

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Ed Scheu '46
By Mary Donin
November 7, 2007

DONIN: ...how you chose Dartmouth as your undergraduate college?

SCHEU: Well, that is somewhat unique in that I came to—my family gave me the family car. We lived in Buffalo, New York, and I went to school there. And they said, "Go make a decision about where you want to go to college." So I did. I took a drive, came east out of Buffalo. Made stops sort of on the way: Colgate...well, anyway, a number of different schools as I came east. I headed down towards New York and stopped briefly at Yale in New Haven. Then I proceeded on and headed for Harvard and other schools along that way. I got to Dartmouth first. I don't know why, it just struck me just immediately. I was due to continue on at Yale and Harvard. And when I got to Dartmouth, I said, "This is it!"

DONIN: You knew right away.

SCHEU: I knew right away. There wasn't any question at all. And I spent a couple of nights there and just found somebody to spend the night with. And went to a couple of classes, I guess. And then I headed home. I went back to Buffalo, back in school when the war struck. But I guess I must have, while I was still in Hanover, I think I registered. I don't know what that procedure was. Because it wasn't long after, I was still in Buffalo, as I mentioned, the war started. But I immediately put in an application to come to school here. I stayed there at school and sort of matriculated. Then I went back to Buffalo and then made a decision. I knew I didn't want to go in the Army. So right after Christmas I went down to the post office and signed up as an apprentice seaman. I went into the Navy, and my early orders were to go to Sampson Naval Training Program, a newly formed camp, in Geneva, New York, down in the Finger Lakes district. I spent the start of the fall there at Sampson Naval Training Program. Well, shortly thereafter, I was picked to—I was picked to go for further education through the Navy.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

- SCHEU: Which was a very fortuitous thing. I was sent to pick up a ship which was under construction at that time. It was in the amphibious part of the Navy. And the Navy and also my skipper recognized that I did have a marine background; very specifically I became the navigator on this small ship, 157 feet long.
- DONIN: When you arrived at Dartmouth in the summer of 1942—I assume.
- SCHEU: Right.
- DONIN: How soon was it—did you spend any time here before enlisting?
- SCHEU: Very little. Very little time.
- DONIN: Did you go to classes or anything?
- SCHEU: Yes, I think I went to classes. And it wasn't until the end of the semester that I cut off and went one way in the Navy and the other way at Dartmouth.
- DONIN: I see. So you did one semester here, and then you enlisted.
- SCHEU: Right.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- SCHEU: And it wasn't really a full semester, as I recall.
- DONIN: That first semester here, you were a freshman, where did you live?
- SCHEU: I lived in Streeter Dorm.
- DONIN: Oh, yes. Right. But I assume there were lots and lots of students like you who were leaving in order to join the military.
- SCHEU: Yes.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- SCHEU: And, yes, I knew a couple of boys and I think they influenced my thinking to get into the Navy quickly rather than go into the Army or do other things.

DONIN: Well, if you didn't enlist, you were going to be drafted at some point anyway.

SCHEU: Exactly. But I went home for Christmas, and then I think my father was going to shoot me. I just literally packed my bag and went to the enrollment area, and that was it. That was the start of my naval career.

DONIN: And how long were you in the Navy?

SCHEU: Three and a half years.

DONIN: And then when you got out, you came directly back here?

SCHEU: I went down to Florida where my mother and father were and I remember I had a, I think they called it a severance fee, that isn't the right word, but it's the same thing. I remember I had a fee of \$300 and I used it to buy a set of golf clubs and then I joined my father and mother in Florida. [Laughter] That didn't last long at all because the Navy then put me on active duty and then I went in the Navy in January, late January.

DONIN: So you returned here, say, in what, 1946?

SCHEU: Yes, '46. Right.

DONIN: And were there a lot of your classmates who were actually going to graduate that year?

SCHEU: Yes, there were a number. I have to say that I changed my class from '46 to—

DONIN: When you first entered here, were you not in the class of '46?

SCHEU: No, I was not. And I didn't—as I recall I wasn't even assigned a class at that time.

DONIN: Well, so many people were coming and going, and there were all these sort of abbreviated school terms that you were doing, that I think a lot of people were moving between two different classes.

SCHEU: Right.

DONIN: How did you end up ultimately being in the class of '46?

SCHEU: I just selected it.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SCHEU: And I think that was mostly on the basis of friendships.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SCHEU: I knew more people in that group. But it wasn't significant. I just decided it made sense to stay with at least the most important or the largest block of Dartmouth people.

DONIN: That you were friends with?

SCHEU: Yes.

DONIN: Right. Now I read somewhere that you were quite a soccer star when you came to Dartmouth.

SCHEU: Well, I wasn't really a star. But I did have a strong background in hockey.

DONIN: And you played hockey and soccer, is that correct?

SCHEU: I played hockey and soccer. I played hockey. As I started to say, I came to hockey because hockey was very much a family affair.

DONIN: Coming from Buffalo, New York that is no surprise.

