

Dartmouth College Oral History Project  
The War Years at Dartmouth  
Interview with Doug Thomson '49  
By Mary Donin  
October 25, 2007

THOMSON: I got out of the Marine Corps in late December of 1945. My mother and father—my dad was out of work, and they moved to a very small apartment in Mount Vernon, New York. When I got back, another family had moved in next to them, and they had a son who was in Europe, and he came back about the same time. He had already completed one year at Tuck School. And I met him and talked with him. His name was Dave Donaldson, Bing Donaldson, class of '43. And he said to me, "Well, what are you going to do?" And I said, "Well, I'd like to go to college. I have the GI Bill and I want to go. But I haven't got a college education course out of high school. I had a commercial course because I worked the whole time I was in high school." So he said, "Well, look, come on up to Hanover with me. Help me move my furniture. And you can see what a campus looks like and so forth." So I did that. While he went over to see Dean Strong to get re-registered, I moved his furniture out of the bottom of Parkhurst, as I recall, and carried it over to Topliff Hall, and got him reset. He came back from his interview with—his re-registration. He came back and said, "You know they're going to put a very small freshman class in here in March. And I told Dean Strong you were with me. He said he'd be willing to talk to you." So I made an appointment, went over to see Dean Strong. And he went through my background and said, "Well, you know, there's no chance you could come to Dartmouth. You just don't have the background. You don't have enough language, you don't have enough science. But, you know, we owe something to you guys who have done so much for us. So if you'd like, this afternoon you can go over to Carpenter Hall, take a test." And I suspect it was a college entrance examination. He said, "I've got four or five young men from prep schools and high schools over there taking them now. And you can go over with them and take it. Then tomorrow at eleven o'clock come back to me. I'll have your test scored up, and I'll give you some advice on what kind of a college you might be able to get into."

DONIN: Hmm!

THOMSON: "Because I know a lot of people in the college ranks." So I said, well, this is great opportunity. I'm happy to do that. And I came back

to see him at eleven o'clock the next day. He said, "I don't know how you did it, but you scored far better than most of them, but you're weak in language—in science—because you didn't take enough of it in high school." But he said, "You must have done a lot of reading." I said, "Well, I had close to four years of down time on ships and here and there and everywhere. I spent 30 months in the Pacific. So I did a lot of reading. So he introduced me to Eddie Chamberlain who had just gotten back from the service. And Eddie had been a Dartmouth alumnus, of course. They said, Look, we'll make a deal with you. If you'll take four years of language and four years of science, which will restrict you on your electives, we'll accept you in March. And that's how I got into Dartmouth. Now I suspect they were short of bodies. They were happy to get somebody who had a full GI Bill.

DONIN: Yes.

THOMSON: So I didn't need financial aid. And I think they were kind of experimenting on what kind of reaction veterans might give to them because they didn't have much experience there. But who cares? I was happy to take it—I was overjoyed. I went home and told my mother and father I was going to go to Dartmouth College, and I thought they were going to fall through the floor.

DONIN: That's terrific. Terrific. Now let's back up a minute and have you repeat the story you told me a few minutes ago about your experience getting right out of high school and going right into the service.

THOMSON: Well, I graduated high school in 1942. The war was a little over a year long then. I was still 17. I wasn't going to be turning 18 until late September. But I knew at 18 I had to apply to the Selective Service and somewhere along the line, I'd be drafted. I didn't want to just go into the Army and be part of a whole bunch of people who just went in. I wanted to be a little more selective. I tried to get into Marine Aviation because they were just beginning to accept high school graduates in that. But again, my mathematics failed me. And although they were pleased, according to the recruiting officer, with my psychological and my physical and general deportment, they just couldn't see me as a pilot. But they did think I should be in the Marine Corps. So they made every effort, and I was very pleased to be accepted. The Marine Corps was very selective at that time, and they just didn't take anybody. I had to wait around for about a month and a half to two months before I was called up because Parris

Island at that time was filled because so many people had made application to go into the Marine Corps. So at the end of '42 I went down to Parris Island and started.

