

**INTERVIEW OF ALLEN BILDNER '47  
The War Years at Dartmouth  
Saturday, June 7, 2008**

**Today is Saturday, June 7, 2008. My name is Mary Donin and we are here in Rauner Library with Allen Bildner, Dartmouth Class of 1947 and Tuck 1948.**

**I like to start these interviews with this first question: How was it that you ended up coming to Dartmouth? It was unusual circumstances, right? Because of the war?**

It was unusual. I enlisted in the Navy and was sworn in as an Apprentice Seaman on July 1, 1944. I had been selected for the V-12, the Naval Officer Training Program. Dartmouth was not my first choice, because you had a choice of the colleges that you would prefer to go to. I was admitted to Yale and Harvard. Rejected at Cornell. Yale was my first choice but I learned on July 1, 1944 at Grand Central Station where we were sworn in that we were being sent to Dartmouth with the other apprentice seamen and Marines who were in the V-12 program. That was July 1, 1944.

**Now, just as a sort of chronology of your life—when did you enlist?**

I graduated Summit High School in June of '44. I was 17 years old and we were in wartime so I enlisted very quickly. I applied to the Navy for their Officer Training Program to avoid being drafted.

**You could enlist when you were 17, not 18?**

Yes.

**So, you went right from high school?**

Yes, entering the program. And at that particular time I was 17, more interested in baseball and athletics than girls, very naïve, but wanted to get out and into the war, and do my part.

**Was that true of most of your classmates from high school?**

Oh yes. But what was unusual was that most of my classmates and fellow apprentice seamen were 17 or 18 years old but we also had many who had come back from the fleet and were able to get into the officer training program. Many of them wanted to become officers but many got in to get out of the war and we had no problem with that because we understood where they had come from. Many of them had had very serious combat duties as well so we had a mixture of all ages and backgrounds and it was a diverse group. We had some African-Americans in the battalions. We were in the Navy, subject to Navy policy and rules and regulations. There were 2000 of us on the campus making up the apprentice seamen and the Marine contingent. There were about 300 civilians who were at Dartmouth living on campus at the time in addition to those who were in the service. We were under the command of Captain Cummings, of Navy captain rank, and a one-eyed colonel who led the Marine unit. We were up at 6:00 a.m.; that's when reveille sounded. Out front, we fell into our place with each of the battalions out there. We did calisthenics regardless of the weather. The civilians on the campus were so upset with being awakened every morning that every night at taps time, which was 9:00 p.m., they would deliberately play Benny Goodman's *Swing, Swing, Swing* on loudspeakers to keep the rest of us up.

The Pentagon and the White House believed the wars would last so long that Annapolis, West Point and the Air Force Academy couldn't turn out the officers they needed. That is why they took over 100 colleges and universities in the United States for V-12 Navy, V-5 Air Force, and A-12 Army, to turn out officers in a two-year program. But they also theorized that the war was going to last so long that they needed not only military leaders but leaders with some education. And that was the reason that we had two years of academic training as well. We were there 52 weeks a year so the net result of that was that we finished three years of undergraduate work in two years.

**So they accelerated all the classes?**

It was 52 weeks of the year. Yes, at least those in V-12.

**Were your classes just made up of military guys or were there civilians among them?**

Not sure. I think that the classes included civilians since the liberal arts courses were not specially designed for the military.

**Right. Were you taking any sort of liberal arts courses?**

Yes. Two years of that was academics—liberal arts. I got back into Dartmouth in 1947 when I returned as a civilian and entered the Tuck School. This means that I had my undergraduate degree and my MBA in four years and not six. Thanks to the GI bill, Uncle Sam paid for all of it and not my parents. Having told you that, I really regret the fact that I didn't delay my graduation. I missed two years of liberal arts, language, philosophy, psychology and other subjects that I would have loved to take.

**I get the sense from a lot of the veterans we've have talked to that coming back on campus, everybody had a sense of urgency about them, that they wanted to finish up and get on with their lives.**

That was the norm. Women were not in the workplace. Women wanted to be wives, mothers. Men wanted to get on with their lives—get a job, career, get married. That was the norm at that time. One of the interesting things is that when the college opened up after the war we suddenly had Sachem and Wigwam villages with well over 50 married couples and of course they were older than most of us.

**Their experience was very different here than I am sure yours was since you were still able to enjoy a little taste of the traditional college experience.**

Oh yes. But so did they. I was a member of the Casque & Gauntlet, a senior honor society. Several of our members were married. So, we had a chance to be with them and their wives and understand something about how their lives were different than ours on campus.

**Let's back up to when you first got here? Had you seen Dartmouth before when you were looking around at colleges?**

I saw Ann Sheridan in *Winter Carnival* and that was my knowledge of Dartmouth.

**[Laughs] Perfect.**

**What was your reaction at Grand Central Station being told that this is where you were going to come for your training?**

I was disappointed that I wasn't heading for Yale. I didn't know a great deal about Dartmouth but when the bus with all of us aboard pulled up in front of the Hanover Inn . . . (I am getting tears, sorry)

**That's okay.**

. . . and I looked out at that campus, I saw the Green and Baker Library. And by the way, I met Bob Kirsch, a classmate, on July 1, 1944. We had never met and we became very close friends through our V-12 experience and later as civilians at Dartmouth. He was 18 at the time. Bob and Abby, his wife, and Joanie and I have remained close friends to this day. We saw them a week ago at a reunion of five Dartmouth couples. Bob was our 60<sup>th</sup> reunion chairperson.

