

Dartmouth College Oral History Project  
The War Years at Dartmouth  
Interview with Donald '45 and Ruth Sisson  
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SISSON: I had a prep school history teacher at Worcester Academy who took me under his wing; my father had died. He was Dartmouth Class of '33. Tozier, T-O-Z-I-E-R, by name. He was very good to me and was a real Dartmouth man. And it was through him that I was introduced to Dartmouth.

DONIN: Had he himself gone to Dartmouth?

SISSON: He was Dartmouth Class of '33.

DONIN: Oh, I see. I thought your father was Class of '33.

SISSON: No, no.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SISSON: We'd had no Dartmouth connection before me.

DONIN: Uh-huh. You're the first.

SISSON: Yes.

DONIN: Great. So did you look at any other college? You didn't do that in those days as much.

SISSON: I did. I checked out Williams.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SISSON: That was my second choice. Fortunately, Dartmouth said okay. I liked the idea of the rural location.

DONIN: Yes. Did you look at it before you made up your mind?

SISSON: Oh, yes indeed. Yes.

DONIN: So you arrived here by train, by car, when you first got here to start out in the fall of '41?

SISSON: By car in early September of '41.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. And your dormitory, do you remember what dorm you were in?

SISSON: I was in Ripley.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

SISSON: 110 Ripley.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And you and Ruth already knew each other at this point, right?

RUTH SISSON: Very well.

DONIN: Uh-huh. You were childhood friends?

RUTH: Yes.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So where were you, Ruth?

RUTH: Well, I was still in high school.

DONIN: I see. When he started as a freshman, you were still in high school.

RUTH: Yes.

DONIN: Okay. So do you remember who your roommates were when you first got here in '41?

SISSON: Oh, very much so. David Kirkpatrick, Class of '45 was my freshman roommate. Before I left, it was Al Meyer, Class of '45 as well as David Kirkpatrick.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And you had this small window of opportunity to be a regular college kid for those first four months before December 7<sup>th</sup>.

SISSON: I remember December 7<sup>th</sup>. Everybody, I'm sure, remembers where they were on December 7<sup>th</sup>.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SISSON: As a freshman I had signed on to *The Dartmouth*, *The Daily D*, as what they called a heeler. That was the entry-level type—that was the gopher—entry to the staff of *The Daily D*. And on December the 7<sup>th</sup>, I got a call on the hall phone and said they wanted to go over there, heelers and everybody, down to the office to get out an extra of *The Daily D*. And we went down there in the afternoon. I don't remember all the mechanics of it. But the result was that we got out a one-sheet, extra tabloid size, one sheet front and back of *The Daily D*. And I'm sure—almost sure—we hit the streets that afternoon. It may have taken until Monday morning, but certainly that. But that was the beginning of my Dartmouth experience in wartime.

DONIN: Right, right.

SISSON: I have that sheet someplace but I couldn't find it. But I'm sure you have access to *The Daily D*.

DONIN: Right. We have it in the archives but I didn't actually look at the... I'm going to go back and look and see if we have it in the collection, that one page extra that you put out.

Now do you have any recollection of President Hopkins making a speech or call in the school together to tell you what the plans were for reacting to the war and everything?

SISSON: I don't. But I do remember the matriculation ceremony.

DONIN: Oh.

SISSON: It was quite revealing. And I guess they still happen. The president of the College sits down and signs in every matriculating student. And I found him—we connected because he also was, I think in 1896, a graduate of Worcester Academy.

DONIN: Oh, I see!

SISSON: So we did have that in common.

DONIN: And did he actually shake your hand?

SISSON: Absolutely. Yes. Sat down. It wasn't a stand up affair. He sat down. And the matriculating student sat in a chair that was deskside, and he greeted us and shook our hands and wished us well in becoming men of Dartmouth.

DONIN: Right, right. Now during that first period in the fall before war was declared, did the freshmen get treated as freshmen do and have to wear beanies and go through any kind of hazing experiences?

SISSON: We did that, yes. What was it? There was a rope pull, that was one of the things.

DONIN: Oh, yes, on The Green?

SISSON: On The Green.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SISSON: And things were going along just normally up until December 7<sup>th</sup>.