SDHEU: Went to the first school that had a year-round hockey program. That was Nichols School in Buffalo.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SCHEU: And anyway, I did go out for hockey and soccer initially. And then hockey.

DONIN: And you lettered in both, didn't you?

SCHEU: Yes.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SCHEU: My one claim to fame was that I got the first varsity letter. Up to that point Dartmouth eliminated varsity letters because of the war. And as I say, I just lucked out.

DONIN: So you got the first one after the war?

SCHEU: After the war. They were starting to hand them out, these awards, and I was fortunate to be able to get one right at that time. And I was pretty active. I coached the Dartmouth freshman soccer team. And then after I got back from Christmas, I was at Dartmouth. I went out for hockey late that fall. The coach here, Eddie Jeremiah, legendary person, had a hard-and-fast rule that if you skated, you didn't ski. Or vice versa.

DONIN: Oh.

SCHEU: Well, I got a chance to go skiing right after practically starting classes. It was the coach's daughters who talked me into going skiing instead of playing. I had a crazy exam schedule where all my exams were run together. And I had a period of about a month where I gradually worked my way over to the soccer area and didn't actively get into hockey at that point. And I really never did get back into hockey but I did play one semester there at Dartmouth. And then I went out for the ski team. Never having skied before.

DONIN: [Laughs]

SCHEU: But I just—I don't know whether it was a premonition or what. But I just knew that all of my life would be more devoted to skiing rather than to the hockey.

DONIN: Where did the ski team practice in those days?

SCHEU: Balch Hill. We had to climb, run with skis and climb up.

DONIN: That's a workout.

SCHEU: Yes. And the other thing they had from before the war, they had a jump, a 50-meter jump. And unfortunately—I shouldn't say this—but the lawyers put the jump out of business.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SCHEU: Which is too bad. But I had two years of jumping which I really enjoyed.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SCHEU: It's crazy. I wasn't even that good a skier. But I signed up jumping in skiing—cross-country, all that in that packet. And from then on I just worked very hard to get ultimately on the B Team, as I called it. And I was fairly active on the jumping team.

DONIN: Until they shut it down.

SCHEU: Yes, they tore down the jump.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SCHEU: That's my supposition, that it was the lawyers because obviously they were concerned about someone falling—which I did a couple of times; it's hard not to, to start out. So that ended my jumping period. And I continued on with downhill for the rest of my career at Dartmouth. I slowly worked my way up into the club and never regretted my decision. As much as I loved hockey, I just—for some reason, I just knew that skiing was going to be it.

DONIN: So, when you got here, Ernest Martin Hopkins was the president.

SCHEU: Right.

DONIN: But then when you returned, it was John Sloan Dickey.

SCHEU: John Sloan Dickey, right.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Do you have memories of either of them?

SCHEU: Yes, both. I remember meeting Hopkins—Hoppy as he was known then. He retired. John Sloan Dickey came in to Dartmouth. I really enjoyed getting to know him, not intimately well, but I did, along with other people. I took a class with him. He was just getting into Canadian-American Studies and I signed up to be in his class.

DONIN: Now had he started the Great Issues courses yet?

- SCHEU: Yes. Greatest thing anybody did for Dartmouth. I was very enthusiastic about it. I thought it was—just made so much sense to really concentrate on what was going on in the world.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- SCHEU: To have one course that did that, and this was his course.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Now as I understand it, the idea was that you would read different newspaper accounts of the same event.
- SCHEU: Exactly. Every month we would be assigned either a book to read or some event. I sort of made the decision because I was interested in ultimately going to Tuck School.
- DONIN: I think the Tuck program at that point allowed you to do three years at Dartmouth and then two years at Tuck, is that right?
- SCHEU: That's right.
- DONIN: So is that the program—
- SCHEU: I did that program.
- DONIN: What was your major when you were an undergrad?
- SCHEU: My major was history—history and economics.
- DONIN: So after your credits as an undergrad, you then moved on to the Tuck program.
- SCHEU: Uh huh. Well I'm not too sure of that.
- DONIN: Uh huh. Were there any memorable professors that you particularly enjoyed?
- SCHEU: Well, Lou Stilwell—
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- SCHEU: —in history.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.

- SCHEU: A character. He was an expert on the Civil War, if I recall.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- SCHEU: And was a colorful guy who was fun as well as— He worked us hard, but it was worth it. He was a good. And then I am thinking the other history professor... Oh, how could I forget him? Well anyway, I enjoyed both those classes and really basically stayed on other than the Tuck School side, stayed on in history and economics. I liked both and I did reasonably well. I was never too involved in many things, mostly sports.
- DONIN: That's what you enjoyed the most.
- SCHEU: Yes, that's what I enjoyed the most and did the best in. It fitted me, I guess.
- DONIN: So when you returned here after the war, did you join—I assume the fraternities got up and running again. Did you join a fraternity?
- SCHEU: I joined Sigma Chi. I can't remember when that was but I would guess maybe late spring, whenever tapping was really. They didn't call it tapping. They did later on. And again, the thing that pushed me that way was I had a couple of very close friends and one of them who later became my roommate and also was in the Army. His name was Nick Vorys. A great guy.
- DONIN: So he was your roommate in...
- SCHEU: But anyway, he was my roommate starting in the summer. We had a summer program then.
- DONIN: Once the war started, the college started operating year-round.
- SCHEU: Yes, I think so. Being away, I didn't actively get into the Navy until the end of January. Actively, after the end of the war, I had plenty more duty.
- DONIN: There was the training school, the V-12 and the V-5 that were going on here.
- SCHEU: I was probably crazy but I was given a... trying to think of what they call it. They had a V-12 program and a V-5 program for flying...