**So, you get together every year?**

Oh yes.

**Is it true that they turned the dorms into sort of pretend ships and called it the SS whatever?**

I don't recall that. The dorms were our billets and we were required to take night watch at 9:00 pm, which meant that we were up all night on duty to make sure that the rules and regulations were followed and that people weren't leaving or entering. We were subject to Navy discipline. So, in every respect we were in "military service." We had parade instruction and every Friday there was a dress parade. That means you were in your dress uniform, there was an honor guard and we paraded before Captain Cummings, the colonel that led the Marines, Secretary Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, he was present, often there were dignitaries from Washington there. That was every single Friday on the green.

**We have great pictures of it. I assume President Hopkins and Dean Neidlinger were all there?**

Oh yes. I remember serving as a member of the honor guard. I was one of the flag bearers. We wore leggings—you know, boots. And it was just lots of fun. In 1993 V-12 had their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, which I returned to. Many of the people that I knew at Dartmouth, fellow V-12ers and Marines returned and of course we paraded again and the townspeople were out watching these elder people stumble in parade formation.

**[Laughs.]**

It was lots of fun.

**So, I assume your roommates were other trainees like yourself?**

Yes.

**And they stacked you up—what was it, four to a room in those bunks?**

Yes, four to a room in the bunks.

**And they used military lingo, right? Like 0800 and all that?**

Oh yes.

**So it was the whole thing?**

Yes. The training was not only academic but naval—seamanship, navigation, engineering—subjects designed to get us ready to serve as Naval officers, including survival exercises. We were not only under the command of a captain but we had a chief boatswain and petty officers also. One of the petty officers in charge of physical training was responsible for teaching us survival training. In the Spaulding pool we would all climb up a cargo net to the top and he would light oil on the surface of the water. We would jump in and then learn how to swim in the flaming water to survive in the event of a shipwreck.

**Amazing.**

The physical training was really demanding. The obstacle course was behind Chase Field which used to be the soccer field and it took about an hour to get over the obstacle course. It consisted of jumping, rope climbing, cargo net climbing, you name it. It was exhausting. We did that every single day. I remember quite often in the summertime it was after lunch and I would wind up in class, many of us would, fast asleep. We were up at 6:00 in the morning and were exhausted. So the physical training was really something. One of the amusing things I think, was that in order to teach us something about seamanship, whaleboats would be lowered off the Ledyard Bridge into the water.

### **What is a whaleboat?**

A whaleboat is a large boat, usually about 12 seamen, 6 at oars on either side with a petty officer usually at the stern shouting out orders. What the whaleboats were used for I don't know, but they were lowered off the bridge and Captain Cummings would stand in one of these shouting out orders and the townspeople would be at the bridge laughing, amused. By the way, we were, too.

I told you each of us had a battalion commander. Our battalion had a battalion commander (who shall be nameless), and he was one of the ones who had come out of the fleet. I would say this particular fellow was about 28 years old. He had come out of the fleet to get out of the war and he had been through lots of combat experience. I was 17 and we were on liberty one night and he said, "Bildner, there's a carnival in White River. What do you say you and I take a walk down the midway?" So what am I going to say? I didn't know him well but knew he was a very rough customer. So I say, "Of course." So we get to White River and we are walking down the midway and suddenly there are two women, two girls, coming our way. He taps me on the shoulder. "Bildner, yours doesn't look too good." That was my experience with my battalion commander.

**[Laughs.]**

And . . . when we did have liberty, what did we do?

### **What did you do?**

Why we went to girls' schools—Colby Junior College, Smith, Skidmore. There were no cars. It was all hitchhiking or taking the train down or bus or whatever, or

we hitchhiked to Claremont to a dance hall there. Remember, most of the men of eligible age were not here and so there were many, many single women at the dance halls and that was part of the fun of going down there, hitching and coming back. That was our social life.

**How long was your liberty generally? Was it just a weekend?**

It could be a weekend. It could be a night. Because you were often on duty on the weekends, too.

**Was there anything on campus that was offered to the trainees?**

We had the Nugget, movies at Webster Hall.

**Yes, because the real Nugget had burned down. Before you got here, maybe, or maybe right after you got here.**

And of course the other thing that was for amusement was athletics because Dartmouth still had basketball, soccer, and football teams in those days and competed.

**Speaking of athletics, I was doing a little reading of your 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary speech and the press release about your professorship—you were a member of Dartmouth's Ivy League championship basketball team in 1946?**

Yes.

**Wow. Tell me about that. I am surprised they had athletics still going on during the war.**

Oh they did. Of course, that was not unusual because, after all, in the military, outside of the officer training programs, sports recreation was critical for morale and for physical training. There was inter-dormitory athletics, too. Even though we were in the Navy, there was still competition between the dormitories as well as varsity sports. And a basketball coach, Ozzie Cowles, took Dartmouth to nine consecutive Ivy League championships and to National Invitational Tournaments ("NIT") a couple of years also. I played on that last team. We had our final game for the championship, the ninth championship, in Ithaca at Cornell in 1946.