DONIN: So when you finally enrolled at Dartmouth, you were four years older than traditional undergrads who were just coming in.

THOMSON: Right, right. I spent my 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays in the Pacific.

DONIN: Yes. The traditional college years you were a soldier. Were you put in with a roommate who was someone closer to your age? Was it a veteran?

THOMSON: Yes. Another one who came in at the same time. He'd just gotten out of the Air Corps.

DONIN: Uh huh.

THOMSON: So we started off. And there were, as I recall, about 125 people in this March class. And then we went that summer, that summer of '46, we went to summer school. And the college gave us credit for two courses from our service in the military. And we had to take three additional courses. And that put us into our sophomore year in September.

DONIN: Oh, so you were sort of—you were advanced quickly.

THOMSON: Right. And that put me in the class of '49.

DONIN: I see. Okay. Right. So you got credit for your military service.

THOMSON: Right.

DONIN: How did they decide how much credit to give you? Was it based on...

THOMSON: I think they gave everybody two courses. I can't think of any other—Of course the man whom I roomed with, the fellow I roomed with, was a pilot. He went through far more extensive training, schooling, than I did. It all came out—we all got two.

DONIN: Right, right. Now what dormitory were you in?

THOMSON: Started in Topliff. Lived in New Hampshire, lived in Phi Delta Theta house. And then as I went into my senior year, by then my grades had come up pretty well. I started a little bit low as I didn't really know how to study very well. But my grades were up above 3.0 by the time my senior year. So I went to Tuck School.

DONIN: Oh, that was that period of time when they were offering that 3:2 program?

THOMSON: Right.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

THOMSON: And that sounded great to me except that all of a sudden I realized that I still hadn't finished my Spanish.

DONIN: Oh.

THOMSON: I had finished my science. So I had to take Spanish, the last semester of Spanish, my first year of Tuck School, which was not easy. And also the college put in the Great Issues course, which was a mandatory senior course. So I had to take six courses or seven courses the first semester and six courses thereafter.

DONIN: You were a busy guy.

THOMSON: Very busy. But it was all very— The Great Issues course was a wonderful course. I think everybody who went through that period of time looks back on that and thinks that's probably the best course they ever took.

DONIN: You're not alone. A lot of people say that. And you, of course, got here just as John Dickey was starting his career here.

THOMSON: That's right.

DONIN: What are your memories of him?

THOMSON: Well, of course the school—the college—was a much smaller college. So he had a chance to see— But I remember very clearly that the first—he met every single freshman and shook his hand in his office, which I doubt if Jim Wright can do that these days. But it was.... He had a great memory. And when he saw you in the street, over the period, he would say hello, and he'd know you by name.

DONIN: Wow.

THOMSON: Always came across the campus in his L.L. Bean jacket, his mackinaw with his dog following. He was a very respected man. There was no feeling of anything except goodness about everybody who was on this campus for the president.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

THOMSON: Oh, even to the point where the last time I saw John Sloan Dickey was during one of our, I think leadership meetings, when he was on the corner at a parade, in a wheelchair.

DONIN: Oh.

THOMSON: People were coming up to him, as I did, too, and shake his hand and tell him thank you.

DONIN: OK, back to your undergrad years before you went to Tuck. How was it being a vet here? How did the college do when they were trying to sort of mix the vets with the sort of traditional students who'd not been in the service? Or maybe there weren't that many traditional students here at that time.

THOMSON: Well, there was the whole class... I think the class of '49 was probably the first of the traditional group, so there was a fair number of those.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

THOMSON: There were some men who hadn't gone into the service who were still studying. The thing I remembered most the college pretty much said, Well, look, we're not sure what these guys are like. So let's don't put too many restrictions on them. And I know that—I was crossing the campus one day with my roommate and a couple of fellows came up and said, "Where's your beanie?" And I said, "What's a beanie?" And they said, "Well, you're got to put a hat on. You're a freshman aren't you?" I said, "Yeah." "Well, don't you see these other fellow with beanies?" I said, "Yeah. I don't know anything about them." And they said, "Well, you ought to put your beanie on." I said, "There's no way I'm going to put a beanie on. So forget it!" And we walked off and they never protested. Another group came along and said, "You're freshmen, right?" And I said,

"Yes." "We need you to carry our furniture up." Apparently that was something that the seniors did. And I said, "Well, pal, I carry only my own furniture. So please leave us alone. Thank you very much." And that's the way it worked.

