

Dartmouth College Oral History Project  
The War Years at Dartmouth  
Interview with John Stearns '49  
By Mary Donin  
12/20/07

- DONIN: Your connection to Dartmouth goes further back than just you, right? I mean it's in the family.
- STEARNS: It's in the family. My father was the first in modern day. I think there was somebody in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but not a real direct person. My dad's class of 1908, and my brother Kendall was class of '37. Then I have a daughter and a son who came here in class of '82 and '86.
- DONIN: Ah hah! So you're into it.
- STEARNS: And a grandson who just started this year.
- DONIN: Oh, you have a grandson here now?
- STEARNS: Yes, his name is Luke Hussey. He plays football; so far junior varsity but he's hoping to get a varsity job next year.
- DONIN: Oh great. You're into the fourth generation then.
- STEARNS: That's right.
- DONIN: And how fun to be right here and see all his games.
- STEARNS: Yes, it's fun to go to practice and we know Buddy Teevens pretty well. He lives two houses away from us.
- DONIN: Right. Wonderful.
- STEARNS: Luke is playing 103 years exactly after his great grandfather who also played football.
- DONIN: Oh, amazing. That's great. The genes have carried on down through the...
- STEARNS: They skipped. [Laughter]
- DONIN: Did you do any sports when you were here?
- STEARNS: As I said in my little article there, they had me go out for track and throw the javelin. And I threw the javelin very close to the coach, and so I was excused from track. [Laughter]

DONIN: And that was the end.

STEARNS: That was it. I was too clumsy to play basketball.

DONIN: Right. You certainly had the height.

STEARNS: No, no coordination.

DONIN: I see. So let's talk about your arrival at Dartmouth. In '45 they were still running all three—they were running year round when you got here, weren't they?

STEARNS: That's right. Well, I came and my roommate Dave Jones, who now lives in New London, came up on the train in early July of 1945. And they had a summer term there. We matriculated...actually we matriculated under President Hopkins, and then he left after that year, and we were the first real class under President Dickey.

DONIN: Ah ha.

STEARNS: Yes, we came by train because there was gas rationing. And the train took forever. They stopped in Springfield and sat and sat and sat.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

STEARNS: And I remember what a wonderful feeling it was when some of my fraternity brothers actually had cars.

DONIN: Wow.

STEARNS: That was when sophomore, junior year. But as freshmen we were strictly—we could take a bus in the glee club to go sing, oh, say, in Manchester or places like that. But no private cars. And our freshman trip was funny. We went out to Storrs Pond and swam; that was our freshman trip.

DONIN: That was it?

STEARNS: Yes. Gas rationing.

DONIN: Oh gee. You just couldn't go anywhere.

STEARNS: No.

DONIN: So the tradition of going up to Moosilauke hadn't begun yet?

STEARNS: I think it had, well, before gas rationing, before the War. I think they had started going to Moosilauke. I'm not sure of that. And the people who

came and matriculated not that summer but afterwards, I think those people actually went to Moosilauke.

DONIN: Oh.

STEARNS: But we summer people didn't.

DONIN: So your class arrived here in sort of batches?

STEARNS: Correct.

DONIN: Right?

STEARNS: And of course you'd have people who had been accepted but hadn't gone to Dartmouth, came back from the service that were much older than we. And they were kind of pushed into the same class. The class of '48 and '47—'47, '48, '49 was kind of a mishmash. Kind of Russian roulette what class you ended up in. And there have been people since who have changed. Some of the '49s want to be '50s, some of the '48s want to be '49s.

DONIN: Right. In fact that brings to mind a paragraph that I'm going to read that was in your--

STEARNS: President's letter?

DONIN: Yes, your President's letter. It says here: "As students we were a conglomeration of seasoned war veterans and freshly-minted high school graduates, of widely-ranging ages and interests. Who arrived on campus in different years and became members of the class of '49 at various times before and after graduation, some by assignment and some by choice." Can you elaborate on what that's about? Some by assignment and some by choice?

STEARNS: Well, when most of the class graduated in June of 1949, the college had decided that they, that's the class they belonged in. And then some of them said, okay, we'll graduate, but we like the '50s; we don't like the '49s. So they went to the college and said please change us, and the college did.