**So the college found enough gasoline and transportation for you guys to get over there?**

Yes. We went by bus or by train to do that. I also played soccer.

**Yes. I see that you were captain of the soccer team?**

Captain of the soccer team one year and co-captain with a close friend who unfortunately just died a year ago—Dan Carroll. Dan was our goalie. I was center forward. I had been an All-State soccer player at Summit High School in New Jersey. At Dartmouth, I was switched from center half to center forward by Dartmouth's soccer coach, a great teacher and coach, Tommy Dent, a Scotsman, who had played professionally abroad. We had great teams and there were four of us who made the All-American team and I was one of them. Tom was also the coach of the North/South team and four of us from Dartmouth played on the North/South team. Dan Carroll was also a member of Casque & Gauntlet and my roommate at Casque & Gauntlet. After practice every day I would shoot goals and if he stopped me I would owe him a milkshake and if I put one through he would owe me. We did that every day. We loved the game. Since I was back here for a year at Dartmouth and the Tuck School, I became the coach of the freshman soccer team in 1947. When we were out at Chase Field and I was having the freshman scrimmage (and I would play against them), Coach Tommy came up to me one day and said, "Laddie, I don't think you understand. These young lads are out to show you what they can do and they are going to destroy you. My suggestion is do not scrimmage with them." [Laughter] I would take the freshman team to Kimball Union to play them. I really enjoyed that very, very much.

**So, when you were playing on these teams, you got release time from the Navy to do all those athletic stuff or was the athletic stuff taking place when you came back?**

While I was in the Navy, no varsity sport or other athletics interfered with the academic or Naval responsibilities and duties. Whatever you were doing, those were your additional responsibilities.

**I see. You had a very full schedule!**

**Let's talk about the academics. What did you think of the quality of the teaching when you were here?**

I thought it was great. I didn't mention that in order to have coordination between the Navy and the academics, President Hopkins appointed an Academic Board— Captain Cummings was a member of the Board, Hopkins was, Sid Hayward (then the Secretary of the College) was. The dean of the faculty may have also been and the dean of the college. Sid Hayward served as the liaison between the Navy and the college for academics. I remember some professors very, very well. One was Professor Carr. He was a political science and government professor whom I revered. I remember two other professors as well--Harry Wellman, a professor of advertising, who composed *Dartmouth Undying*, and Al Frye, professor of marketing. Both were exceptional teachers. I stayed in touch with them after I graduated. My family was in the supermarket business. While at the Tuck School, I did both a senior thesis and a masters thesis. One was "Providing a Personnel Department at Kings Super Market," which was very unusual in the supermarket business in those days. Now it is called human resources. And also a thesis on the "History of the Supermarket Business in the United States," which in those days was only about 17 or 18 years old because the first supermarket was opened in 1930.

**Interesting.**

So I did my thesis and gave it to Harry Wellman and said, "How did I do?" He said, "I am going to make it easy for you. I want you to take this down and wrap it in a stone and throw it across the Connecticut River. If it goes across, you get an A. If it doesn't, well . . ." Anyway, I got an A on it. He was lots of fun.

There was another professor who I knew very, very well (he shall be nameless). He was an accounting professor. There were many accounting professors. This one in particular I remember because he would ask a question and then someone in the class would get up to respond and he would break out laughing and say, "Stupid. I can't believe it!" We reached a point in that class where we were all so intimidated and frightened to respond to his questions. How did that affect me? After I graduated in 1948 I had learned so little in this course that I entered Rutgers University in Newark at night to take accounting.

**Oh dear. But generally, the undergrad teaching was pretty good?**

Oh wonderful. Excellent.

**Despite the fact that you are training to be an officer, there was a lot of liberal arts involved to keep the whole balance?**

Yes.

**That's the way you make a good officer I guess.**

As I said, the limitations from my standpoint were that I really couldn't pursue subjects that I would have liked to pursue in greater depth. We had American history but I would have liked to pursue more history. I would have liked to pursue philosophy and more language.

**It's my understanding that some of the courses were not offered during that time and some of the professors were actually retrained to teach courses that were not their specialty because they needed extra courses like geography or statistics to train the officers.**

I think that's true.

Back to the subject of athletics, I would like to share a story about a sport and a coach (both will be nameless). This was after the war. I remember one of the big differences between Dartmouth pre-war and Dartmouth post-war was that pre-war Dartmouth was essentially a monolithic college in student demographic make-up—white, affluent, Christian. Men who had served in the military and whose lives had been saved and injuries prevented often by soldiers different than themselves in color, religion, economic and ethnic backgrounds, returned to Dartmouth with different attitudes about bigotry and discrimination. Many Dartmouth students who returned from the service came back imbued with brotherhood and different values than before they had left. The story I want to tell is about a game that our basketball team played in New York City at Columbia University in 1946. It was customary for the coach to call us together in a huddle before each game and to motivate us with words like, "Let's go!" Columbia had an outstanding African-American player by the name of Norman Skinner who was the only African-American in the Ivy League at that time and the leading scorer in the league. This

time the coach in the huddle said, “I want you to go in and get that N.....” We couldn’t believe it.