DONIN: So you were afforded some different sort of layer of respect from the upperclassmen.

THOMSON: I think so, yes. We didn't know many of them. We knew our own groups pretty much. I didn't know many seniors.

DONIN: Even though they were really your age. The seniors in fact were your age.

THOMSON: But there were relatively few of them. Most of them, the other group, were the V-12 units, and they didn't bother us. And perhaps part of it was perhaps because the uniform of the day in those days was the uniform you came back with. None of us had any money. So everybody—you could tell who had been in the Air Force by their khakis. You could tell who was in the Marine Corps by their green trousers.

DONIN: Oh, I see.

THOMSON: Their khaki shirts. We all—in retrospect I wish I still had that uniform. But I had no money. So I think I probably put in most of my years in a pair of boondockers like what the Marine Corps had outfitted us with new uniforms before we were discharged. And I wore my green wool coat for the winter and my combat jacket for the summer. Until they all wore out. And I suspect that some of the civilians probably recognized those and realized we'd come back from the service and were not part of the freshman class.

DONIN: Do you feel that you were treated differently? I mean obviously the examples you just gave seem to say that you were treated differently.

THOMSON: Well, I think the college was anxious to see that we got good performance, that we performed well. And I think they recognized, too, that we were a little older and probably could discipline ourselves better. That's not to say that we were all that perfect all the time. But I think they recognized our maturity and left us alone.

- DONIN: What was your social life like? I mean a lot of the vets came back with wives, didn't they?
- THOMSON: Yes. And Sachem Village and Wigwam Village were set up with those people. They had, except for the fraternity parties, for the most part they were—they knew each other, they had so much in common that they socialized with each other. Social life in Hanover prior to the women coming into the college was something like monastic, I guess is the right word. But a trip to Smith or Colby or Skidmore or somewhere were.... Most of us didn't have a lot of money. We worked off the GI Bill. We had \$75 a month. The last couple of weeks or days before the end of the month were sort of sparse. Somehow between jobs and jobs during the summer and money that we'd saved in the service. My GI Bill took me all the way through the second year of Tuck School. So when I graduated, I had everything paid up. I graduated with no debt.
- DONIN: That's terrific
- THOMSON: I graduated with no money either. [Laughs] But no debt.
- DONIN: Right. So what did you do? You were a single older student here. You didn't fit in with the married crowd that was living in Wigwam and Fayerweather and Sachem. What did you do for your social life? Did you go into the fraternities?
- THOMSON: I went into Phi Delta Theta.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- THOMSON: There was a good intramural program. There was a good sports program. I went into the Outing Club—
- DONIN: Oh.
- THOMSON: —where I could participate. I learned to ski.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- THOMSON: I played a lot of intramural basketball and baseball and volleyball and handball with some friends. So the gym was well used.
- DONIN: I bet. Yes.

THOMSON: And the finances kind of restricted you a little. I never took the train except for the first year I came up here. The rest of the time I hitchhiked back and forth from Mount Vernon to here.

DONIN: Oh, my, that's a long trip. There was no highway then.

THOMSON: There was the highway up to New Haven. But sometimes we took the streetcar through New Haven to get on the other side of New Haven so we could get back on the road.

DONIN: [Laughs]

THOMSON: But people in those days were not afraid.

DONIN: Right.

THOMSON: And they were willing to pick up people who looked reasonable. And we tried to dress properly so that we looked safe. And somehow that was the way we got back and forth. Shipped everything by what they called Railway Express, which doesn't exist anymore. But ship it. It was rather inexpensive to ship a locker box. Then go back and forth by hitchhiking.