DONIN: Oh!

STEARNS: And a lot of '48s left. 'Forty-eight was the smallest class practically in history in the modern era. And the reason was they were even more fragmented than we, and we collected some '48s.

DONIN: Oh, so some of them migrated to '49.

STEARNS: Exactly, exactly.

- DONIN: Now were you also getting people who had matriculated before you in forty-whatever, before '45, say, had matriculated in years before that but then went off to war. Came back, and then decided they wanted to be adopted by your class?
- STEARNS: I'm not quite sure how that worked, whether they had any choice in the matter or not. But looking at our commencement brochure, there were people who graduated the same day as we did who were graduated class of '46, '47, '48, '49, not '50.
- DONIN: Wow.
- STEARNS: So in some cases if it meant that they'd been here long enough to be embedded in the class. Or if there was a choice involved or not.
- DONIN: And as the years went on, following the end of the War, did you then also pick up, say, some of the V-12s that decided they wanted to come back to Dartmouth and graduate from Dartmouth and got sort of picked up by your class?
- STEARNS: I think, yes. I think in, say, '46, '47, once they were through with their military commitment, some of them did say, we want to stay at Dartmouth, and they were allowed to. A lot of others, however, we knew went on to Stanford and other places. So it was by no means only one way.
- DONIN: Right. But since Dartmouth had the biggest naval training program going on here, I would assume you must have picked up some of those veterans when they came back.
- STEARNS: I think that's true. I think the Great Lakes Naval Center was bigger than we were. But we were the second biggest in the country.
- DONIN: And the biggest of all the college training places, I think, wasn't it?
- STEARNS: I think so, yes. Mm-hmm.
- DONIN: Yes. So let's go back to the summer of '45. That means you were here as newly-minted freshmen when the war—you had VJ-Day here. You were here.
- STEARNS: VJ-Day, right. We'd had—VE-Day happened in May when we were still in high school. But VJ-Day happened here.
- DONIN: Do you have any memories of the day?
- STEARNS: Certainly do! When the word spread, the Navy people took it upon...took this as the occasion to beat the whey out of these little civilians who'd been jeering.

DONIN: Oh.

STEARNS: Oh, yes, it was quite violent.

DONIN: What were you jeering at them for?

STEARNS: Well, we all knew—we thought—we were all going to be there anyway. But meantime we leaned out the window when they were in formation in the morning and said, “Hi, Swabbie,” you know and so on. We built up a certain amount of ill-will.

DONIN: You were setting yourself up for trouble.

STEARNS: Exactly. Exactly.

DONIN: So this was their opportunity for payback.

STEARNS: Mm-hmm. And the whole campus, all poured out on the campus, and there were fistfights all over the place.

DONIN: Oh, my!

STEARNS: Nobody was seriously hurt.

DONIN: Right. It was boys being boys.

STEARNS: That’s right. And they were, of course, expressing joy that they weren’t going to have to go off and be killed. And we were just trying to survive.

DONIN: Now was there any kind of official ceremony that took place here with marching around and that kind of thing?

STEARNS: No, no. I think they might have had a service at the chapel, but I don’t recall that.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. So you have now these military kids here, but they’re not going anywhere. Did they stay at Dartmouth?

STEARNS: I think they stayed...They had to do what the military told them to do.

DONIN: Right.

STEARNS: I think for the most part they were allowed to complete whatever semester or year that they were in. And then they were either discharged or they were moved to another location, Great Lakes or the West Coast. I’m not quite sure how that worked because we were not directly involved. And it was V-7, V-12, and Marines as well as Navy. So it was kind of confusing. It was quite a sight, though, when we were playing pool on the top floor of

Robinson, the civilians, in beautiful weather that summer. And the whole campus was full of these white uniforms. They did quite a job.

DONIN: Beautiful to see.

STEARNS: Yes, yes.

DONIN: So what dorm were you in when you first got here?

STEARNS: Wheeler, right across the way.

DONIN: Oh, yes. Uh-huh. And any memorable professors that freshman year?