**Did it affect your play?**

We won that game but it affected all of us intellectually and emotionally, but we were there for Dartmouth, not this particular coach.

**Do you think that was an isolated incident?**

Don’t think so. At Dartmouth, in either sports or in life at Dartmouth. For example, there was a dean (who should be nameless). Students would call or arrange to see him by simply waiting in his outside office. One day a classmate of mine (who shall be nameless also) was waiting outside his open door to see him and heard him say to his secretary, “Send the little Jew in now.”

One other story of those times was in Casque & Gauntlet, a senior honor society, based on the Arthurian Legend, which I belonged to. We had chapter meetings led by our president, Bob McLaughry, monthly. Our president was our King Arthur and I was Sir Modred, the Black Knight. Remember that we had men in our delegation of all ages. Well, Bob got a call from the chairman of a major New York City bank who asked if he could come to the next chapter meeting. We were in the process of bidding new members to a delegation that only averaged about 16. Our top candidate for the next delegation happened to be an African-American, the son of the musical star of Porgy & Bess, Charlie Duncan. Todd Duncan was captain of the ski team, captain of the tennis team, an outstanding individual. We had a southern member in our chapter who objected strongly but we finally helped educate him about the world we were in. The three honor societies—Casque & Gauntlet, Dragon, and Sphinx, all were obligated to do the bidding of new candidates at the same time, so the meeting attended by the bank chairman was prior to the actual bidding of the new delegations. Everyone was excited because they were looking for jobs and they were thinking that he might be there to recruit. After the meeting he said, “In all the years that I have been a member here and an alumnus, I have always felt comfortable inviting my fellow C&Gs to my home, but I can tell you, if you persist in bidding Charlie Duncan to this chapter, that is the end of any invitation you will get from me.” Again, we were all very shocked. I was not surprised, for even with the wartime experiences

that changed the attitudes and values of many Americans, the bigots of our society were still among us. We bid Charlie Duncan nevertheless.

**During your time here—I ask this of all the alums whom I ascertained are Jewish—did you experience any anti-Semitism when you were here?**

I would say, no. What's interesting is that my name is Bildner, which is not a Jewish name. I never dated a Jewish girl. I grew up in a community in Summit, New Jersey, where I think we only had 60 Jewish families, and I was not an educated Jew in terms of my knowledge of my religion. I was bar mitzvahed at a camp where I was sent for \$90 a season because that's what my mother and father could afford. It was a YMHA camp and my Bar Mitzvah consisted of my learning Hebrew phonetically from a Texas rabbi and my mom and dad bringing cake and ice cream. So I was not an educated Jew. But I wanted to identify—people didn't know and it wasn't as though people went around asking what people's religions were—but I wanted to be up front just as my Catholic friends were. When the war was over, fraternities opened their doors. Every fraternity still had discriminatory clauses, except one—Pi Lambda Phi. Pi Lambda Phi was non-sectarian, but primarily Jewish. So I joined. We had some non-Jewish members but most were Jewish and I was bid to every fraternity, except one. I won't mention that one, but you probably know which one that is. I joined Pi Lambda Phi because I wanted to identify as a Jew on campus and the interesting thing is it was after that that I was elected president of my senior class, elected vice president of my Tuck class, and was heavily involved in everything, so I felt very good about that. By the way, when I was encouraged to join by the alumnus who opened up the chapter, he promised to fix me up with a Jewish girl from Smith. Then after I was accepted and wanted to join, he called me and said, "Allen, I have to tell you, the girl that I have arranged for you is a shicksa.

**[Laughs] That's cute.**

**So, when you arrived here, the president of the college was Ernest Martin Hopkins, but then when you came back after the war you had a new president.**

Yes, Dickey. I really didn't know Hopkins personally. I only knew him through Bob Strong, the director of admissions. Dartmouth's archives in those times included letters from alumni about too many kikes at the college. Geographic quotas were used at Dartmouth and other Ivy League colleges to exclude non-

Caucasians and Jews. Along comes John Dickey. He was a fantastic human being with a global understanding of the world in which we lived. He became an honorary member of our class by the way.

**Oh? I didn't know that.**

Yes, we made him honorary member of the class. There was a blizzard in '47 and there is Dickey with us out in the streets, shoveling snow. There are probably pictures of him in the archives.

**Yes, there are pictures. There's one with a hunting shirt on.**

The first thing he did was the Great Issues course because in freshman year he insisted that we needed to understand what was going on in the world at large. He encouraged everyone to read the *New York Times* religiously because of the fact that he thought it was critical that we know what was going on in the world. He took steps to eliminate discriminatory clauses in chapters and that was to be done quickly, but you know it still existed until 1956.

**Yes, it took him longer than he was happy about.**

He asked me to serve as president of the Committee of Class Presidents. So there were three other presidents—freshman, sophomore, junior—and I served for the senior class. Our job was to come up with recommendations for re-instituting student government at Dartmouth, which we did. He also sought our advice with the problem of alcohol abuse. While we were concerned with those deliberations, he called me and said, “Allen, I would like you to represent Dartmouth as president of the senior class. I have a distinguished visitor from Washington coming down and I would like you to accompany us to the hockey game in Thompson Arena so he can talk to you about college. So we get there and we are about to enter and suddenly there are about six Dartmouth students with cold beer on their shoulders. Dickey turns to me and says, “Allen, would you please explain to me and [so-and-so] here why cold beer is necessary.” Remember, those were the days in which the windows were opened to freeze the ice.