DONIN: Right. And then it all changed.

SISSON: Then we knew the world had changed.

DONIN: Indeed. They started sort of accelerating your classes, didn't they?

SISSON: They did. They introduced a summer term in '42.

DONIN: Right. Did you join in that summer term? Did you?

SISSON: I was here in '42 into '43 before I left in the summer of '43 for the Army.

DONIN: So you had completed—so you basically went to school year round.

SISSON: Yes, yes.

DONIN: And were you drafted or did you enlist?

SISSON: I volunteered for enlistment is what it was called. My eyes didn't let me into any of the Navy programs or the V-5, V-7, V-12. And I wound up in the Army as of the summer of '43.

- DONIN: The summer of '43. And at this point you had the equivalent probably of what? Three years of college under your belt.
- SISSON: Well, two years plus maybe. I was a Tuck/Thayer major.
- DONIN: Right.
- SISSON: And I started taking courses in the College and Thayer School and Tuck School.
- DONIN: Before you— Wow! So they got you started at Tuck and Thayer quickly. I thought you didn't start until maybe your third year or something.
- SISSON: I wasn't supposed to.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- SISSON: But in the mixed-up curriculum change approach at that time, I wound up in all three.
- DONIN: Do you have any sense of whether there were a lot of faculty who also signed up and left? Did you lose any of your teachers, do you remember?
- SISSON: Not that I can recall.
- DONIN: Yes, yes. But you of course lost a lot of classmates who signed up right away.
- SISSON: Yes. And there were course changes. I remember there was a course quickly put together called Training for Supervision and Leadership.
- DONIN: Ah.
- SISSON: Done by Professor Feldman down at Tuck School.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- SISSON: And that was a quickie course they put together that was sort of personnel management in a sense. Good background for maybe OCS.

- DONIN: Sure, sure.
- SISSON: Then there was another one called Economics of War that was put together very quickly.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Now do you remember when the military training programs arrived on campus? You were still there. That was before you left, right? The Navy came with their training program to get the officers trained before sending them off before the—
- SISSON: I don't remember their presence on the campus before I left.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- SISSON: I don't know when they arrived.
- DONIN: It was sometime in '42 or '43. But it may have been after you left.
- SISSON: I think so.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. And what did it feel like to see your classmates go off and know that you were not going to have this sort of traditional undergraduate education? I mean was everybody of the same mind, that it was time to just sign up and go off to war?
- SISSON: Well, some did very quickly. Some were picked up into the Navy programs. And it became apparent that I wasn't going to be. So that's when I said, I won't wait for the draft board to come after me; I'll let them know I'm ready to go.
- DONIN: Ready to go. And was that the sense that everybody had, all your classmates? That they were just waiting and ready to sign up and go?
- SISSON: I don't have any means for addressing the general opinion that way.
- DONIN: Uh huh. But was war the only topic of conversation? Was that on everybody's mind?
- SISSON: Yes, I'd have to say it sure crossed our minds.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. Where were you at this point, Ruth?

RUTH SISSON: Well, I graduated from the Bancroft School in 1943. And then I went to Mount Holyoke.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So you didn't come to Dartmouth campus until after? Did you come up and visit him before he left?

RUTH SISSON: I came to the Dartmouth campus in the fall of 1941. A football game was being played with William and Mary in pouring rain. And they called it the Reign of William and Mary. [Laughter]

DONIN: That's great. Was that the first time you visited Dartmouth?

RUTH SISSON: Yes.

DONIN: So that must have been for Homecoming.

RUTH SISSON: No, it wasn't. I came with his mother and his sister.

DONIN: Oh, I see.

RUTH SISSON: We stayed at the Green Mountain Inn down on Main Street, long gone.

SISSON: 110 Ripley had a fireplace. It was really cozy. And I remember. I don't know where we got the firewood but we had a fire in the fireplace after the Reign of William and Mary where we warmed and dried ourselves.

DONIN: I bet you needed it. Cold and raw. So when was the next time you returned to Dartmouth?

RUTH: It would have been in the winter of '42. It was not Winter Carnival. If they had a Winter Carnival in '42. I'm not sure.

DONIN: Yes, I don't know if they did or not.

