

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Barbara Truncellito
By Mary Stelle Donin
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DONIN: How did you land in Hanover, and when did you get there?

TRUNCELLITO: I got there in August of 1945. Actually I was accepted at the New England Baptist Hospital in Boston. But I was going to have to wait six months before I could go. And they accepted me in Hanover for the fall.

DONIN: Of '45?

TRUNCELLITO: Of '45. And so that's how I happened to go there.

DONIN: And this was to the—it was Mary Hitchcock Nursing School?

TRUNCELLITO: Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital School of Nursing.

DONIN: You were obviously located at the old hospital where it used to be. Was the school included as part of the hospital with the classrooms right there?

TRUNCELLITO: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Right downstairs in one of the—some of the classes were in the hospital downstairs. But some of them were also... There was a classroom downstairs in Billingsley which is one of the nursing homes—nurses' homes.

DONIN: And where did you live?

TRUNCELLITO: Right there.

DONIN: There was a dormitory?

TRUNCELLITO: Oh, yes.

DONIN: Oh, I see. So it was a package deal.

TRUNCELLITO: We were there, other than three weeks in the summer, we were there all year round.

DONIN: Wow.

- TRUNCELLITO: It was an all-year-round deal.
- DONIN: And it took how long?
- TRUNCELLITO: Three years, three solid years. Once in three months I'd get home for a weekend. We didn't get home very often.
- DONIN: So when you arrived in the fall of '45, the war was over.
- TRUNCELLITO: It had just ended.
- DONIN: Yes.
- TRUNCELLITO: About the week before I went up there because I went in the 26th of August.
- DONIN: Were you intimidated being in a, you know, in the same town with an all-men's college?
- TRUNCELLITO: Not really. Actually I don't think I even had a date for a year. I was not interested.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- TRUNCELLITO: And I enjoyed what I was doing. But we were busy.
- DONIN: Yes, you were a student.
- TRUNCELLITO: We were busy, busy. We were child labor. [Laughs] When you come right down to it.
- DONIN: Yes. Right, right.
- TRUNCELLITO: Because it was the end of the, during the war, they were short-handed all the way around.
- DONIN: Yes.
- TRUNCELLITO: And we used to do cleaning.
- DONIN: So in addition to the classroom work, you were working on the wards then.

TRUNCELLITO: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

DONIN: Yes.

TRUNCELLITO: We got our cap, I think, it's three months after we arrived. And we would be alone on night duty.

DONIN: No doctors around?

TRUNCELLITO: Oh, they were on—

DONIN: They were no call.

TRUNCELLITO: The interns were. They lived in the hospital.

DONIN: Right.

TRUNCELLITO: But I mean we were....

DONIN: Now were you used to— Did you come from an urban area, or were you—

TRUNCELLITO: I came from Manchester.

DONIN: Oh, from Manchester. So here you were up in the boonies of Hanover.

TRUNCELLITO: Come to find out, I was the youngest in my class. And they probably would have asked me to wait another six months because I had a friend from high school, and we were both interested. And she had to wait until the spring before she went in. So when we graduated and I took my state boards, Miss Dower said, "I hate to tell you this, Barbara, but you have to wait until you become 21 to sign you RN." I didn't care. It was done. I did it. And so forth. And I stayed on in Hanover for a couple of years anyhow afterwards.

DONIN: When did you meet Ray?

TRUNCELLITO: I didn't meet Ray until just before I graduated.

RAY: June of '48 we met.

TRUNCELLITO: One of my good friends was going with a fellow who was graduating. And they were having a party at the Deke house. And

they wanted me to go. And I said no; I really wasn't interested in going. But they pushed and pushed, and so I went. And I happened to meet Ray there.

DONIN: Amazing.

TRUNCELLITO: Isn't that funny?

DONIN: Yes. So what your social life like before, you know, before you went to Deke that night? I mean did you—

TRUNCELLITO: Oh, yes, I dated after. But as I said, I wasn't really interested that much in guys. And so I wasn't looking. I wasn't looking for dates.

DONIN: Well, you were very young. The pressure of school and everything I'm sure was time-consuming.

TRUNCELLITO: Busy, busy. We were busy. But a great group of people.