About that time there was a New York newspaper called PM. It was an investigative newspaper and one of the investigative reporters by the name of Max Lerner decided he wanted to go after the geographic quota in Ivy League schools

and colleges in particular. And he did that. He went after all the colleges and visited each of the colleges and he called Dartmouth and arranged a date with President Dickey and members of the administration and faculty on the geographic quota. I got a call from John Dickey, our president, who said, “Allen, PM magazine is sending an investigative reporter up and I really would appreciate it very much if you would share your own experience here with him.” It wasn’t always clear to me whether the president had asked me to front for him because I was Jewish and president of the class or whether it was simply because he knew that I could share lots of things with him, but knowing him as well as I do, I think the latter was true. I don’t think he was capable of setting me up that way.

**Did the reporter write the article?**

If he did, I don’t recall reading it.

**I will have to check on that.**

If you do, I would love to get it.

**What did PM stand for? Do you know?**

Afternoon—it was just an afternoon newspaper.

**Oh, I get it. So it was called PM Magazine?**

PM—it was an investigative newspaper.

**Ok. I want to look for this and see if anything ever came of that. And the author’s name was Max Lerner?**

Yes.

**Ok. So when you came back and Dickey was here, the campus, as you described it, was a collection or broad range of different types of students?**

Oh yes.

**... the seasoned war veterans who had seen combat, and the traditional right out of high school freshman with no military experience at all. That must have been quite a challenge to sort of mainstream this group back into traditional college life when you have such a diverse student body in terms of social activities to offer them—I mean the 17 year olds didn't want to be drinking in the basement of the frat houses with the 26 year old vets I assume.**

Well, there were not that many 26-year-old vets. That kind of social gap didn't exist. After the war I would describe it as one of 'brotherhood'. Everyone was more worthy of respect; it was a different college and people accepted people different than themselves. It was just a different world after the war. The people that returned had the same experiences that I am describing to you and it changed their view of things. Now that didn't mean that everyone who came here who either had never met a Black person or a Jew or Hispanic or Asian or never talked to one didn't come here with the same lack of understanding, but I would say that probably open prejudice and bigotry was not as acceptable. As years went on the fraternities of course were not what they were after the war when they opened up to everyone even though the discriminatory clauses were there until 1956.

**Were there disciplinary problems with this mix of students?**

No. I would say to the best of my knowledge that there were no more disciplinary problems because of the mix than there ever were and no more drinking problems than there ever were.

**The drinking age back then was 18?**

Yes.

**I remember President Dickey, who did a 45-hour oral history with us (not with me but previously). He said that Dartmouth opened up a pub in the basement of College Hall for the older students. It was meant to offer an alternative social venue for the older students as opposed to hanging out with the younger students.**

**Now, when you got back they had restored all of the college events like the Winter Carnival and Homecoming, so that the campus was really coming back to—**

Green Key, Winter Carnival, the bonfires, the Indian symbol, Dartmouth's Indians, the senior canes, which were fantastic.

**And yet the student body was a different student body in some ways. Did you get to have a traditional commencement exercise when you graduated then?**

Yes, I did.

**Was that the first one after the war?**

Well, let's see, '47. Sure. Yes. 1947.

**You must have had students from other classes in that graduation ceremony. For instance, someone in the class of '45 was finally finishing up after the war. Did they come and join in your commencement exercises?**

I am not sure. They must have. Yes.

**Because they had halted all that for a number of years until after the war was over.**

Yes. They definitely had to return to college to get sufficient credits so they had to be graduating in '47 whether they were the class of '47 or not. I would be curious about that. But we had a traditional graduation. In those days the class would be sitting together and the parents and everyone else would be in front of them and it was customary for the class president to make the class day address, which I did. Then afterwards, we would all follow each other and the dean up to the Old Pine stump at the Bema and break our clay pipes. And so all of those traditions returned.

**I think in looking through your 25<sup>th</sup> book there was a picture of you—was it actually at the Bema?**

You know, I'm not sure. Maybe it was at the Bema.

**Let me look. Here you are. There's Neidlinger and you are . . . Let's see, here you are—the second from the end. You all still have your pipes in your mouths.**

So we hadn't broken the pipes there yet. That is the Bema where I am standing. Yes, it is.

**And then you went up to the old stump, which was right up there, too?**

Yes.

**So you smashed the pipes?**

Yes, that was the tradition.

**When did you smoke it?**

I never smoked it.

**You never smoked it?**

No.

**Oh. I thought you used to puff on them or something.**

No.

**This was in keeping with the Native American theme back then I understand?**

The tradition lives on. My son, Jim, was class of '75 and his daughter, Lizzie, graduated this year from Dartmouth.

My son, Rob, and his family are Yalies and he tells me that at graduation they have clay pipes too that they all break, which surprised me.

**Still to this day? So it wasn't just Dartmouth?**

No.