RUTH: But anyway the trains were still running.

DONIN: The trains were running?

RUTH: Yes.

DONIN: At that point there must have been gas rationing, though; it was expensive to get around.

RUTH: I can't tell you when gas rationing began. Do you have any recollection of that?

SISSON: No, I don't.

RUTH: You know, it's very interesting how memory just wipes out so much. I do remember that when I came home from college, the first thing my mother said to me was not hello but, did you bring your ration book? These things were very very important.

DONIN: Sure.

RUTH: My father had extra gas because he was a doctor but that didn't mean that we went joyriding around I didn't learn to drive because I wouldn't have wanted to use any of that precious gas.

DONIN: Waste it on anything. Right. So let's get back to how your education got short of chopped up. You left Dartmouth in '43.

SISSON: Summer of '43, yes.

DONIN: And how long were you in the Army?

SISSON: I got out of the Army I think November of '45.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

SISSON: I came back to the campus in the spring of '46.

DONIN: And what did you find?

SISSON: Found the Theta Chi House pretty much in a mess.

DONIN: Yes.

SISSON: I can remember being part of the crew trying to spiffy the place up as we were the first returning brothers, if you will.

DONIN: I guess they closed all the fraternities for a number of years during the war. They closed them down. So you had to open it up again.

SISSON: We were opening it up, yes, yes.



DONIN: Uh-huh. And did you live there once you got it fixed up?

SISSON: Yes, I lived there. Lived there through '46 and '47 until we were married in August of '47. And Ruth and I came to the campus right after we were wed in August of '47.

DONIN: And where did you live when you came back as a couple?

RUTH: Wigwam Circle.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

RUTH: Have you heard of Wigwam Circle?

DONIN: Sure.

RUTH: Has anybody mentioned it?

DONIN: Oh, yes.

RUTH: As a matter of fact, our only piece of primary information we found is a very small picture of Wigwam Circle.

DONIN: Oh, great.

RUTH: And it does, if you look at it very closely, you'll see a telephone booth; it's a little hard to make out. But it is there.

DONIN: Way down at the end there.

RUTH: Yes. Well, the telephone booth was sort of in the middle of the buildings.

DONIN: Oh. Oh, there it is. Up on the porch.

RUTH: And it was right outside of our apartment, which was No. 56. Some things you never forget. [Laughter] And when the phone rang—I don't know how many telephone booths there were on Wigwam, but not very many. And when the phone rang, of course, I always answered it, thinking it would be an emergency of some dire sort. And then I would go around to however far away and knock on somebody's door who might or might not be there and might or might not respond. And it's cold. And another thing, there were a great many dogs running around Wigwam Circle. There were no

leash laws or any of that sort of thing. And some of the dogs were—

SISSON: Always dogs running free on the Dartmouth campus.

RUTH: And I remember one night coming back from Worcester where my family lived, and it was very snowy and miserable, and I had taken the train or the bus or something. And I'm covered with snow and everything. And I had what was known as an Alaskan Mouton coat. You never heard of these things. Well, it is a sort of—it's a fur; it came off of some animal. Well, a very large, slathering Mastiff approached me, put his paws on my shoulders. He's looking me in the face. And I don't know why I didn't faint dead away. [Laughter] I think I asked him to leave as politely as I could. I thought this dog could have taken my head off. And he thought I was some kind of animal, of course. The scent of this fur that was covered with snowy rain and everything.

DONIN: Oh, that's funny.

RUTH: I mean these are things you don't forget.

DONIN: No, exactly. So that must have been a very different life coming back married and living in Wigwam Circle, which I gather was not the most luxurious accommodations.

SISSON: Has anybody described those buildings to you?

DONIN: Well, they told me about the lack of heat mostly. It was always cold.

SISSON: Well, it was always cold outside in the winter. But each of these one-room units, which we had, had a great big kerosene heater. A huge kerosene—an oversized kerosene heater, which when fired up would drive you right out of the place.

DONIN: Oh, that's funny. Dangerous, though, I would think.

SISSON: Yes.