DONIN: And there was a big demand at Dartmouth, I think, for women to sort of participate in... They put on plays, and they needed women to play the women roles. Did any of the nursing students have time to do stuff like that?

TRUNCELLITO: I don't remember them. The only thing I remember is Paul Sample was their artist-in-residence. And I can remember Dr. Lord asked me—I had graduated at this point—and he said, "Would you be willing to go to one of his classes and pose with your uniform?" I said, "Oh, no, thank you very much." [Laughs] I'm not interested.

DONIN: You're not ready. No, no.

TRUNCELLITO: No. And I had graduated at this point. But I didn't want to do that.

DONIN: Right.

TRUNCELLITO: I do know a girl who did do it.

DONIN: They found somebody. So he was using you as a teaching tool with one of his classes he was teaching. He wasn't sketching you. It was the class that was sketching you. Not you, but the model.

TRUNCELLITO: I guess they needed somebody. Actually, Ray... He did you, didn't he?

RAY: Want to see me?

DONIN: Paul Sample did you?

TRUNCELLITO: Yes.

DONIN: Oh, I'd love to see it.

TRUNCELLITO: Go get it.

RAY: Actually, the objective... You were right on. It was a teaching situation where everybody is drawing you. But at the end of the class, Paul Sample, he drew me.

DONIN: That's fantastic. It's probably worth a fortune now.

RAY: Oh, I don't know. The subject matter. [Laughter]

TRUNCELLITO: You know where the guys in the Deke House put it? The john.

DONIN: Oh, honestly. [Laughter]

TRUNCELLITO: I'm wondering if he signed it. I'm not sure. It's been in a number of different places in this house.

DONIN: That's amazing.

TRUNCELLITO: Mm-hmm. I had five years in Hanover, and loved it.

DONIN: Did you?

TRUNCELLITO: Loved it. And I stayed on for two years after I graduated.

[Further conversation about Paul Sample.]

DONIN: What was it like living in a town with all these college guys that probably wanted to date all the nurses? I mean you guys were the only game in town at that point. Otherwise, they had to travel to the women's colleges.

TRUNCELLITO: Yes. Other than some of the gals that worked in some of the offices and so forth, you know. Met a lot of very nice fellows.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TRUNCELLITO: That I dated, not seriously, but very nice fellows.

DONIN: You spent time in the fraternities socializing?

TRUNCELLITO: Yes. Mm-hmm.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TRUNCELLITO: Oh, that's right. My last summer before we graduated, we lived in the Theta Chi house, which was right around the corner from the hospital. And it was fine. It must have been crowded. But they needed a little extra space over in the nurses' homes.

DONIN: But how did they have space at Theta Chi?

TRUNCELLITO: They were gone for the summer.

DONIN: Oh, it was summer. Sorry.

TRUNCELLITO: Yes, it was summer.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

TRUNCELLITO: And it was handy for us. I enjoyed it. I met a lot of nice gals. Still keep track of some of them.

DONIN: Now, were there any legendary doctors that you remember?

TRUNCELLITO: Oh. You know the part that was nice when we were there, you got to know everybody in the hospital.

DONIN: Because it was small?

TRUNCELLITO: Because it was small. Not like it is now. Although it's a great place. Oh, we had a lot of wonderful doctors. Wonderful guys.

RAY: Dr. Bowler.

TRUNCELLITO: Oh, Dr. Bowler was a great, great, great guy. Wonderful man. I used to love it. He'd get through the operating room and he'd be doing his rounds with his crew. And he had on this little short kind of furry like jacket that he used to wear. He wasn't very tall.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

TRUNCELLITO: Just a nice, nice man.

DONIN: Speaking of doctors, didn't you guys have to take a course as freshmen called the –

RAY: Yes.

DONIN: They had a funny name for it. Smut class or something?

RAY: [Laughter] Sounds right. I don't recall the exact name.

DONIN: Sort of a sex education course, I assume. [...]

DONIN: So when you graduated, when you finished, where did you live? Did they let you stay?

TRUNCELLITO: I moved across the street. There were several graduate houses.

DONIN: That's where you moved into Gile House.

TRUNCELLITO: And then the Sherman House is on the corner, kind of a stucco....

DONIN: Still there.