STEARNS: Yes, I remember John Adams, for example, who was history, very good history—took modern European history. There was an excellent English teacher, and I can't think of his name now. Of course you see, we were not—we didn't have many young faculty because the young faculty were in uniform. So we had old-timers. And some of them frankly were kind of over it.

DONIN: Yes.

STEARNS: The math professors we had, for heaven's sake, I could have taught better than they did, I'm sure. Much before [John] Kemeny.

DONIN: Oh, sure. I gather there were a number of professors that were teaching totally out of their field. You know, had been trained quickly to teach other things other than their field.

STEARNS: Probably survey courses, yes.

DONIN: Yes.

STEARNS: Yes. And yet we had...I remember a man named Pelenyi, who was Hungarian by background, and he taught classes in international relations which is where he belonged. Al Foley was here.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

STEARNS: He was legendary. Herb West and some of those stayed on and they were quite well known. But some of them just kind of passed best in the night. I can't even think of their names.

DONIN: Well they may have been hired in just temporary positions until some of the regular faculty came back. I don't know.

STEARNS: Could be. Tenure was probably suspended.

- DONIN: So what about the social life here when this campus was all mixed up with so many different age groups? Did you find a core group that you did social stuff with?
- STEARNS: Well, the fraternities—when we first came, the fraternities were all dead.
- DONIN: Right.
- STEARNS: And then they revived, and AD was one of the earliest ones. A group of us from Wheeler and elsewhere block pledged to Sigma Chi, which opened up fairly soon. Psi U was opening up. I think Deke—we used to have a Deke chapter down near Casque & Gauntlet. And Phi Gamma. The fraternities were there, and of course Colby was not that far away. So we could do some dating there. But the road trips to Smith, etc., really didn't begin for another year. Pretty much a male campus.
- DONIN: Right, right. But things must have really changed dramatically that fall once the War ended.
- STEARNS: Mm-hmm.
- DONIN: The College must have sort of revved up to try and return to the way they were before. Is that your sense?
- STEARNS: Yes. I think so.
- DONIN: So the fraternities were opening, and they started having the regular traditional sort of....
- STEARNS: Yes, and they restored some classes—some courses—too, that they had suspended. They had the senior fellows. I had hoped to go out for that, but they didn't revive that for a number of years, too late.
- DONIN: And of course The D continued to function all the way through the war?
- STEARNS: I think actually....
- DONIN: They called it *The Log* for a while.
- STEARNS: That's right.
- DONIN: *The Dartmouth Log*.
- STEARNS: Yes, and it was put out, I think, by the V-12s and so forth. The editor two ahead of me, Howard Samuel, was the first to really get *The Dartmouth* goes as such.
- DONIN: How often were you publishing in those days?

STEARNS: Daily.

DONIN: Was it?

STEARNS: Yes. I don't think it was weekends, but it was *The Daily D*. You know that's an interesting question. It could be when we first began that it was not quite daily, but we had to build up to that.

DONIN: Sure.

STEARNS: We had to recruit staff and get the Robinson Hall offices working. We were in a different place in Robinson then.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

STEARNS: Of course we were not so really involved in the return of the old because we didn't know what the old was.

DONIN: Right.

STEARNS: We just took it as it came.

DONIN: Whatever was there was there.

STEARNS: Yes.

DONIN: But they started back up with Winter Carnival and those sorts of things, I assume?

STEARNS: Yes, I remember....

DONIN: Homecoming?

STEARNS: Yes. I remember when not in Wheeler, but when we moved in the winter over to Crosby, where I fell off the roof, doing the sculpture there, which was kind of a banal thing, a figure of an Indian, very politically incorrect.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

STEARNS: Lying back with his hatchet buried. How hokey can you be? But that meant that there was a Winter Carnival in '46.

DONIN: So how did it change as time went on? I mean did you feel that the classes were improving in terms of choices because people were returning?

STEARNS: Mm-hmm.



DONIN: And that the structure of the school was changing in some way from when you first started here in the summer of '45?