DONIN: So when you got here, what were the arrangements for feeding yourself? Was Thayer dining hall feeding you?

THOMSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. You could buy a ticket and eat there. And some semesters I did. Other semesters we'd eat at the—there were a couple of small restaurants. Lou's had just opened.

DONIN: Oh!

THOMSON: Lou was a former Marine who came in and opened up his restaurant.

DONIN: This is Lou Bressett.

THOMSON: And some of us worked there at various times. So sometimes you.... One time I worked at Thayer and got food. And as time went along, sometimes we ate at a place called the Indian Bowl. Or there was sort of a road place down in Lebanon called Lander's which was popular.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.



THOMSON: Most people didn't have cars. There weren't many cars. There was no parking problem on the campus.

DONIN: Not like now.

THOMSON: Right. But some did have cars. And sometimes if you wanted to go to Boston or New York or somewhere, you could look on the bulletin board and find that somebody was driving to Boston. And for sharing gas, they would make arrangements to take you back, back and forth. So you just kept looking for opportunities to do this the least expensive way you could.

DONIN: Right. Sounds like you were very resourceful.

THOMSON: I had to be.

DONIN: Sure. Now, any memorable professors that you have stories about?

THOMSON: Well, I think— We were very fortunate in some respects because again, it was a small operation. And I took a creative writing course. And Robert Frost was one of the professors.

DONIN: Imagine that!

THOMSON: Now he wasn't every day. But he came in, and he would talk about how he wrote and why he wrote and what stimulated him and so on. So we had that. Down at Tuck School there were some famous ones. Tuck School at that time, you had to wear a shirt and tie and be shaven. Had to be on time. There were no cuts. If for any reason you couldn't be at the class, going for a job interview, you had to go to the professor, explain it, and get his permission. Just like you would if you were in business.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

THOMSON: All examinations were unannounced.

DONIN: Whew!

THOMSON: So you had to have what they called a blue book, which was the standard book for writing, pencil and paper and all the other things with you. Lacking any of those, you just failed.

DONIN: Oh, my!

THOMSON: That particular.... Louis Foster, who was the accounting professor down there, was famous for giving examinations on the Saturday morning of a football game. And we had classes every Saturday morning.

DONIN: Was that true at Tuck or also at the undergraduate level?

THOMSON: That depended upon your electives. But at Tuck School you did.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Six days a week.

THOMSON: When I was at second year of Tuck, I was very interested in labor relations. And there were only about four of us who—you didn't really major in it, but you specialized in it.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

THOMSON: And we met with our professor, Professor Walters, down at his house most of the time. He lived down on... overlooking the Connecticut River, and we'd just walk on down there, sit on his deck and talk. And he would take us to Boston to a mediation or arbitration so that we could see how it worked. It was very informal and the classes were all small. The other professor that my roommate and I always laughed about—still do.... The book said that there was a Professor Green who was going to be teaching Spanish I. And he never got around to introducing himself. And it wasn't until the end of the semester that we knew it was Professor Guyer. [Laughs] So we always called him "Green Guyer" from then on.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

THOMSON: And of course Al Foley was famous.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

THOMSON: And everybody took that course if they possibly could because he was so entertaining. And Professor Robinson who taught the course on theater. I forget what the title of the course was. But it was primarily on the history of American theater. Who did terrific lectures, mostly from memory. But he had a lot of background on

people whose names you recognized in the theater. He was very popular. And people kind of flocked to his courses, too.

DONIN: Now in those days there was no Hopkins Center. So all the theatrical stuff took place here in Webster Hall?

THOMSON: Webster Hall was the Nugget, the theater.

DONIN: Yes, right. Because the Nugget had burned down, I gather.

THOMSON: Right. I don't know when. But this was the theater. So anything that was up at the movies at night and any other activity during other times, it was a very sparse movie. And famous for misbehaving students who were total critics of the movies.

DONIN: Oh.