TRUNCELLITO: Yes. And the white one across the street from that is also a graduate house.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

TRUNCELLITO: And then there were girls, too, that lived—I don't know where they lived.

DONIN: Apartments and stuff.

TRUNCELLITO: Apartments, but that wasn't too common. But we lived right across the street, which was handy.

DONIN: Now did you have a specialty as an RN?

TRUNCELLITO: No.

- DONIN: So you worked all parts of the hospital then. I mean you could do either the emergency room or you could do an operating room or.... So nurses in those days you didn't have to specialize in something.
- TRUNCELLITO: No, no.
- DONIN: You covered everything.
- TRUNCELLITO: Right. [...]
- DONIN: Did you become friends with anybody who wasn't a nurse? I mean I'm trying to visualize your life there. Did you have friends who weren't nurses who worked in other parts of town or—
- TRUNCELLITO: No.
- DONIN: It was a pretty insulated world—
- TRUNCELLITO: It was.
- DONIN: —because you were surrounded by doctors and nurses.
- TRUNCELLITO: Yes. I remember one week in 1947, it snowed so much, and it was so cold that we would go from the nurses' home under Dick's House in that little corridor into the hospital. Back over. We didn't go anywhere.
- DONIN: So cold.
- TRUNCELLITO: It was so cold. Oh!
- DONIN: Did you feel free to go like if Dartmouth was having a movie—go to the Nugget or go, you know, go into Webster Hall for—
- TRUNCELLITO: Oh, sure.
- DONIN: For lectures and movies and stuff?
- TRUNCELLITO: Oh, when we were there, that's where the movie theater was. It was in Webster Hall.
- DONIN: Oh, the Nugget had burned down. That's right.
- TRUNCELLITO: Yes. And so we would go there.

- RAY: Webster Hall, that was it.
- TRUNCELLITO: There was a seven o'clock show and an eight-thirty or something like that.
- RAY: Oh, yes. I knew fellows in V-12 who never missed a movie.
- TRUNCELLITO: The movies were great entertainment.
- RAY: They spent more time there than I did. They never missed a movie. They saw every single at Webster Hall.
- TRUNCELLITO: Oh, we used to do the Hums. They used to have—you know the Hums in front of Dartmouth Hall.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.
- TRUNCELLITO: The fraternities would all do them, and we'd all go. Oh, there was a lot of it. And when I think of the number of people that Dartmouth guys, a number of them did.
- DONIN: So when College events, you know, like Winter Carnival and stuff was going on, or Homecoming—they didn't call it Homecoming then. They called it Dartmouth Night. When that took place, you felt welcome to participate in those sorts of things.
- TRUNCELLITO: Absolutely. In fact it must have been my second year, the fraternities would empty out, and the girls would come in, and there would be house parents. And Miss Dower said, "Go ahead and go." And I did. I had a great time. It was a chubber.
- DONIN: A chubber. What's a chubber? I've heard that.
- RAY: The Outing Club.
- DONIN: Oh, the Outing Club, that's right.
- TRUNCELLITO: The greatest group of people.
- DONIN: So if you were a chubber, you were a member of the Outing Club, is that right?

- RAY: Yeah, that's what they called them. It also indicated that it was a student who was an outdoor sportsman. A guy who was chopping wood, and fishing and climbing hills and that kind of thing. That was a chubber.
- TRUNCELLITO: Yes. It was a wonderful experience. I met a lot of people that were not necessarily on campus but were dates of these fellows and so forth. It was great. And we all stayed there in the Tri Kap House. I guess all the fraternities emptied out then, didn't they, Ray?
- RAY: They were closed, Honey.
- TRUNCELLITO: No, no, no. Not then.
- RAY: Oh, you mean... Well, we all had to move out, and you couldn't go above the second floor.
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- RAY: They had rules and chaperones and all those good things.
- DONIN: Didn't they have what they called parietal hours back in those days where the women had to empty out of the fraternities by a certain hour of the night or something?
- RAY: Oh, well, we had, what—and the dormitories, too.
- DONIN: And the dorms, yes.
- RAY: And the dorms. They were strict hours. I mean they couldn't be in there after a certain hour. I don't remember what it was.
- TRUNCELLITO: Yes, because women weren't allowed in the dorms of any—
- RAY: In the dormitory, ooh ah, no way.
- TRUNCELLITO: No, I didn't think so.
- DONIN: And I heard stories about the one policeman on campus whose name was Wormwood.
- RAY: Oh yes.
- TRUNCELLITO: I never saw the man. But I heard of him.