RUTH: You see, there were eight units on one side of the building and eight on the other. So in other words there were 16 of these stoves. Why we didn't all blow up! Because nobody there, you know, these are people who grew up under slightly more civilized situations. And nobody knew how to work these stoves.

SISSON: There was a 55-gallon drum of kerosene out front. It literally was... When we were married and didn't have a child. So we were in the one-roomers.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SISSON: It was pretty primitive. I shaved in the same sink where Ruth washed the lettuce.

DONIN: Right, right. [Laughs]

RUTH: We knew that this was sort of rudimentary living. And we knew that we would remember every detail as we got older, which of course we have. And we said, But we mustn't forget: we had a wonderful time.

DONIN: That's what everybody says.

RUTH: Yes.

DONIN: That there was a real camaraderie among the couples.

RUTH: We used to blow fuses all up and down.

SISSON: We used to have waffle parties. In those days everybody got a waffle iron as a wedding present.

DONIN: [Laughs] Yes.

SISSON: And we would take two or three waffle irons to one apartment where the hostess would mix up the batter. That would blow the fuse, you see.

DONIN: [Laughs] That's great. And it seems that there was sort of a lighthearted feeling to your life after the war. That this was just a wonderful time to be young and married and you didn't mind the sort of primitive accommodations you had because you realized it was—

SISSON: That's absolutely true.

DONIN: —temporary. Yes.

- RUTH: Well, I think we were so used to working as students, and it was hard going. And he was in his last semester at Tuck School. And we were all geared up to work.
- DONIN: Were you able to get a job?
- RUTH: Yes, I worked at Champion's.
- DONIN: Oh, great. Yes. It's still there.
- RUTH: Well, it was very different. Champion's was an all-men's store then and very upscale.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- RUTH: And I was busy all the time, learning to cook and little things like that.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. And all the wives sort of stuck together as their husbands were—because the husbands were tied up finishing their education.
- RUTH: Yes.
- DONIN: And you went out to work. And then did you find time to spend with the other wives as well?
- RUTH: Yes.
- DONIN: Yes.
- SISSON: Want to tell her about Herr Schlossmacher?
- RUTH: Oh, yes, there was a professor of German whose name was Herr Schlossmacher. And he gave a course for the war brides who were returning, in German. And he had us singing German songs and learning a bit of German vocabulary. He was very nice to do this. It really was a very gracious thing. It was an introduction to a campus course, of course. And I remember one of the assignments was to bring in, in German of course, the menu of what we had had for Sunday dinner. And I thought, well, I can't have a hotdog. That's for sure. So I think, well, I'll do something with chicken. And the word for a little roast chicken is Gebratenes Hühnchen. I felt very proud

of myself to be able to say that we had actually had Gebratenes Hühnchen.

SISSON: That's great. So he was teaching the wives of the students?

RUTH: He was teaching—yes.

DONIN: Interesting. Because one thinks of Dartmouth in those days, the women were just not allowed in the classroom at all. But clearly that's not right.

RUTH: No, no. And I can't even tell you what building this was held in. It wasn't really a formal classroom. And he was very, shall I say, light-footed. That doesn't sound—but he was. And he would dance to some of these German songs that he was singing. And I think another thing that he had in mind was he wanted to put a good face on German culture. Because when you think about what the country had come through....

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Very wise man.

RUTH: And he was a very wise man.

DONIN: That must have been fun, that class.

RUTH: Yes, of course it was fun.

DONIN: Right.

RUTH: Yes. And it was a certain amount of work, and we felt, yes, we've done something.

DONIN: Right.

RUTH: Because, you know, it's a terrible adjustment to come out of the academic lifestyle and find yourself doing the laundry in the basement of Thayer School.

DONIN: Right.

RUTH: And the bell rings, and you think, oh, I've got to go to class. And then you think, no, I'm not going to class. I'm just doing the laundry.