**You had to march to meals too, didn't you?**

Yes. And meals were in Freshman Commons I guess the first year.

**Did you eat separate from the rest of the students or all together?**

My recollection is that there had to be civilians there but I am really not sure. One of my classmates Burt Zuckernik was waiting on tables—you know, for financial aid, and in the archives I found the bill he received for breaking three jugs. The bill was for \$3.79.

**During 1943 to 1946 one of the courses required was a course about health and hygiene.**

Yes, Doc Pollard's smut course. What was then called health and hygiene is today called sex education. The world has changed.

That reminds me. I met my wife when she was 15. A classmate of ours and I were invited by another Dartmouth fellow to the Jersey shore for a day at the beach. My folks had a home in Sea Bright, which was nearby, and Bob Kirsch, who I told you about, came down to stay at my home and the next day we went to the beach. Our friend Ben says, "Get in your bathing suits, there's a great volleyball game going on. So we got in suits and came out and I look across the deck and there is Joanie Lebson, 15 years old, in a two-piece bathing suit and I turned to Bob and said, "Bob, there's the girl I am going to marry." My folks and I gave her a 16<sup>th</sup> birthday party. I had to wait for her to graduate the Dwight School in Englewood to get married. And we did. Joan didn't come to my graduation in 1947. She came to my graduation from the Tuck School.

The reason I am telling you the story is that I invited Joan up for a sports weekend. Joan asked, "What games are we going to?" I said, "We're not going to any games," and she said, "Then why did you say it was a sports weekend?" I said, "I knew if you didn't tell your mother there was some event going on here, she wouldn't let you go."

**[Laughs]**

So, one of my Casque & Gauntlet fellow members was Mort Thalhimer from Richmond, Virginia. Mort brings up Jeannie Bailey who had never even seen snow. Mort, Jean, Joanie and I are at the Casque & Gauntlet house on the second floor, a roaring fire. It is zero degrees outside. Suddenly we hear a voice downstairs, “It’s midnight.” Even the Casque & Gauntlet had some rules about when the house had to close down. We hear a voice downstairs—Nelson Wormwood, the campus cop. He calls out, “Anybody up there?”

“Yes,” we say, “who is there?” “Nelson Wormwood.” “Oh, Nelson, would you like a beer?” We open up the windows and both Jeanie and Joan go out on the fire escape. It’s zero. Well, Nelson sits down with us and drinks his beer. We are really nervous.

**Those poor girls were outside freezing.**

Finally, Nelson says, “Thanks a lot boys. I’ll be leaving now. And you know you shouldn’t be here at this time. You should be in bed.”

“We’ll go right to it, Nelson.”

He leaves and we quickly open the window and Jeanie Bailey says, “Mort, you’re taking me to the railroad station at White River Junction. I am going home on the first train and I never want to see you or Dartmouth again.”

**[Laughter] Oh dear. It wasn’t a successful weekend for Mort.**

No, it wasn’t. John Dodge, class of 1956, in the development business, developed Harbor Ridge in Stuart, Florida. There must be 75 Dartmouth couples there. They have a Dartmouth jamboree every year. Mort Thalhimer is there and we still talk from time to time.

**So you met Joanie when you were already back from the war?**

Yes. But Joan had never seen me play basketball or soccer.

**She never saw all your athletic prowess?**

No. But one of the things that happened is that when Doggie Julian became the coach to replace Cowles (this would have been in 1947), he wanted to play his freshmen because he wanted to build a new team, so those of us who were seniors were going to wind up sitting on the bench. So there were three of us—Reggie Pierce, myself and one other player who were hired by Fletcher who ran a little store down in a basement (he was the largest seller of condoms and cigarettes in the U.S.). Fletcher was into everything. When he learned that we had left the varsity team, he asked us if we wanted to play semi-pro ball for the Windsor American Legion and we did, for \$25.00 per game. We became professional.

**Windsor, Vermont?**

Yes.

**Amazing.**

And we would travel around to most of the communities. They knew that most of us were Dartmouth students—we would get booed, but we played for Fletcher. [Laughter]

**That is great. So this is when you were back—you were a senior?**

Yes.

**Here is a question for you: What was your feeling about your class unity?**

There is no question that because so many V-12s were here but had not matriculated originally, that the mix was such that the opportunity for class unity never really existed to any extent. That was true of the classes of '45, '46, '47 and '48 to a great extent, and probably a little of '49 too. We never had the participation in the Alumni Fund. Within the class, there was great unity by those who were originally '47s or V-12s or both, but the unity you asked about was what you would expect following World War II.

**This carried through over the years based on how the class originated then? Did people distinguish between the V-12 and V-5 folks or the regular civilians?**

No, not at all.

**So you were just a member of the class?**

Yes.

**Everyone got melded together even though their timing was different?**

Yes.

**Do you think the college was right to allow students to change their identity—to become a '47 instead of a '48?**

Oh yes. From the college's standpoint they wanted to do something that would reinforce the Dartmouth bond, so if someone had friends in the class of '47 and wanted to affiliate with that, the college didn't discourage it.

**You must have had two graduations then—a Dartmouth graduation and a Tuck School graduation.**

Yes.