RAY: He was security. I think he was the only one on the security force. And he broke up a fight once between Russell Sage and what's the dorm behind Russell Sage? Butterfield. Big fight. Water flowing all over the place. This was freshman year. That's a summer '45 fight. You ask anybody from the class of '49 and they would remember that. Poor Wormwood. He didn't know what to do.

DONIN: With only one guy on campus.

RAY: He threatened like mad.

DONIN: I don't know who I was interviewing but he said Wormwood could sniff out a woman in a dorm room like nothing else. [Laughter]

TRUNCELLITO: Well, I think when you were in college Ray, you had janitors who made your beds.

RAY: Oh sure.

TRUNCELLITO: Can you believe it?

RAY: In the Deke house too.

DONIN: Each dorm had its own janitor that just....

RAY: Oh, sure. We'd get clean sheets every week. Absolutely.

TRUNCELLITO: They made your beds. My goodness.

DONIN: It's a good thing. And each of the fraternities did as well, didn't they?

RAY: Yes, we did.

DONIN: That's why the fraternities were in such better shape in those days than they are now.

RAY: Ohhhh. No.

DONIN: But we won't go there.

RAY: No. No. Don't go there. [Laughter]

TRUNCELLITO: Our older son was a Beta.

DONIN: Oh, I didn't ask you that. Did you have a son who went to Dartmouth?

TRUNCELLITO: Uh huh. Class of '77.

DONIN: Oh yes, we talked about that. [...] So, once you guys were married, where did you live?

TRUNCELLITO: I came home. Because Ray had just gone into the service.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

TRUNCELLITO: And so I came home, and I thought this will give me a chance to save a few dollars. And so I did. And I was home for 18 months, right? And when Ray got out of OCS we got married. [Laughs]

RAY: Before we got married and after your graduation, you lived in the Gile House.

TRUNCELLITO: I lived in the Gile House. Yes.

RAY: Yes, that's right. Where did I live? In the C&G House?

TRUNCELLITO: I guess you did. Yes, you were living with Ray Rasenburger in the C&G House.

RAY: I'm a little fuzzy there because we spent a lot of our time... The bachelor coaches at Dartmouth College, there was two or three of us, we lived on the top floor of Davis Field House. It was terrific!

DONIN: Was it?

RAY: Absolutely. And you remind me... If you don't me interjecting this. There was this fellow Art Young who has nothing to do with Stu, Jack or Lou. A different family. Art was loaded with integrity. The nicest guy you'd ever want to meet. And he was the assistant varsity line coach when I was the freshman line coach. And we lived there with the track coach.

TRUNCELLITO: Assistant track coach.

- RAY: Yes, he was the assistant at the time. He was telling me a story. When he came back. He was one of those guys who was a very good player. Went into the service, was captain in the Marines. After the Marines he comes back to Dartmouth to finish his education and starts playing football again. He told me a story where he put an M1, a rifle, in China, on the conductor of a train in order to get that train into a certain port so he could catch a boat to get to Hanover.
- TRUNCELLITO: Oh my goodness.
- RAY: And there are lots of stories like that. He was so determined. He was a wonderful guy.
- DONIN: So you were living in the top of Davis coaching, and you were working as a nurse. And this was before—
- TRUNCELLITO: I had graduated.
- DONIN: Right, right.
- TRUNCELLITO: Ray came back after that summer. I met him that time. And then I didn't see him until the end of the summer. And I had graduated. And you were done in January.
- RAY: I was in the Army.
- TRUNCELLITO: You hadn't graduated. Because I went to your graduation.
- RAY: Well, that was about a week— But the ceremony was June of '49.
- TRUNCELLITO: Right.
- RAY: I had the honor of being the first marshall of the class. I have to tell you something that I think kind of indicates what kind of a wonderful environment Dartmouth...
- DONIN: That's all right. Take a breath or two.
- TRUNCELLITO: Yes. Oh he.... My kids are all Italian. [Laughter]
- DONIN: I have to tell you when I do interviews in Webster Hall which is where most of the interviews take place, I have a cart all set up with this stuff and on the cart is not only the equipment but a bottle of

water and glass and a large box of tissues because more often than not somebody gets choked up. Sometimes it's the wife and husband together talking about their married life or sometimes it's the alum himself talking about his Dartmouth experience. So, it's more common than you would think. Which says a lot to me about peoples' connections to Dartmouth.