STEARNS: It was very clear when we came that we were...it was a band-aid operation. That they were desperate to try to keep something going. But the military was a tremendously heavy presence, and the civilians had to be kind of eased in. And they all expected us to be drafted. And indeed quite a few of the people who came in that summer either enlisted or were drafted and didn't come back until they were sophomores when I was a senior. So that was an influx, too. You know, some of my best friends actually disappeared into the Navy. But I decided I was going to—I went to the draft board and decided I would try to stay as long as I could. And VJ-Day happened. Then when I went to Harvard Law School, I had an attack of conscience. So when Korea broke out, I volunteered. So I spent a couple of years in the Air Force then and then felt I'd done my duty.

DONIN: Right.

STEARNS: There was a different feeling then. I mean there was no.... I remember a young Dartmouth staffer calling me after we'd moved up here wanting to know what did we do protest the Korean War? I said, protest hell! I volunteered! Different feeling.

DONIN: It was.

STEARNS: I mean my brother had been in it, and four classmates had been in it. So it was not a thing that the government was pulling something fast on us. Quite different.

DONIN: Very different. Was there any kind of sort of respect shown to the returning veterans? I mean were they treated as heroes of any kind, or treated differently?

STEARNS: They were treated with respect, yes. I mean, as I wrote in that little article. It was quite something to be walking down Main Street and have car backfire and the man beside you was flat on his face. I mean obviously they were still—

DONIN: Suffering.

STEARNS: —in it.

DONIN: Yes.

STEARNS: And there's a lot of chin wags then about how they were much more mature and grown up and serious about it. Well, yes—yes and no. Some of them could party pretty well, too.

- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Well, two interesting things have come out of these interviews. One is the number of men who said they learned to drink not at Dartmouth but in the service. They came to Dartmouth and they didn't really drink but once they came back from the service, they fit very well into the fraternity drinking scene because they'd learned to do it in the service.
- STEARNS: Yes.
- DONIN: And the other thing they said – these are the people who were here and they went into the service and then they came back again – was they were better students when they came back. More focused.
- STEARNS: Uh huh.
- DONIN: Some of that was developmental. They were older.
- STEARNS: Some of them got married in the meantime, too.
- DONIN: A good number of them did.
- STEARNS: That sobered them up.
- DONIN: That certainly sobers you up, exactly. [Laughter] But how do you think the college did in sort of mainstreaming this motley group of undergrads who were a mixture, as you say, of newly-minted high school graduates along with these seasoned men who'd been in battle or at least been in the military.
- STEARNS: Well, there was a certain amount of mentoring going on there. I mean some of the older ones took us young ones under their wing.
- DONIN: Uh huh.
- STEARNS: They kind of shepherded us to get into fraternities they belonged to and they wanted to build up. And kind of looked out for us, too.
- DONIN: Uh huh.
- STEARNS: There were some interesting people. Budd Schulberg I don't think was back. But Charles Bolté.
- DONIN: Oh, Charles Bolté.
- STEARNS: Yes, he was back. When I was editor of *The Dartmouth*, he was kind of mentoring me, and he was quite a guy.
- DONIN: His name comes up repeatedly as a war hero and wonderful leader.

STEARNS: Yes. I think the war hero was Merrill Frost, who had most of his face burned away in an airplane, and still played quarterback.

DONIN: So what are your memories of President Hopkins. Did you ever interact with him personally?

STEARNS: Very briefly when I matriculated, and he knew my father and mentioned it.

DONIN: Ah....

STEARNS: Actually, Hoppy was class of '11, Dad was class of '08. But in some way their football letter sweaters got swapped, mixed up.

DONIN: Isn't that funny.

STEARNS: And this came up. Pudge Neidlinger was somebody else who was of the old school and remained. As Bill Kilmarx, his son-in-law, said, "In those days there was *the dean*."

DONIN: Exactly.

STEARNS: There was much less administrative structure then.

DONIN: Right.

STEARNS: Much less. You had *the dean*, and you had dean of the faculty and so forth. But the associate, assistant, who who what what, hadn't developed yet.

DONIN: Right. I gather in those days you did *not* want to be called into the dean's office.

STEARNS: No!