**Do you feel more an affinity to your Tuck Class? Did you make a new set of friends once you were in Tuck?**

Many of the friends that I had in the Tuck School were the same friends I had in my undergraduate years at Dartmouth.

**When did you know you wanted to go to Tuck?**

I'll tell you the story about how I finally wound up back at Dartmouth. I had fallen in love with Dartmouth College (I'm getting tears again).

**No surprise.**

I very much wanted to return to Dartmouth.

**Did you have an understanding with Dartmouth when you joined the V-12 and they sent you off to sea?**

Not at all. When you were commissioned or had resigned from the V-12 program or transferred out, you were finished with Dartmouth. You had no commitment from Dartmouth. Dartmouth had to keep open the places for students that they had accepted and had gone elsewhere. So when I knew I wanted to come back to Dartmouth, I met with the dean and he said, "I'm sorry. We don't have room for you." So I posted my \$300 bond at Harvard, not Yale, because I had been admitted there and I had sufficient credits from Dartmouth to do that. I wanted to go to Harvard because I knew I wanted an MBA. In those days you were more likely to get into the business school at Harvard if you were an undergraduate. It is not true today but it was true then. So I posted my bond. Then two close friends of mine from Summit High School and I decide to travel to Montreal. On the way up I said, "Look, it's a little out of the way but we have to stop at Hanover. I want to show you how beautiful the campus is." While we're there, I said, "I'm going to find out if I can see Dean Neidlinger today." The dean's secretary said he would see me. I explained to him that I was hoping there might have been a change and that I could return to Dartmouth. There were others like myself who were sent by the Navy, Army or Marine Corps to other colleges and universities where they fell in love as I did at Dartmouth and that's why there was room for me that day. So I learned from the dean that I was admitted to Dartmouth College and to the Tuck School. That was incredible.

**Amazing. It was so easy. Just stopping in there and then it happened.**

Yes. If I hadn't done that I would have been in Cambridge. That's how it happened.

**So at that point when you were admitted, you knew that you had to do one more undergraduate year and then a year at Tuck?**

That's when I made my decision. I did two years and so I didn't need any of the requirements that otherwise would have been necessary so I could enter Tuck School in what would be the third year and then take my fourth year with my graduate year.

**I see. And the rest is history as they say. Terrific. So you got two graduations out of Dartmouth.**

Yes.

**Well, I think we have pretty well covered this chapter. Don't you?**

Yes, I do.

**Now, did we talk about your fraternity life, Pi Lambda Pi?**

Yes. We did.

**Ok, but you never lived there?**

No. I lived in the Casque & Gauntlet house for two years because of my graduate work in the Tuck School. Ordinarily, people would be living there only in their senior year. But I was able to live there two years—they were wonderful years. I don't know what Casque & Gauntlet is today but Casque & Gauntlet had the campus leadership—we had athletes, scholars, poets, writers—it was an incredible group of people.

**How did people get selected back then?**

It was a bidding process. In those days there were only three—Dragon, Sphinx and Casque & Gauntlet. Each of them would identify who on campus they wanted to join their chapter and then they would meet with each of those people. I was given an opportunity to join any of the three but it was Casque & Gauntlet I wanted to join.

**Did each of them have different personalities?**

Yes, they did. Sphinx and Dragon both tended to have the jocks on campus.

**But you *were* a jock?**

Yes, I was. [Laughter]

**But you wanted more than jocks.**

Yes, right. I also had good friends who were bid to Casque & Gauntlet—Dan Carroll, who I was very close to.

**It must have been a feather in their cap to get the class president as part of their membership. So you were in big demand—athlete and class president. Was it still the same building as it is today, right on the corner there?**

Yes. If you go in you will see our class picture on the wall. You know, our son, Jim, wanted to join Casque & Gauntlet. He wanted to be a legacy. But so much of Casque & Gauntlet, even in those days, had to do with personal relationships as well as being identified by... Jim wasn't bid and he didn't want either Dragon or Sphinx, so he organized the first co-ed Senior Society on campus. Jim is the founder of Fire & Skoal.

**Oh, isn't that great?**

And he is revered. Today it is one of the Senior Societies. He was disappointed that his daughter didn't join Fire & Skoal.

**So he was in the first co-ed class? How did he deal with that?**

Very well. He was jock chairman for Hitchcock.

**What does that mean?**

He was the chairman of athletics. His responsibility was to make sure that all athletic competition was represented by Hitchcock. I remember when we came up here the first time to visit Jim on campus that there was a softball game going on--Hitchcock against some other team. There were many women on Jim's team and these were the days when the young women were not wearing bras (there was a time when they didn't—remember that?). The women were all adorable but most of them were not really good baseball players. After the game I said, "Jim, couldn't you have selected better players?" He said, "Dad, are you like some of the other sexist alumni out there? Don't you realize we are a co-ed institution? Don't you want the co-eds to have their chance?" I said, "Jim, I apologize."

