you know, for me, that would have probably—I think I was probably better off in some ways at making friends with other men when there were no women around. And because that's the only time in my life that I've ever had a close relationship with any male, and those guys are gone. One of them was a friend of mine; he married my sister-in-law, as a matter of fact. He met my wife when we came back after the war, and he wanted to meet her sister, so they got married. Anyway, so I knew him and he came from Connecticut, but he was a friend of mine before the war. And another one I saw once after the war; he was in Philadelphia and I went down there for a medical meeting and I called him up, went to see him. He was in my dormitory and I used to really spend a lot of time just visiting with him. But those are the only two guys that I really saw that much. And the first guy who married my sister-in-law died quite a few years ago. He died in his forties of a brain tumor, so I don't see him anymore.

DONIN: Right. So how do you think your education and your experience here was impacted by, you know, Pearl Harbor happening and then so many of your classmates going off to join up and enlist, and even some faculty members, I understand, also left. How did that change your experience here, do you think?

HINCKLEY: Well, for one—What I have often said, the most important thing I think I got out of going in the army was learning to live with a lot of people I never would have known at all before, of different walks of life. I would have had no contact with a lot of those people, and I think that was very helpful when I started doing family practice,

because I found I was very good at getting along with people. So I think that was the one biggest thing that I got out of the army.

The other part was that it absolutely came out to what I thought it was going to be like, which was I didn't like it at all. I'm absolutely, totally non-military. In fact, I was really a conscientious objector, but I didn't happen to belong to an outfit that was called that, that was officially that. When I was being drafted, I must have mentioned to someone—I must have made out a questionnaire—because they called me in for an interview with this whole room full of people, and some guy asked me some questions about this. So, I said, "Yeah, this is the way I feel about it." And so, his final parting shot was: "You wouldn't want to embarrass your father, would you?" My father practically everybody knew; he was a judge, lawyer, and in all kinds of civic activities, and this guy had to bring that up and I said, "Of course not." "I'm sure you'll be all right, son." That was it. I wasn't even asked if I would like to be in the medics, nothing.

So I ended up in the infantry in Texas, and after about a month or so, I finally... They just, without anybody telling me why, I was transferred to the field artillery. I think they must have figured I was so skinny that I wouldn't make a very good infantryman. [Laughter] So I ended up in the field artillery, which was a good break, you know?

DONIN: Yeah, it was a good break.

HINCKLEY: Yeah. And I was just fortunate all the way along in that sense. We lost only two people and that was one day before the war ended in Europe, and they went off to see if they could buy a chicken from a farmer somewhere. And they drove off onto a road that hadn't been cleared by the engineers. Boom. Right up in the air. The driver's mother was a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School and he used to talk to me for hours sometimes. Apparently I was a really good listener and he was a conflicted kind of guy and apparently I'd make him feel better somehow. I don't know. But anyway, he's the one that was driving that truck. So, anyway. Where do we go from here?

Oh, you were saying, how did I think this impacted me? Well, that was one thing. And of course then the other thing was that—the important one was about helping me decide what I wanted to do when I got through the army. And the third one was that the G.I. Bill paid for me to go to medical school, the whole thing.

DONIN: It's a lucky situation, yeah.

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: And how do you think the college managed to organize all these groups that returned from the war that were different ages, different levels of experience, different levels of education? It must have been a big sort of administrative nightmare to try and accommodate all these people coming back basically in 1946 at different times.

HINCKLEY: Well, I suppose it might have been. I don't know. Because they weren't all going to be kind of doing the same, same kind of a major. My major at that point was biology—I mean, yeah. Not biology—zoology and chemistry.

DONIN: Right.

HINCKLEY: But a lot of them—That wouldn't be that many that were doing that.

DONIN: Right. But from your experience, though, it was smooth—The transition back here was smooth.

HINCKLEY: Oh, yeah. It was much better than when I was first here. I went back in the glee club until I really got into medical school and then I had no more time.

DONIN: Right.

HINCKLEY: But that was the only other thing I did. And other than that, I just studied.

DONIN: Studied. A lot of studying, yeah. So where did you continue your medical studies after Dartmouth?

HINCKLEY: I went to Boston University.

DONIN: Oh, yeah. So you spent another three years there?

HINCKLEY: No, two.

DONIN: Two. So back in those days it was three—well—

HINCKLEY: No, it was four years total.

DONIN: But they gave you credit for your last year of undergrad.

HINCKLEY: Well, you're talking about—no. The first year of medical school counted for your last year of college.

DONIN: I see, okay. So the opposite of what I said.

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: Right, I see.

HINCKLEY: So the first two years of medical school was here; the last two were at Boston.

DONIN: At BU. Right, okay. And did you stay sort of connected to the class activities after you finished here? Did you come back for the reunions on a regular basis? I know you said you hadn't been back in twenty years.

HINCKLEY: I think I went two times. I know one of them was the twenty-fifth.

DONIN: Oh, yeah. That's a big one.

HINCKLEY: But I don't remember for sure about the next one. I think it was about twenty years ago. Whatever.

DONIN: Did you have children?

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: Were any of them interested in going to Dartmouth?