THOMSON: And if the movie was a bad movie, the remarks were flying from all places.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

THOMSON: People were getting up and walking out and saying, I can't take this anymore. I can't take this anymore. [Laughter] So it was a very, very critical group of people.

DONIN: So all the years you were here you lived in the dorms.

THOMSON: Except for the Phi Delta Theta house.

DONIN: And that was when you were at Tuck?

THOMSON: Well, partly when I was at Tuck. And then the last year I was at Tuck, they had—the number of students with wives had reduced. And Wigwam, which was down behind Thayer School, was left empty. And Tuck didn't have enough dormitory room. So my roommate and I lived down at Wigwam in one of the old student family units.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. I gather the insulation there wasn't too great.

THOMSON: No. [Laughs] And the heat wasn't very good either.

DONIN: Right.

- THOMSON: And everything creaked. But it was all right.
- DONIN: Right. I mean if we're talking.... When you first got here, '46, I should think the college would have been flooded with GIs returning and wanting to go to school.
- THOMSON: Well, I think—I was fortunate that I got out early. At the time the war ended and they began to phase people out, a lot depended upon how long you'd been overseas, how many battles you had participated in, how long you were in. So I was fortunate. I was actually on my way home when the war ended. So I just kept coming. So I got out pretty early. So that group that we came in in '46 was a very small group. It wasn't until September of '46 that a larger group had to be sort of combined with those students who were getting out of high school.
- DONIN: Yes.
- THOMSON: Who had gotten out of high school in June of '46.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- THOMSON: And then there was a heavy group of students that came in starting in September.
- DONIN: But you were sort of one semester ahead of them at that point.
- THOMSON: Right, right.
- DONIN: But they ended up all being—you ended up all being in the same class.
- THOMSON: No, the ones who came in in September ended up in the class of '50.
- DONIN: So with all this sort of coming and going and different start times for your class, how did that affect the feeling of—and also the different, the vets versus the traditional students—how did that affect the feeling of class unity and class identity?
- THOMSON: Well, I think those of us who came in in March of '46 and ended up in the class of '49 were a little out of synch. Because the class of '49, the [freshman] book you are looking at, they had come in; they

had formed together; they had elected officers. I think in early '46 I didn't even know the class had an officer. [Laughs] There was nothing that I really understood about that. I was focused entirely on trying to figure out how to integrate myself into a college and learn how to study again. And I think that was true of most of us in that group. So there wasn't as much cohesiveness perhaps in that class with the group that came in afterwards. But when they got the class of '50, they came in in a traditional way. And some were older, some were younger. But it seemed to flow okay.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. So you were actually the first class that matriculated under John Dickey, weren't you?

THOMSON: Right.

DONIN: So that made you a special class. They say that he signed every matriculation card.

THOMSON: He did. And shook your hand.

DONIN: Yes.

THOMSON: Interestingly, I saw something not too long ago. I go up to the college grant with a group of people to the second grant every year, eight of us, for hunting, fishing, and golf.

DONIN: Ah-ha!

THOMSON: And living for a couple of days, anyhow.... But there's a memory book up there. And in that this year when we were up there, the memory book had a 1951, as I recall it—'52—the second annual John Sloan Dickey Fishing Expedition.

DONIN: Oh!

THOMSON: And in the book it said, "John Sloan Dickey, President of Dartmouth College. Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of the United States. James J. Haggerty, Press Secretary; Sherman Adams, Chief of Staff; Styles Bridges, New Hampshire Senator."

DONIN: How exciting!

THOMSON: The guide.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

THOMSON: I forget his name—Cookie Something-or-other, the guide. And all signed in, very carefully. And we were looking at it, and I said, "Holy smokes! This page ought to be at the Rauner Library.

DONIN: It should be.

THOMSON: Well, we turned the page, and it said, "Facsimile. Original in Archives."

DONIN: Oh, good!

THOMSON: So somebody else had recognized that.

[Pause to turn over cassette]

DONIN: So is there anything that you want to add to your recollections.