**[Laughs.]**

**Boy, they needed more Jims around in those days. He was probably a leader of the good guys.**

He had a classmate, Blake Winchell, who he's still very close to and on father-student weekend, Blake's dad and I visit them at Dartmouth. When I get ready to leave, Joan says to me, "Take a towel with you." I said, "Joan, they have towels at Dartmouth." Joan says, "Allen, take a towel with you." I took a towel with me. The two guys had a room for two people—one upper and one lower bed. We only had a tiny club bag and we couldn't find a place in the room to even put it down. The next morning I go into the bathroom and I am shaving in my briefs. The toilet flushes and out comes a young woman wearing a bra and panties. She said, "Oh, good morning. How are you?" Different world. And when people found out that I had a clean towel, they wanted to borrow it.

**Your wife is very smart. That's great.**

I'll share another story with you. Campion and the Dartmouth Coop had a monopoly on the sale of green Dartmouth blazers. So one day I get a call as president of the senior class by a firm asking if we would be interested in selling their blazers at the Dartmouth campus. I took it up with some of the classmates and they had no interest in it. Then I made certain that there was no conflict of interest and Bob Kirsch and I decided that we would try it. I set up pipe racks and we took orders for blazers and competed with Campion and the Coop. We probably sold maybe 150 blazers. Then we went on the road in the summer of '47 selling blazers to schools and colleges. We had never done any direct selling before so we sat down and devised who introduces it, what do I say, what does he say, when do I come in? Our first visit was to High Mowing Prep School. The headmistress, after our introductions said, "Boys, it's such a beautiful day today, why don't we put a blanket down on the grass and then we can talk." So we sit down and she says, "Here we are boys, what's on your mind?" And we start our routine. After about 40 minutes she says, "Boys, are you trying to sell me something?"

**[Laughs.]**

So we went back to the drawing boards. We decided we needed to change our routine. It was customary on our part to wear a different color blazer whenever we were talking. It was my turn to wear a Cornell blazer—white with red piping. We were always there at an assembly or convocation where someone would get up and announce the Blazer Guild is here to have you consider buying a fraternity or college blazer and one of us would get up and talk. So there we are in the audience at Keene State Teachers College and out comes the president in a black robe who starts off by saying, “Today, in addition to welcoming you to this year, we are going to deal with the evils of commercialism,” and out walks every minister, every reverend, every priest in town in their black robes. After he made his remarks, he said, “I want now to call on the Blazer Guild.” I said, “I’m not going up.” Bob says to me, “You *are* going.” I said, “I’m not.” Bob pushes me out. “You *are*.” By the time I got on stage I was as red as could be.

We had so much fun and of course we learned a lot about personal selling.

Now Joanie, who was at the Dwight School, she was our agent there at her school and we of course paid her as one of our agents.

### **How long did you keep this up?**

Just for the summer. The interesting thing is that Bob, using the GI bill, borrowed \$5,000. He did his thesis at the Tuck School on selling blazers to schools and colleges as a business and he opened up Robert Rowland’s Blazers for schools and colleges and he did that for five years and built a very, very successful business. When kids stopped wearing jackets and ties and such, his business really suffered. He was able to sell successfully however to a conglomerate in the uniform business and today Bob has joined his wife who was a graduate of Cornell. She was teaching in her home and then opened up a shop. Today, along with her husband Bob, they are leading upscale caterers in the New York area called Abigail Kirsch Culinary Productions. Abby is one of the most revered people in the culinary arts with cookbooks out, etc. So Bob wound up going into his wife’s business and Abby will tell you, “Before Bob came in it was fun. After Bob came in, it became a business.”

**[Laughs.]**

**So you both ended up in careers of retailing of sorts.**

Yes.

**That's great.**

Yes. You know, my Dad graduated high school but he didn't go to college. He was a very well read person and I admired him for his knowledge and commitment to learning by reading. He thought that when I came into the business with all of the education that I had and that he didn't, that all of his problems would be over. And I thought that my Dad was a cockeyed genius in merchandising and advertising, and boy, we would make some team. I was in the business no more than a week when we both realized we had big problems. But it all worked out well.

**Did you stay in the business with your father?**

Yes. It was miraculous that we did. Because when I said black, he said white. But in 1956 he had a serious coronary and he came in after he recovered and said, "Son, I know what you want me to be, what the doctor wants me to be, what your mother wants me to be—a coach, a counselor, a chairman—you and I both know that I can't be all those people any more. Whatever I am, I have to run with both my hands so the best thing for me to do is to get out and have you take over. That was 1956. I was very young and of course I thought I was ready a long time ago. But I wasn't. He left and he and my mother still had substantial equity. They were the major stockholders in the business. I felt very guilty, even though I didn't push him out, so I began sending him the operating reports and cash flows. Dad had a heavy crayon writing and he always loved sending articles to people with writing on it and memos so I got back these operating reports from my father a couple of days after receiving the first. "Dear son, this conceals more than it reveals. Don't send me any more." That was the end of that.

**Did your Dad go crazy not having his fingers right in the business?**

No. He didn't. He was a stamp and coin collector and he believed that teaching young people to collect was really great for their education and knowledge. We found out he was teaching collecting in schools to kids and he worked nearly every day at the Veteran's Hospital in East Orange, New Jersey with cardiac patients like himself, and most didn't know what he did. I seldom had seen my father when I

was young because he was a workaholic seven days and seven nights, but what he and I missed he was able to make up with his grandchildren.

**[End of Interview]**