HINCKLEY: No. I had three daughters and one of them is in Seattle now. She's a writer/producer for the University of Washington TV department. Does a lot of work for the medical school and the hospital. And another one is a marine biologist, lives in Idaho. And the third one lives in South Portland, where I grew up.

DONIN: Oh, how nice. So one of them is close to home.

HINCKLEY: Yeah. Now, my wife that I got married to when I was in the army, I got divorced from her after thirty years. And I got to the point where I thought: this isn't working anymore. In fact, it was a lot more worse

than that. I thought: if I don't get out of here, I'm going to die soon. So we got divorced. And then later on, I married my present wife. I've been married to her for two more years than I was married the first time.

DONIN: Amazing.

HINCKLEY: And she was one daughter who is mentally challenged, so to speak. Her IQ is about seventy and she lives with us; she's in her forties. And that's a bit of a burden in a way for my wife. And she was adopted and it was my wife's former husband who wanted to adopt her. And my wife didn't want to. But he was sterile and so... My wife began to suspect that the brain wasn't working right when she was still quite young, but the pediatricians, you know, were going to—No, she's just a little slow developing, that's all. She was four years old before they finally admitted she was mentally retarded.

DONIN: Oh, dear.

HINCKLEY: At that point, he lost interest in her. So from that point on, Sally, my wife, was the one who had to do everything. So they got divorced. And then I heard about her because she was a patient of another doctor, but I had seen her once or twice or something when he was away. And then I heard later that she was getting divorced and I thought she was really quite an unusual person, so that's how that happened to come around.

DONIN: That's nice.

HINCKLEY: And she still is unusual.

DONIN: Isn't that nice. So is she here with you this weekend? Is she with you this weekend?

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: Oh, nice. So she's learned to be a Dartmouth wife.

HINCKLEY: Oh, I don't think you're right. She probably wouldn't go with that. [Laughter] She's very much into women having equal rights.

DONIN: Good for her.

HINCKLEY: She thinks it's perfectly okay that I came here but she came from such a poor family. Her father was a career army guy, a sergeant who didn't do much of anything for his family. Her mother worked the whole time she was married to have enough money to just even pay the rent. They moved from one apartment to another when her father was in the army, and she would have loved to go to college, but she never had the opportunity. In fact, even as a senior in high school she asked her father if he would give her five dollars towards getting a class ring and he said no.

DONIN: Oh gee. Tough times back then.

HINCKLEY: Yeah. She came from the wrong side of the tracks, as far as other people in Cape Elizabeth were concerned. Her best girlfriend, when she was very young, was finally told by her mother: "I don't want you associating with her anymore because she's whatever, you know. Because she's socially not okay."

DONIN: It's a shame.

HINCKLEY: Yeah, because Cape Elizabeth is funny. It has a mix like that and still does, somewhat.

DONIN: Cape Elizabeth is near Portland?

HINCKLEY: It's right next to South Portland.

DONIN: I see.

HINCKLEY: There's Portland, South Portland, Cape Elizabeth. Cape Elizabeth's line is 150 feet from our house in South Portland.

DONIN: Oh, I see.

HINCKLEY: So, Sally, you know, from time to time she's taken a course here or there at the University of Southern Maine, but she would have loved to be a lawyer. It's kind of too bad, you know. Really, makes me feel sad about it sometimes.

DONIN: Yeah. Missed opportunities. Okay. Well, unless you have other closing thoughts about your Dartmouth experience, I think we're finished.

HINCKLEY: Okay. Oh, I was just going to say—you know, for fifty years after I finished my resident—well, while I was still a resident in Portland, when I joined this choir at this congregational church in South Portland, we put on an operetta while I was a resident. And it was sort of acted out by a little group of people who did acting and some who sang, and I was one of the singers. And so this doctor who—happened that we put it on for the medical staff, and afterwards I got a call from this doctor saying, “Would you be interested in joining my choir?” He was directing the choir at this church.

DONIN: Oh, isn't that nice?

HINCKLEY: So I joined the choir and I was in that choir for fifty years until about five years ago when my hearing got to the point I couldn't sing anymore. And I still can't—

DONIN: But it was obviously an enjoyable experience if you stayed there for fifty years. That's great.

HINCKLEY: Yeah, it was fun. I think I really had a pretty good voice. One of the guys I was going to try to see when we came up here this year was Bob Joy, who was in my class.

DONIN: Yeah, I interviewed him.

HINCKLEY: I think he died, didn't he?

DONIN: Yes, he did. Pediatrician, right?

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: Yeah. Recently.

HINCKLEY: And he sent me a little note back and said, “Love to see you. Call me when you get here.”

DONIN: Oh, that's a shame.

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

DONIN: Yeah they live out at Kendal.

HINCKLEY: Oh yeah.

DONIN: He was a lovely man.

HINCKLEY: Yeah. I knew him quite well when I was in medical school. The thing I remember is this car he had, one of those old Chryslers with the fluid drive and he never changed gears in the thing. It would start up about this rapidly, you know, and he'd be talking away; we'd just be sort of gliding along and finally get up to twenty-five miles an hour. [Laughter] Funny. Well, okay.

DONIN: Okay. Well, this is great. Let me push stop here.

HINCKLEY: Yeah.

[End of interview]