RAY: What I wanted to tell you was here I am a freshman, summer of '45, barely walking and we had a visit at the Dean's house.

DONIN: Is this Dean Neidlinger?

RAY: Pudge Neidlinger. Invites us over, myself and a couple of guys. And we met his family and we spent the evening with his family, Susan and Sally and Mary. Now where? What kind of environment allows for that? Special.

DONIN: And there used to be relationships like that with some faculty members I gather.

RAY: Lots of them.

TRUNCELLITO: Even when Jim was there. They would go...

RAY: They invited us over for dinner. Absolutely. It was a warm cuddly place.

DONIN: Right.

RAY: A lot of support. A lot of support but not in the regimental way. It was there if you needed it. You just did things, like Bob Strong. He was a wonderful man. He was setting up my courses my freshman year. And I said, well, I think I'll take German. I'll start off with German. I'll take German 101. He says, no you won't. You've had three years of German in high school. You will take advanced German. [Laughter] I said, ok. He knew better than I that that was the thing to do.

DONIN: Although it's been said by many that for all Dean Neidlinger's warmth, the one thing you didn't want to have happen was to get a notice, apparently a little card, saying, please see me in my office.

RAY: Well you know, I never had any trouble.

TRUNCELLITO: He was the disciplinarian, wasn't he?

RAY: One time, my brother was in the service, World War Two. He got married in 1946 and I'm a sophomore at Dartmouth. And we're playing... Who were we playing? We played Columbia and I had a bruised nose. And I was in the wedding party. And he was getting married fortunately on a Sunday. And I went to see him like on a Friday before the game and I said, I really have a problem: I'd like to have Monday off. Hah! In those days... I'm asking for Monday off. I wanted to be excused from classes on Monday and I explained the situation to him and he said, you're all set. He had a tendency... I liked him.

TRUNCELLITO: How the heck could you be in a wedding on a Sunday afternoon or evening in New Jersey and be back in class...

DONIN: In those days.

RAY: It was tough enough getting down there, sitting up all night. You think I had a Pullman going down from White River. It was locomotive with all the soot from the diesel... But anyway, I had a heck of a time at the party and that Sunday. And Monday I was coming back Monday. Tuesday I'm in class. Everything was... It was easy for us because we didn't expect that much.

DONIN: Right. Expectations were different.

RAY: Another kid today would say, well, I'll take the week off or something. You know what I mean.

TRUNCELLITO: [Laughter] And not even ask anybody.

RAY: He used to kick extra points. He was quite an athlete himself, Neidlinger.

DONIN: Oh, was he?

RAY: He and Milt Piepul. Milt Piepul was one of the backfield coaches. He used to play for Notre Dame. He was on the staff at Dartmouth. And Milt would kick extra points. That was one of the things he did when he was playing for Notre Dame. And Neidlinger would be kicking extra points.

DONIN: And his twin daughters I gather were very much in demand on the social circuit at Dartmouth. Neidlingers.

RAY: Sally and Susan.

DONIN: Sally and Susan.

RAY: It's funny. I became acquainted with them early, very early but I was not... Susan, we met Susan back here in Concord. And we knew Mal, her husband. He was a C&G guy.

DONIN: Right.

RAY: So there was no romantic interest. Just a friend and that was nice. And then her sister Mary married Bob Kilmarx who was manager of the football team in '50. So you know, we were all like that. I wouldn't swap it for anything.

DONIN: So when you went back to Hanover with Ray, when you were married and he was coaching, where did you guys live?

TRUNCELLITO: Sanborn Lane.

DONIN: Oh, you told me that.

TRUNCELLITO: It was great because I could walk. I pushed Jimmy downtown. We used to go to football practice every afternoon, band practice every afternoon. And now I wonder why Jimmy is such a social person.
[Laughter]

DONIN: Mm-hmm. He was out and about in Hanover all the time.

[End of Interview]