

Dartmouth College Oral History Project
The War Years at Dartmouth
Interview with Harold Frank '46
By Mary Stelle Donin
August 12, 2008

- DONIN: How did you come to have the nickname Red?
- FRANK: I had—obviously you can't tell now—but I had flaming red hair as a youngster.
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- FRANK: And the boys around town decided that they didn't want to call me Harold. So they called me Red.
- DONIN: And it stuck.
- FRANK: And that name stuck with me all the way through to my graduation, through my graduation and into my first year of business when a good friend of mine said, "You can't be in business with the name Red. We'll have to change that name." And then they changed it to Hal. And I've been known as Hal ever since.
- DONIN: Oh, good. Let's back up for a minute now. And find out how it is you ended up coming to Dartmouth back in 1942, I guess.
- FRANK: No, I didn't come in '42 as a high school graduate entering the Dartmouth class of '46. I graduated from high school in '43, took a test for the V-12 program, and was accepted and entered the Navy in July 1st of 1943.
- DONIN: Ah....
- FRANK: And was sent to Williams College for an eight-month or two-semester period which was to prepare us if we passed that initial effort for midshipmen's school and an opportunity to be an ensign in the United States Navy. While there, the Navy offered us an opportunity to take perhaps another track in midshipmen's school for line officer in the Navy. And there was an offer from the Navy to take a test to continue studies for the Supply Corps in the Navy.

DONIN: Oh, yes.

FRANK: Which I decided to do. And I passed all the vetting and was sent with others to Dartmouth, actually the Tuck School, to develop background in business with the future of being an officer in the Naval Supply Corps.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

FRANK: So that's how I got to Dartmouth. Actually got to Dartmouth in February of 1944.

DONIN: 'Forty-four.

FRANK: Yes, 1944.

DONIN: So was the training at Williams like it was at Dartmouth in that it was sort of half military training and half educational classes?

FRANK: I wouldn't say it was half military training. I would say it was educational classes while we learned to be a member of the United States Navy. When I say that, take care of ourselves properly, eat properly, exercise properly. But there was no what you might call naval training. It was all getting ready to become an officer in the Supply Corps. And that was educational training.

DONIN: Right. So by the time you arrived at Dartmouth, what did you envision that your—I mean what was your schedule going to be like? How long did you think you were going to be there?

FRANK: I was going to be at Dartmouth for four semesters or five semesters—I can't recall now—because we went from February all the way straight through to a year from the following June.

DONIN: No breaks at all.

FRANK: No breaks.

DONIN: Wow!

FRANK: At which point that class—there was another class behind us—we were the first class in the Supply Corps training at Dartmouth. There was another class behind us. That class then went on to enter now active naval service at a naval installation that would

further train us in Supply Corps needs. However, there was a, let's say, a graduate course for the Navy for selected people, who they wanted to train more broadly. Of course, they were thinking of their needs for wartime. But they were also thinking of future needs. So there was a selective group chosen at that point for broader educational training was sent to the Harvard Business School. And I was one of those people who was sent to the Harvard Business School. So that's my history in the Navy. That program was cancelled immediately after the Japanese surrender, two or three months later. And we then had military training, naval training, at Harvard for about six weeks. We were then sent to active duty. And my active duty consisted of two months at the naval shipyard in Boston and then a year at sea. But that was all postwar.

So I think I should put all that together by saying I am not one of those fellows who graduated from high school, came in on the class of '42, had a year, matriculated, chose to go to Dartmouth. I was fortunate enough to be sent to Dartmouth.

DONIN: You were sort of assigned to go there.

FRANK: Correct. With many others. The population of Dartmouth and many schools through the country was young men in service and I don't know how many Dartmouth students were civilians but I don't think there were more than 200.

DONIN: Right. I was going to say probably about 200.

FRANK: And the rest of the 2500 were in naval programs, as I've explained plus Air Force plus Marines.

DONIN: So, you finished your naval duty. How did you end up deciding to go back to Dartmouth?

FRANK: After I was discharged from the Navy, I decided that I wanted an MBA before I pursued a business career. And I really enjoyed my time at Dartmouth a great deal. And I applied to schools. I was fortunately selected for the class of '48 at Tuck School. And I went back to Dartmouth in the fall of '47 and graduated from Tuck School in the summer of '48.

DONIN: So essentially, though.... So you had earned enough undergraduate credits for them to take those credits plus your year at Tuck School to make it—put it in a big pot and stir it and give

you.... So you ended up with both the undergraduate degree as well as the MBA.