THOMSON: Well, one thing that struck me recently. I have grandchildren now who are of college age. We came up to college with no computers, no radios, no microwaves, and we learned to ski on the ski slope off the second hole where there was a rope tow at the golf course. And once you got good enough on that you could then walk out to Oak Hill and ski there. There was a J-bar there. And I got my skiing through the Outing Club by going out there and grooming the trails and helping to load... and then we would get free skiing. But we did it all in equipment... I never owned a parka or a pair of rubber boots. Somehow, through all the cold... And I always remember going down to Davis Rink to see the hockey teams because the hockey teams at that time were just sensational hockey teams. Probably the best in the country. But Davis Rink, the way they got the ice was to open the doors. In the bitter cold weather you'd line up to go in there. Once you were in there, you were still outdoors. [Laughs] And we would do it in our old Marine overcoats and a pair of earmuffs and our gloves. But no special Gore-tex and rubberized and polarized and all the other things. But it was a good time. I always felt that I owed the college more than I could ever give them back in my lifetime. So they can make a lot of mistakes. I don't know that they could make enough mistakes on policy and this and that and the other and all the other things that go on. So I've always tried to do my best to pay it back. I've been a club president. I've been a roaming chairman. I've been a fundraiser, class agent. Class agent for Tuck School for 25 years. Club secretary, club

president. Do everything I possibly can to somehow repay the college for giving me a break which I could never have believed. When I went back to my high school to pick up my grades to present to Dartmouth to go to Dartmouth.... Because Dean Strong said to me, "Here's an application. Send it in. But you're all set." So I went back to get it all together, and I told the teacher down there who was a very nice lady, but when I told her I was going to go to Dartmouth, she said, "I can't believe this."

DONIN: Sounds like they made a good gamble on you.

THOMSON: Well, I hope so.

DONIN: Yes.

THOMSON: But who knows? [Laughs]

DONIN: Well, you've been a real asset to the college all these years with all of your volunteer time that you've spent in all those jobs.

THOMSON: Well, you can give it back in some way.

DONIN: Right.

THOMSON: Just because you're a volunteer doesn't mean you're a good volunteer. [Laughter] Or a skillful volunteer. But at least you tried.

DONIN: Right, right. Now are you active with the class now?

THOMSON: I'm the class president.

DONIN: Oh, I didn't know that. Is that a lot of work?

THOMSON: No, I have some very good people. We're very fortunate. We have about 18 or 19 classmates who live in this area who have come back. Everybody who ever went to Dartmouth always wants to go back here.

DONIN: They're coming back.

THOMSON: So when we got a chance to move back here, we did so. So these people, we all work quite well together. And so we can hang it together. We think we have a very good class organization. Now it's

dropping rather dramatically these days. This month's Dartmouth alumni magazine has two obituaries.

DONIN: Oh.

THOMSON: Two or three almost every month.

DONIN: Mmm mmm.

THOMSON: Or every issue that comes out. So they are dropping because we're all in our eighties.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

THOMSON: Some even older. We have a few who are 86 or 87. So we're not going to last forever. And we're coming up to our 60<sup>th</sup> reunion. We're planning on that, and that's our last official reunion.

DONIN: The big one, right. That's this spring? Are you doing it in the spring or in the fall?

THOMSON: No, in '09, in '09. We still have some time.

DONIN: Right, right.

THOMSON: But we have to plan, plan it.

DONIN: A lot of planning. Now do you find that any of these people that you're now spending a lot of time with, this core group, who's here in New England, are they any of the same people that you remember from when you were a student here?

THOMSON: Oh, some. Some. Some others that I didn't know very well, because again, they had come in earlier.

DONIN: Sure.

THOMSON: I didn't know them too well.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

THOMSON: But a couple I knew quite well when I was a student here.



DONIN: How quickly did you pick up on all the sort of funny Dartmouth traditions when you started out here as an undergrad? I mean like didn't they do the thing with the clay pipe?