- DONIN: [Laughs] Right, right. Now did you find that most of your social life was oriented towards other married students?
- RUTH: We knew a few undergraduates who were friends or relatives of friends who were students. And I do remember that when they came to our one-room apartment for dinner, they were very nice about eating the food that I had made, which was of course all very experimental. And, you know, it was fun to entertain.
- DONIN: Sure.
- SISSON: We also had to reopen fraternities, the base of social activity.
- DONIN: So could Ruth go with you to fraternity parties?
- SISSON: Sure. Yes, yes.
- RUTH: I'll tell you. This just comes to me, that in the fall of '47, the new look came along. Do you know the new look? It was a radical fashion change. And the skirts went all the way down almost to the floor.
- DONIN: Oh!
- RUTH: And those of us who had been married in the old look, of course, that was our working wardrobe. But when I went to the fraternity house with him, the dates, the women, were all in these long skirts, and they looked very glamorous. And I thought, oh, you see, now I'm an old married woman in these old fuddy-duddy clothes. You see you have to adjust to that sort of thing.
- DONIN: Yes, yes.
- RUTH: After a while you learn how to get a long skirt that you could put with a jacket and try to make yourself look up to date. But it was a radical fashion change. It really was. And I don't think there's been anything quite that radical that has taken place since then.
- DONIN: Interesting.
- SISSON: Possibly the miniskirt.
- RUTH: Well, the miniskirt, yes. Yes. But that was going in the other direction.

- DONIN: Yes. [Laughs]
- RUTH: By that time I don't think I was worrying about mini—I, you know, the knee or anything, right?
- DONIN: Exactly. So were you able to sort of reunite with your classmates when you returned?
- SISSON: Yes, yes. Had another roommate then in the interim period until we went to Wigwam.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Now they also had married people living in Sachem Village, I guess.
- RUTH: That was known as the Gold Coast.
- SISSON: The high rent district.
- DONIN: Yes.
- SISSON: They were classier construction than Wigwam.
- RUTH: And they had children for the most part.
- DONIN: Sachem? Yes, yes. Well, they had to slap up these buildings pretty quickly to accommodate the married—the veterans who were returning with wives.
- SISSON: Indeed. We were told, as I recall, that the buildings that we were in, pictured there, had been erected first down in Portsmouth for naval shipyard workers.
- DONIN: Oh.
- SISSON: And dismantled down there and re-erected up here. They were rather like matchsticks when they were re-erected.
- DONIN: It's a miracle you didn't all burn up with the kerosene tank.
- RUTH: Yes, it really is.
- DONIN: So do you think you were a better student when you returned from the war than beforehand?

RUTH: May I answer that question? He has always been all As.

DONIN: Oh, so there was no change. Okay.

RUTH: All As.

DONIN: Yes.

RUTH: He was born a student.

DONIN: Right, right.

RUTH: He's a *summa* graduate.

DONIN: Congratulations.

SISSON: I always said I had some skill for expecting what the professor wanted to see.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Well, that's a good skill to have. Because it's been pointed out by a number of people that they felt they were more mature when they returned and therefore, they sort of buckled down and they performed better as students when they returned.

RUTH: We've heard that from lots of our friends.

DONIN: Did you ever get to sort of officially graduate? I mean was there a ceremony for you? I mean obviously you didn't graduate with your class of '45 because there were no—

RUTH: Oh, this is a wonderful story. No, there was no graduation.

SISSON: We did not have a commencement. Some, I guess, got their diplomas in the mail. But we did share in the graduation ceremony for the class of '95, which was our 50<sup>th</sup>—

DONIN: Oh, yes.

SISSON: You've heard about this?

DONIN: Yes. Wonderful.

SISSON: That was a wonderful experience.



DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SISSON: And we sat right behind the Class of '95. They all turned around and stood up and saluted us. And we in turn saluted them.

DONIN: Must have been just a wonderful experience.

RUTH: Another rainy day.

DONIN: Oh!

RUTH: We were tastefully attired in plastic garbage bags. [Laughter] Really. And we had been frisked before we went into the field because President Clinton was speaking at that time. And that was also very memorable. And we were supposed to get there at I don't know; the ceremony was at eleven or whatever. And we had to get there about seven-thirty in the morning. And they did have coffee for us, but we didn't dare drink anything because we knew we were going to be trapped out on that field for hours on end.

DONIN: Right. And I gather they didn't allow umbrellas because of security.

RUTH: No, no.

DONIN: So when you finished at Dartmouth, you came away with another degree besides your undergraduate degree, is that right?