FRANK: My memory... The Tuck School had nothing to do with it because I have an MBA from Tuck. They said that my educational credits from Williams added to the educational credits that I had from Dartmouth and my immediate business experience or naval experience or whatever, entitled me to a degree, and they were happy to offer me a degree in the class of '46.

DONIN: Some people have said they earned points of some sort; that your military service earned you points towards your degree.

FRANK: I don't remember that at all. I remember a letter, and I don't have a copy of that letter, saying Dartmouth is happy to tell you that your time at Dartmouth plus all of your other activities during the national emergency, earned you a degree at Dartmouth. I don't have the letter but I have the degree. [Laughter]

DONIN: Right. So did you feel any connection to the class of '46?

FRANK: No, none.

DONIN: That was just a number.

FRANK: I felt no connection to the class of '46 during the time that I was at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Right.

FRANK: You asked me that question. I didn't know any of the young men who were civilians there.

DONIN: Right, right.

FRANK: No connection.

DONIN: And of course there was no graduation ceremony that you were at because you were at sea at that point.

FRANK: That's correct.

DONIN: Did the class connection grow over the years through reunions and that sort of thing?

FRANK: Yes. The class connection grew because there were a number of us who returned to Dartmouth. A number of my comrades, if that's the word, at Dartmouth who returned to Dartmouth, and were in the Tuck School class of '48.

DONIN: I see. Right.

FRANK: A large number of them, as a matter of fact. And the class of '46 invited us to join them, and they were very happy to have us join them. So over the years we returned for reunions and that sort of thing. I became embedded. I was embedded in Dartmouth from the time I left Dartmouth to go to Harvard, as I explained. I really did enjoy that 16 months. I enjoyed the college. I enjoyed the professors I met. I enjoyed the atmosphere. I wanted to go back there.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

FRANK: So I made myself part of the graduating class of 1946.

DONIN: Right. And as you said, there were plenty of others like you.

FRANK: That's correct.

DONIN: Who really were just randomly assigned to that class who were out doing their military service, who didn't matriculate in the traditional sense.

FRANK: Oh, many.

DONIN: Right, right.

FRANK: Yes.

DONIN: So you were there during both Ernest Martin Hopkin's presidency as well as John Sloan Dickey's presidency.

FRANK: Correct.

DONIN: Any impressions about either of them? Did you ever actually meet either of them? I have no impression today of President Hopkins other than what I've read of him. But John Dickey's presidency I know a great deal of but I don't know whether I know it because I

felt there, because I don't think, or whether I have felt it over the years of reading materials after I had graduated from Tuck. So I don't think I know his presidency any more than I know the following presidents. They offer me historical rather than evolved.

- DONIN: So let's talk about your sort of day-to-day experience there if you can recall. The military, the units, were housed all together in dorms, sort of segregated from the civilian population.
- FRANK: Segregated from the civilian population who had their own dorms. And we were in our dorms.
- DONIN: So you guys were in Topliff and New Hampshire, weren't you, most of the V-12?
- FRANK: I was in Streeter, as a matter of fact.
- DONIN: Oh, you were in Streeter?
- FRANK: Streeter and Gile and Lord, which is a unit.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
- FRANK: They were all sailors. In fact I think all the dorms, the Massachusetts dorms, they were all sailors. All the dorms were—
- DONIN: Most of them.
- FRANK: All the dorms that existed at that time—
- DONIN: Uh-huh.
- FRANK: —were sailors or marines. I think the civilians population were sequestered perhaps in Fayerweather or whatever. But they were sequestered. We dominated the school, the town, all of that.
- DONIN: But the classes were a mixture. I mean the civilians mixed in with you—some of the classes.
- FRANK: Not mine.
- DONIN: Really?

- FRANK: Not mine. Not my classes at Tuck School. I can't remember anybody in anything but a navy outfit in my classes.
- DONIN: Oh.
- FRANK: Perhaps there was but I can't remember that at all.
- DONIN: Right. And in terms of whatever free time you had, which probably wasn't much, you probably sort of stuck together with your military group.
- FRANK: No question about it.
- DONIN: Yes, yes. And was there free time? I mean did you go to the football games?
- FRANK: We went to the football games. We felt part of the school because it was an educational experience. Now, with that, that was our duty. That was what the Navy required of us to do: go to school.
- DONIN: Yes.
- FRANK: But with that came naval oversight. So reveille was blown at six o'clock in the morning. We fell out into the cold in front of the dorm and did exercises.
- DONIN: Calisthenics.
- FRANK: Right. We did all that. Then we got dressed and we marched to breakfast. And then we broke for school, had classes, whatever. We broke classes and came together and marched for chow, as they say, chow-down.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- FRANK: Physical education was a required subject. It was run by the ship's company, they're called, the group of men who were stationed at Dartmouth to run these programs physically, not educationally. So the ship's company mans the physical education programs. But we had study time, and we had to be back at our dorms at ten-thirty for bed check. From that point of view, it was a military operation.
- DONIN: Right. And did you have free time on the weekends?