DONIN: [Laughs]

STEARNS: No, I remember we ran an article in *The Dartmouth* that Neidlinger took severe exception to. So I was called and dressed down. And I stuck to my guns. I said, "That's the way the reporter found it, and that's the way he wrote it, and that's the way it's going to be."

DONIN: Good for you.

STEARNS: So he glowered.

DONIN: Your knees must have been trembling. [Laughs] I gather he...and Robert Strong was the admissions dean? Does that name mean anything?

STEARNS: Yes. And there was also Stearns Morse.

- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- STEARNS: Did admissions I think after Strong.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- STEARNS: And Sid Hayward was a holdover. He had known my brother in the class of '37 and he knew me. So there was this kind of carry-on.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. So what were your impressions of John Dickey when he came here?
- STEARNS: It's interesting. At first we were kind of nonplussed by him. One of my roommates, who came from the metropolitan area, said, "What the hell is the president of Dartmouth doing sitting up there with a lumber jacket, lumberjack sweater on?"
- DONIN: Yes.
- STEARNS: And he did look very woodsy and so forth. I don't think he was really as appreciated at first while we were here as he became later on, as his influence sank in. I mean I loved the fact that he invented this international relations major, which I... it was such fun. And he became, of course, as time went on, he became the dean or the doyen of the Ivy presidents and passed away and that.
- DONIN: Now had he started up the Great Issues course when you were here? Or was that later?
- STEARNS: Yes, I took it.
- DONIN: You did take it. You must have loved it if you were an international relations major.
- STEARNS: Yes. And we had some wonderful speakers come. And no-holds-barred discussions. We learned how to read a newspaper and see how they distorted things. It was a very good course. I'm sorry they dropped it.
- DONIN: It seemed to sort of run out of steam in the sixties.
- STEARNS: I don't know why. Maybe people were sophisticated enough then they didn't need this. But, you know, after all, we, as elementary, junior high, high, we had been subject to a great deal of brainwashing. And so it was good for us to learn to be a little disrespectful and not trusting everything we read. I think by the time of the sixties, people believed nothing they read—
- DONIN: This pendulum swung in the opposite direction.

STEARNS: Exactly. So the need was not there.

DONIN: So it was a course just for seniors, is that right?

STEARNS: Yes.

DONIN: A great culminating experience then before you graduated.

STEARNS: Yes, uh huh.

DONIN: So your major was international relations?

STEARNS: That's right.

DONIN: And that's sort of a reflection of the college's effort to open up the world, following the war, it seems to me.

STEARNS: Mm-hmm. This had been kind of a provincial college perhaps. It'd through football and things like that, it had gotten sort of a national recognition more in some ways, like football, than it ever has since.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

STEARNS: But it was not quite a cow college, but it was definitely a rural college, not quite, quite, you know... When I went to Harvard, I detested the sneers that you got. They called us "Dartmouth puppies."

DONIN: Puppies?

STEARNS: Puppies. You know, wet behind the ears.

DONIN: Yes.

STEARNS: Type of thing.

DONIN: Yes. I see.

STEARNS: Harvard is so sophisticated.

DONIN: Yes.

STEARNS: But I'm glad I didn't go there for an undergraduate experience.

DONIN: A very different experience. So what would you say to the complaint that the quality of the education here during these years was really not meeting the college's mission to provide this well-rounded liberal arts experience for the undergrads. Because of the fact that the military was basically running the place for any number of years and there was such a

focus on military training in the classroom as well as marching around out on the Green that it affected the quality of the education here?

STEARNS: I don't think so.

DONIN: No?

STEARNS: I don't know who is making that complaint but we had plenty of choice. If we wanted to go and become single-subject economics, math or whatever, you could do that. But if you didn't want to, if you wanted to be liberal arts, wow could you be liberal. I chose all over the place: sociology, government, history, languages. If anything, too much.

DONIN: And they may have been referring to the years just before you got here because I think part of the accusation was with this telescoping of the terms and pushing the students out as quickly as they could with a minimum of requirements being met.

STEARNS: Yes. That was definitely before '45. '42, '43, '44, probably.

DONIN: Right.

STEARNS: Because they were a factory and they were turning out men.