THOMSON: And eventually to the canes and some of the other things. I think it's not hard to pick up because first of all it's a very insulated kind of geographical area. And you hear about it, and you see it. Just walking to Baker Library, and it's in front of you all the time. Go to the Outing Club, and you go up to Moosilauke, and you see and hear some more of it. You hear some of the old-timers talking about it, especially those who are permanent employees of Dartmouth: in the forestry service and at the ski slopes and things of that sort. So I don't think it takes you long to pick it up. I guess I had a pretty good background on it, too, because when you go into the Marine Corps, you hear the Marine Corps, the old Marine Corps, all the time. And you very quickly assimilate into that and enjoy it and probably get some prestige out of it you didn't deserve. So it wasn't hard. It's easy to fall in love with Dartmouth. And it's partly geographical, it's partly the history of it. And you never find out enough. Dartmouth history is worth reading over and over and over again. Sort of like reading the Mayflower.

DONIN: Right. And I should think also for the classes in your situation, who were coming back here after a life-changing experience like being in a war, this place must have felt like paradise.

THOMSON: Absolutely. You couldn't believe how many times, at least in my case, I sat there and said, Boy, how did I luck into this? How could this possibly be this good? That I'm going to get essentially a free education at one of the finest colleges in the world. How come? And I'd better glory in it, I'd better enjoy it while I can. And I'd better make use of it the best I can. Not only for now, but for the future, too.

DONIN: So what did you go on to do? You finished at Tuck, and then what happened?

THOMSON: I went to work—I worked for 30 years with the United States Rubber Company, which became Uniroyal Rubber.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

THOMSON: Rubber and Plastic. We ran into considerable difficulties and eventually liquidated the company. But good luck. My division, the

division that I ran, was liquidated first. So I got out of there pretty early. I worked for a year on loan from the company with the Carter Reorganization Project out of the White House at the Office of Management and Budget as an economic analyst. Then I worked for 13 years as president of the Toy Manufacturers of America, the toy and game people.

DONIN: And that was all based on your— I mean you had good preparation then from Tuck.

THOMSON: Tuck was fantastic. It was a very small school, and it was very competitive. To go from your junior year, the end of your junior year, you had to go interview with the Tuck School.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

THOMSON: Staff and faculty in order to be accepted. They took 150, so it was very competitive. And, again, you were very pleased to be able to say you made it. At the end of the first year, they cut the second-year class back to 75. Some of it was attrition. Some men, their grades weren't good enough, some decided to go in the family business, some had health problems, some had family problems, some went on to law school or some other activity. But then to get to the 75, they weeded out rather strongly on the basis of attitude. If you were late getting to class, it was noted. If you came to class unshaven or without a necktie, [laughs] it was noted. If you had taken an unannounced cut it was noted. So then a few were told they wouldn't be accepted back for the second year based on attitude.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

THOMSON: So they got down to 75. So it was very small and very personal in your studies. And it gave you a great— I was later sent, my company sent me to Harvard Business School, and I could compare those. Harvard Business School, the class was 75 or 80. You didn't have that same cohesiveness and personal attention.

DONIN: No. So when you finished there, if you finished the two-year program, was that the equivalent of an MBA?

THOMSON: It was an MBA. They called it an MCS, Master of Commercial Science.

DONIN: Uh huh!

THOMSON: They've now changed it over to an MBA.

DONIN: Right.

THOMSON: So in that period of time, from early '46 to the middle of '50, I was able to get both my undergraduate degree and the Tuck School graduate degree.

DONIN: Yes. I mean you crammed two degrees into essentially four years.

THOMSON: Right.

DONIN: But there was a lot of that sort of—I don't want to say shortening. But sort of pushing you through.

THOMSON: I think it was because I think the colleges recognized that people who had been delayed in getting.... So I didn't start business until I was almost 26 years old. And I think the colleges saw that as perhaps a disadvantage and tried to get them out quicker.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. Right.

THOMSON: I never caught onto that. I didn't think it was a disadvantage at all. In fact in many respects I think it was a plus.

**[End of Interview]**