- DONIN: So coming back to campus after the war, the campus must have been sort of settling into more of a regular traditional routine.
- SCHEU: Right.
- DONIN: But there must have been a big mixture of the returning vets like yourself along with more traditional undergrads just coming out of high school and starting their college life.
- SCHEU: Yes.
- DONIN: How was it on campus with these two very different groups of students here? I mean was there much interaction between the traditional students and the vets?
- SCHEU: I wouldn't say there was much interaction. There certainly was interaction. I think we tended to—it was indicative of the fact that I could have gone into the class of '89 instead of '46.
- DONIN: You could've gone into the class of '49?
- SCHEU: Oh, '49. I said '89. But '49. See, you had your choice.
- DONIN: Oh.
- SCHEU: And the younger, newer men went into '49, and most of us of the guys who went to war ended up in '46.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- SCHEU: We could've changed it, but we didn't.
- DONIN: Well, that was more your age group as well.
- SCHEU: Right, right.
- DONIN: 'Forty-six.
- SCHEU: But I had no sense of a significant difference there. I think maybe it was due to two things: one, soccer, and sports, in which there was an intermingling. And then the fraternities. I was never a great supporters of fraternities. But at that time it was sort of the only way to get started.

DONIN: Socially you mean?

SCHEU: Socially, yes.

DONIN: So let's talk about the social life. You guys weren't young high school boys anymore coming to campus. You were grown men who'd had very life-changing experiences during the war and you're coming back to a campus of just men who probably were used to having a different kind of social life than the young kids who were just getting here out of high school. What did you do for social activities?

SCHEU: Oh, it was mostly get a keg of beer on a Friday. Tanzi's downtown, which was very much a part of the Dartmouth history, always provided us with a keg. But basically the fraternities were the only game in town, so to speak. And I think Dartmouth made a big mistake on that. The fraternities were doubtful even at that time because there were fraternities before the war. There was some debate about whether to change and the administration decided to support both. And I think that one of the reasons the fraternities were a problem was that there was group of us who were all a lot older and tended to automatically go into fraternities. They are still a part of Dartmouth life but I think it would have been better if they would have taken advantage of it.

DONIN: And not had them come back, you mean?

SCHEU: Not had them.... Either join a new fraternity or go to the fraternity they had before the war. Before active duty, I didn't have anything—I didn't think at all about fraternities.

DONIN: But when you got back, you found they were the only source of social life.

SCHEU: Right, right.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SCHEU: And actually I don't think even, when I got back, I didn't join the fraternity until the summer of that year. But, as I say, sports and my schoolwork were the important part of that return.

DONIN: Now were you one of the men that would make road trips down to visit girls at the girls' colleges?

SCHEU: No. I think I did it once, and it was not with the fraternity. I think it was—We had a roommate; there were three of us in the room. We had a roommate who had a car.

DONIN: Oh.

SCHEU: He was a very good friend. [Laughter] And I remember going down to Smith one time. But I didn't do it. There were some that were fairly active in that. But I was too involved with Dartmouth and athletics. And women didn't play a part in my Dartmouth career at that time.

DONIN: Wasn't enough time. You were engaged in so many other things. And there was no other place for the vets, for the older vets like yourself to congregate. There was no bar in town?

SCHEU: Oh yes they did. Those were the people who were active at Dartmouth at the beginning of the war and so they went back. And the fraternities were regrouping.

DONIN: Now you said there was a bar in town you could go to?

SCHEU: I don't remember a bar in town and I am sure there was.

DONIN: I'm just trying to think of what other alternatives there would be for....

SCHEU: I think it was the fraternity and athletics. There was intramural athletics at that time.

DONIN: Were you active in the Outing Club?

SCHEU: Not active, but I did go to some of the programs. Again, it wasn't a big deal at that time for undergraduates.

DONIN: Now, there was another group on campus after the war, and these were the folks that were married and living in Wigwam and Sachem and I think in Fayerweather as well.

SCHEU: Yes.

DONIN: Did you socialize much with them or get to know them very much?

SCHEU: Yes, we did because, well, number one some of the guys and gals participated in the fraternity life. But I think, as I recall, they were quite separate. The married guys went with their counterparts and not a lot of mixture at that point.

[End of Interview]