SISSON: It was a peculiar thing called master of science—

DONIN: Was it the MCS, master of commercial science?

SISSON: No, no. Master of science and engineering and business administration.

DONIN: Oh, my goodness!

SISSON: That's what they gave us from the Tuck-Thayer program.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

SISSON: That is so obscure that I since was told just call yourself an MBA. I don't know if they ever changed the records or not.

- RUTH: Well, fortunately you haven't had to go out and look for a job recently. [Laughter]
- DONIN: That's a good thing, right. It's a good thing. So were there any sort of memorable teachers that you had that made a real impact on you that you remember?
- SISSON: Well, one was Professor of French, Francois Denoeu, who was a veteran of the Foreign Legion and a novelist and was a wonderful, wonderful guy.
- DONIN: And he taught you?
- SISSON: French.
- RUTH: And one of your classmates was Ernest Hemingway's son.
- SISSON: Jack Hemingway.
- DONIN: Oh! Uh-huh. Didn't know that.
- SISSON: The Denoeus had two daughters, and I can remember him saying, "Hanover is a helluva place to raise daughters."
- DONIN: Yes, it must be difficult. [Laughs]
- SISSON: One of our assignments, he said, I want everybody—speaking in French—I want everybody to come in Saturday morning and tell a dirty joke in French.
- DONIN: Oh, in French! [Laughs]
- SISSON: A colorful, colorful guy.
- DONIN: A colorful guy, yes. And was he there when you returned from the war as well? Was he still there?
- SISSON: He was still there but what I'm telling you is a pre-war experience with him.
- DONIN: Right. So when you matriculated, you had Ernest Hopkins as your president. And when you returned, you had John Dickey.
- SISSON: That's right.

DONIN: A new president.

SISSON: That's right.

DONIN: Did you ever meet him, President Dickey?

SISSON: President Dickey was a Theta Chi.

DONIN: Oh.

SISSON: And he came to a Theta Chi dinner and talked to us.

RUTH: Didn't he have a son who was quite little at that time?

SISSON: We had a children's Christmas party, and President Dickey's son was, I don't know, a six-year-old or something.

DONIN: Uh huh. Nice experience for you, for the fraternity brothers. To claim...

RUTH: They'd gotten the house cleaned up by the.

DONIN: I bet you did, yes. But you took pretty good care of the fraternity houses back in those days. Didn't you?

SISSON: Well, depended on the fraternity. There was a great variation of maintenance of the houses.

DONIN: Right.

SISSON: Now they can't get away with letting them go to pieces.

DONIN: Uh huh. They try not to. So what were your impressions of President Dickey? Did you have any at the time?

SISSON: Certainly an intellectual. Good communication skills, obviously. Very affable type. Didn't have that much interaction with him.

RUTH: Class of '29.

DONIN: Right. He was a young man then, to be a college president. So when did you finally leave Hanover? When did you finally finish your degree?

SISSON: We left in February of '48.

DONIN: February '48.

SISSON: January, February. It was just one term I had.

RUTH: It was at that time the coldest winter that Hanover had recorded, that winter of '47-48.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

RUTH: It really was bitterly cold and snowed and you know.

DONIN: Uh huh. And the campus—

SISSON: One of the things that was going on that fall, fall of '47, was the forest fires up and in Maine in Bar Harbor.

DONIN: Oh.

SISSON: Very severe drought. And a lot of Dartmouth, I don't know how many, but quite a few of us in the fall went to fight fires in Maine.

DONIN: Did you! As volunteers.

SISSON: As volunteers. I wasn't one of them. But that was...

DONIN: The volunteers who went there were given days off from school to go fight the fires?

SISSON: That must have been the case. Yes.

DONIN: Now the campus at this point must have been pretty full because you had all the returning veterans in addition to the—

SISSON: It was going up again. It was about the time that I went back and obviously lots of others got back.

DONIN: Right. So do you feel the College did a good job of sort of mainstreaming all the veterans back into the life of the College?

SISSON: Excellent job.

SISSON: Excellent job.

RUTH: Well, tell her about Dean Hill at Tuck School because you were eternally grateful to him and what a help he was. And also following him along long after he'd graduated when he was looking for a job change and Dean Hill gave him excellent advice.