DONIN: Soldiers.

STEARNS: Yes.

DONIN: And I assume it was the only way Hopkins had figured he was going to be able to keep the dorms... Keep it open.

STEARNS: Keep the place alive.

DONIN: Right. Let's talk about your class unity. I mean was there an issue with this sort of mixed-up crazy way that you all started here, and people left and then came back again. So was class unity impacted by that when you were here?

STEARNS: I think probably. It took us a while compared to classes before and classes after us to get this feeling of class unity or cohesion and so forth. That's why the picture in the 50th yearbook, the first mini-reunion in Boston is so telling.

DONIN: Uh huh.

STEARNS: No, it took a while. Actually for a while after Harvard Law and Korean War and so forth, it took me a while to get myself interested particularly in Dartmouth.

DONIN: Uh huh.

STEARNS: And then it came back, came back slowly. And accelerated when my daughter was accepted.

DONIN: Sure, that helps. Did people make a distinction made between those who started here as traditional undergrads, as freshmen, versus those who came either through the V-12 or other military training programs or who asked to be in your class instead of the class they originated with? Was there a distinction made between people, between the way people actually ended up being in the class?

STEARNS: I don't really think so, no. If somebody who came back and was put in our class was a lot older, then he would be much more apt to relate to other classes who were around. At one time I roomed—I was a '49—I roomed with three guys. One of them was the class of '41, one was the class of '45, and one was the class of '46. I remember the class of '46; he was called Shipwreck Kelly. And he'd been in the Eighth Air Force, and his feet had frozen on a mission over Germany. Unfortunately I slept in the bunk above him and it was noticeable.

DONIN: Yes.

STEARNS: But the class of '41 guy, he was just barely—he could have been here when my brother was here, and that's 13 years difference.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So were all three of them military people?

STEARNS: Yes, yes.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

STEARNS: They'd all been in.

DONIN: What an awkward pairing for you with these three guys.

STEARNS: Actually somehow we got along all right. Mm-hmm. Again, there was this feeling of big brotherhood. And that happened a little bit later after some of my people the same age were away. You see nobody really wanted to room alone then, with some exceptions. Lowell Thomas Jr. always wanted to.

DONIN: He wanted to be alone?

STEARNS: Yes. Different strokes for different folks.

DONIN: Your friends that you had that went away and then came back again. Were you able to reestablish those friendships when they were back?

STEARNS: Oh, yes, yes. Because very often they would come back, and we'd still be in the same fraternity that they'd joined.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

STEARNS: So that was a way to immediately reestablish contact.

DONIN: Did you feel more bound to your fraternity brothers and that group than you did to your class? Was that a common—

STEARNS: Yes, I'd say so.

DONIN: Was that a common bond?

STEARNS: That and also Casque & Gauntlet; I was fortunate to join that. And I was very close to that. Indeed, when I first came back here, I made the comment to John Hatheway and Bill Sherman that, you know, my heart isn't really with the class; it's with the group across the street, the C&G.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

STEARNS: That has changed. Once I began to get active in the class and became older and older than the people who were going into C&G, it was quite different, quite different.

DONIN: Yes. So there were other avenues for people to sort of establish their social groups rather than just their class.

STEARNS: That's right.

DONIN: Yes.

STEARNS: I mean you've the DOC, for example, which attracted a great many people. You had the athletic teams.

DONIN: You had your group, I assume, at The D as well.

STEARNS: That's right.

DONIN: Yes. So when you were here, were you sort of expecting to be drafted?

STEARNS: Yes.

DONIN: You were sort of waiting each term.

STEARNS: Exactly. We were just waiting to see what happened. Took the bus down to where was it? I don't think it was Manchester. It was somewhere in that general direction, some military installation, and they had all these questions, as I mentioned. In there they took people from the surrounding



countryside and asked them lineal descendant of Daniel Webster.  
[Laughs]

DONIN: That's a great story.

STEARNS: Female disorder? Yup. Had a female disorder all right.

DONIN: [Laughs] That's great.

STEARNS: Yes.