- FRANK: Sure. We had, let's see... We had weekend passes. They were taken away if the petty officers in charge didn't like the way our rooms were maintained or our beds were made and all that.
- DONIN: Oh, yes.
- FRANK: We were restricted for other bad things that we did. But we had weekends. I did a lot of hitchhiking through New Hampshire and Vermont at that time.
- DONIN: I gather it was easier in those days when you had a uniform on to get picked up.
- FRANK: Oh, it was easy.
- DONIN: Yes. Hard to get around otherwise.
- FRANK: It was hard to get around, but not hard at all to hitchhike.
- DONIN: To hitchhike. Right. So were there road trips then to the women's schools that were nearby and that sort of thing?
- FRANK: Yes. We went to Colby, we went to Smith, we went to Skidmore. I didn't go to Boston particularly. But we did.
- DONIN: And the fraternities at this point were not active, were they?
- FRANK: My memory, they were shut down.
- DONIN: Yes, I think that's right. And yet you still had time to write for *The D*.
- FRANK: Yes. You were going to college. You were not... You were wearing a uniform, but you were going to college. And you felt you were at college. And there were classes. There was preparation for classes. The naval students were on the football team, were on the baseball team. I surely was on the baseball team. And I had time to write, didn't take much time. We had free time. You didn't feel you were in the service. You felt you were at school.
- DONIN: Right. But a lot of people were very focused on wanting to finish their training and get out there and serve their country.
- FRANK: Well, let's go back on that and let's see what happened. It's June of '43 and there's two million kids graduating from high school around

the country. I don't know how many. They're all going to be drafted. All of them. I'm sure... All of them are going to serve. I don't know what portion of them said, "I've got to get out and serve my country." Or what proportion of them said, "The country says I have to go, so I will go." Or what proportion of them said, "How can I get out of active duty and go into some kind of program that doesn't send me into war zones?" But I'm sure that this whole group is split up into many pieces.

My issue was, V-12 was an opportunity to go to college. And if the country said, that is what we want you to do, that was a favorable thing for me. And I wanted to do that because the country said we want you to do it. And I was very happy to go to college because I don't think I would have been to college if I didn't.

DONIN: Well there were a lot of people like that at that time.

FRANK: Well, if you read some of the books that have been written about the happenings for the people of that generation, including the GI Bill of Rights behind this whole thing, there were millions of young men who had an opportunity that might not have been open to them. And I was one of them.

DONIN: Do you feel more attachment to Tuck than you do to Dartmouth, you know, undergrad?

FRANK: No, no. I feel attachment to Dartmouth.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

FRANK: But I think that's because Tuck for me is just a part of Dartmouth. But I think that's because I found my way to stay with the school through the class of '46 at Dartmouth, as did many of my friends who graduated from Tuck.

DONIN: Right.

FRANK: And then as time went by, two of my sons went to Dartmouth, and now two of my grandchildren went to Dartmouth. So my tie is to my class affiliation and to Dartmouth which made a hit with this young impressionable young boy while he was there.

DONIN: Were you a different kind of student when you came back after the war was over, after you'd finished your service? Were you more motivated or more focused or the same?

FRANK: First of all, I was a good student. I went to Public Latin School here in Boston. And you have to be a good student to go to Public Latin. And I was motivated because I wanted the opportunity to broaden my life through college. So I did very well at Williams, Dartmouth, Tuck, Harvard, Tuck. I did very well. So I was motivated all the way along. It was my ticket to my life.

DONIN: Right. And when you graduated from high school, had you already sort of looked ahead and said business is where I want to end up being?

FRANK: Yes, that's true. As a result of my childhood, family relationships, I wanted to be a retailer and knew that that's the career I wanted to cut out for myself. That's one reason I went into the Supply Corps and took advantage of that opportunity when it came about at Williams. I knew that and I made every effort to make my way into that business and I spent my life in the retail business.

DONIN: So it all started at Williams, really.

FRANK: Yes, it did.