DONIN: Oh, that's great.

RUTH: And so Don has made sure that he has been very generous to Tuck School.

SISSON: I was already needing a career change and I talked to Karl Hill. What's this thing called computers? And he told me a little bit about computers and asked if I was interested and I said yes. And he said, well, you want to go with the best. So he made an appointment with IBM for me and was very helpful.

DONIN: So this was as you were graduating?

SISSON: No, afterwards.

DONIN: Making a job change, later on.

RUTH: Fifty-five. It was a very major change.

SISSON: Karl Hill, by the way, went to Worcester Academy.

RUTH: Another plus, yes. Because the job that he had was a very good job. It was just that he had done it and done it and done it and it was time to think of something else.

DONIN: Was he the dean when you were a student there?

SISSON: Yes.

RUTH: But the name of the game is that teachers can be very helpful.

DONIN: Yes they can. Now what do you think the war did to your sense of class unity with everybody coming and going and not being able to graduate together?

SISSON: It was pretty well fractured.

DONIN: It was pretty well fractured?

SISSON: Yes.

DONIN: Yes.

SISSON: We lost quite a few to the Navy who finished where the Navy had sent them. And we picked up some veterans who had done their early undergraduate work in the Navy and came to Dartmouth.

DONIN: Right.

SISSON: It was a mix: we lost a few and we gained a few. It took some years to build a class solidarity back. I think we did a pretty good job of that.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Did it matter—I mean are people mindful of whether you actually matriculated at Dartmouth or you came in in one of the Naval training programs?

SISSON: I don't think that made any difference.

DONIN: That distinction doesn't matter. But you managed to pull together after the war and create a feeling of togetherness even though—

SISSON: We had some good times and good reunions, many reunions. It still goes on. We have a monthly lunch of the local '45s at the Norwich Inn.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Bull Hinman has been wonderful keeping me up to date on the activities of the '45s. When you have someone like him doing things, I imagine that the class must feel pretty tight knit.

RUTH: He's on top of everything. We lived in New London.

DONIN: Oh yes, you said that.

RUTH: And of course, she has Hanover connections from —

DONIN: -- Her father.

RUTH: Yes.

DONIN: So a lot of it has to do with the leadership of the class. How much work they put into it I guess, to keep everyone together since you had such a rocky beginning in terms of common experiences that weren't there because of the war. Do you still feel an allegiance to your fraternity? To Theta Chi?

SISSON: Not really. Theta Chi is no longer Theta Chi. You go back in the late '40s there, Dartmouth said to the fraternities who had racial restrictive clauses in their agreements, you either get rid of the national racial restrictions or you go local. And Theta Chi was one of the first ones to go local. The Alpha Theta chapter of Theta Chi became Alpha Theta fraternity. Now I understand it's a coed house.

DONIN: Oh is it? I don't keep up with the current fraternity stuff. So they changed the name and went coed.

SISSON: They changed the name back then and resigned from the national Theta Chi organization.

DONIN: I see.

RUTH: This was you could take people of different colors and different religious backgrounds.

DONIN: Uh huh.

RUTH: Because it must have been pretty limited in whom you could take. Pretty WASP-Y.

DONIN: Yes. I gather. That was one of the first things that Dickey worked on when he was president was to...

SISSON: Dartmouth can be proud of that. They required the fraternities to take that step way back then.

DONIN: We have an interview with President Dickey that he did back in the '70s and he spent time talking about that. The work that it took to get the fraternities to drop these clauses. I didn't realize that if you left the national chapter you have to change the name?

SISSON: You have to change the name.

DONIN: Yes. So that fraternity, later on, after coeducation, has since become coed. I see. So there really isn't much left of what you remember as Theta Chi.

SISSON: I'm still on their mailing list.

DONIN: Is that right? Oh, from the national chapter.

SISSON: We're on the mailing list of the local chapter of Theta.

RUTH: Apparently they are planning major renovations.

DONIN: Where is the house?

SISSON: On North Main Street; going up north, it is on the right-hand side, the second fraternity house going up that way.

DONIN: So you go past Baker Library and it's up there on the right?

SISSON: Yes.

**[End of Interview]**