DONIN: So each term was sort of a—it was sort of a crap shoot, whether you were going to be here or be called up. I mean was there sort of a schedule when people were being called up?

STEARNS: No, no. In the draft it was, you know, you roll the dice, and nobody knew when your number was going to come up. Some people thought they were very smart because they were going to enlist and go into what they wanted to go into. And then when the War was over, they said, Why the hell did we do that? [Laughs]

DONIN: But were you—there must have been a fair number of you like that here who were doing the sort of traditional four-year undergrad thing and making it through successfully without being called up.

STEARNS: Yes, I'd say—I don't know what the percentage was. But I think probably more were able to do that than were drafted or volunteered. There was a core that stayed and got added to.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

STEARNS: That's another thing affecting the class. You could hardly criticize a class for not having a feeling of unity when a great number of people didn't even join it until some of us were juniors or seniors. You didn't get to know that many of your future classmates until later.

DONIN: Of course, that's right. So you may have only had maybe two years with some of them.

STEARNS: That's right.

DONIN: And there's no way to get to know all the members of your class even in the best of circumstances.

STEARNS: No, I mean my father used to brag about the fact that he could call every member of his class by his first name.

DONIN: Wow.

- STEARNS: Well, 1908, I guess, it was a small place, and World War I hadn't come along yet.
- DONIN: Right.
- STEARNS: And I can see that that was true. It was not true in our case. Returning vets were not interested in many cases in hanging out with some of the young people.
- DONIN: Sure. Where did the vets go for their...the married ones obviously hung around with, I suppose, with themselves...
- STEARNS: Wigwam Circle and Sachem Village.
- DONIN: But the unmarried vets who were older than you young'uns, where did they go? Was there a separate place that they hung out? Did they go into the fraternities?
- STEARNS: I think some of them did, yes. Some of them came to our fraternity. They'd appear. In September you'd meet somebody who had been here before, a new brother. And some of them I think, even if they were not married, just didn't go for the sophomore experience anymore.
- DONIN: Yes, they'd outgrown it. And probably some of them lived off campus, didn't they?
- STEARNS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I was about to say that in a few cases I remember being invited to go to dinner at the home up on Lyme Road of a married couple. And there were some other people like us. It was salad and coffee and the like; no boozing. It was quite different.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. They were acting like grownups. [Laughter]
- STEARNS: That's right. No more kid stuff.
- DONIN: Right.
- STEARNS: One episode that I didn't mention that I recall from that summer, a bunch of us from Wheeler and Richardson, there were quite a few freshmen in both of those dorms. And some upperclassmen came roaring through one night, roused us out of our beds, and marched us up to the golf course, Occom Ridge. I've forgotten what the heck it was all about. But some of us got a little bored with it. And I remember putting my shoulder into somebody's shoulder, an upperclassman. What, what, what!
- DONIN: Resisting.
- STEARNS: But that's the closest we ever came to hazing. And it dissipated. They liked to march us, up, up, up, you know.

DONIN: So this was the... Was this sort of the precursor to hazing for the fraternities and stuff?

STEARNS: No, I don't know. It was really, it was a bunch of the older people breaking in the freshmen, the new freshmen.

DONIN: Right.

STEARNS: As such. And it was a one-night affair and nothing much came of it. It was kind of juvenile.

DONIN: Now were you at that point, were you wearing the little beanies?

STEARNS: Well, we wore...they gave us beanies. I've forgotten how mandatory they were.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

STEARNS: Maybe they made us wear them that night. But I don't recall.

DONIN: So was that your only experience of being sort of tortured by upperclassmen? Just that one night?

STEARNS: Yes.

DONIN: That's pretty good.

STEARNS: Yes.

DONIN: I thought it went on all the time.

STEARNS: Well, maybe some people...I mean I've always been rather big. So people don't naturally pick on me.

DONIN: Right.

STEARNS: I remember one time somebody tried to muscle me around, and an older—class of '46—took him out and said no.

DONIN: Oh, interesting.

STEARNS: And stopped it.

DONIN: He's your friend for life, whoever it was.

STEARNS: It was Shipwreck.

DONIN: Oh, Shipwreck, yes.

**[End of Interview]**