DONIN: Now, maybe I'm guessing here, and if I'm wrong you can correct me, but one topic I like to bring up with people who are Jewish is, if that had any impact on your relationships when you were either at Williams or at Dartmouth. I'm assuming you're Jewish.

FRANK: I am.

DONIN: And I wonder if you did have any experiences that sort of set you aside, that made you feel set aside because you were Jewish. Either on the social level or in any other way during your college experience.

FRANK: I never had any experience that made me feel outside of any group. So my answer to that is I was a young man playing by the rules and had a very comfortable path through various places I've told you about, including a year on a destroyer after I left Harvard, so there was never any feeling on my part of self-consciousness or anti-Semitism or not being wanted. It's always been comfortable for me.

DONIN: That's good to hear. It wasn't true of some of your classmates I gather, but...

FRANK: Classmates?

DONIN: Not classmates, other Dartmouth alums from the '40s, let's put it that way.

FRANK: Other alumni who matriculated at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Yes. Exactly.

FRANK: I can't answer for that. I was in the Navy; every one of us wore the same clothes. Every one of us had a shadow of, they might not come home. So I think when everybody puts on the same and does the same thing and goes to the same school, people tend to realize that everybody's the same.

DONIN: Oh huh. Good. Were there any—Do you have memories of any professors that made a particular impression on you?

FRANK: Yes. The retailing professor at Tuck School—his name was Harry Wellman—he guided me by telling me not to change my course. If I had planned to look to retailing as my profession, let's say, to stay with it. And he helped me identify the organization that he said would be the best organization at the time to join. And I followed his advice. And he turned out to be— That advice turned out to be very instrumental in the way my young life played out. And I value him in my life. And that was— He was the one specific that I can say made an impression on me and my future.

DONIN: Did you stay in touch with him as your career advanced?

FRANK: I stayed in touch with him and another professor there in the early years of my career. Just updating them on where I was and where I was going. I interviewed for my company at Dartmouth.

DONIN: [Laughs] Great.

FRANK: In the early years after I graduated and visited with them.

DONIN: Oh, how nice.

FRANK: He and the advertising professor, whose name was Frey. But they were aging.

DONIN: Yes.

FRANK: And shortly thereafter they retired. We lost contact.

DONIN: Have you done any reunions with the V-12 group rather than with the '46 group?

FRANK: No. Not my class. Dartmouth never attempted to follow the V-12, I say this to make a point. Dartmouth never attempted to say, oh, there is a subset here. There is a subset of people who went to Dartmouth in the V-12 and may have gone off to another college for a degree—or may not have, or may have. So why don't we do a V-12 reunion? Well, Harvard did that.

DONIN: Ah-ha.

FRANK: Harvard did do that. And I have been on the Harvard list for the reunions all these 60 years. But Dartmouth didn't do that. I think Harvard did it honestly totally selfishly; they were hoping that there was a V-12... They had a lot of students there. There was a V-12 group who had a relationship who may not have gone back to Harvard but still had a relationship and they did it selfishly; the development office did it and this continued it all these years. Dartmouth didn't do that. So '47 must have done it on their own.

DONIN: Yes. Well, it is an opportunity that they've lost.

FRANK: They lost that long ago. If it was an opportunity. Who knows how many V-12 students at Harvard... I do know they reunion, but I rather think most of them are also Harvard graduates.

DONIN: Right. Which is what the class of '47 did. Although interestingly, when I was looking at the reunion list for that V-12 50th, and there were members from many different classes.

FRANK: Many different classes?

DONIN: Classes.

FRANK: Yes, but they were Dartmouth classes.

DONIN: Right, they were matriculated students.

FRANK: Different years.

DONIN: Exactly.

FRANK: They were Dartmouth classes. Well, that would have been a nice thing to do because... But my class of Supply Corps students came back to Dartmouth or applied and were accepted to Dartmouth in a quite large number. And in our reunions today, which now are small in number you know, although we are considered to have a very strong class, many of them are Supply Corps students who came back and matriculated at Tuck School.

DONIN: And they all ended up in '46.

FRANK: And they all ended up in '46. No, not all of them. Some of them ended up in '47.

DONIN: Right.

FRANK: My roommate ended up in '47. A couple of other fellows I know ended up in '47. No, they ended up in Tuck '47. They were class of '46 but they ended up in Tuck '47.

DONIN: Now, are you Tuck '47? No, you're Tuck '48.

FRANK: I'm Tuck '48 but some went back a year earlier. And then there were people who were in the class behind me. Remember I mentioned there was a class behind me? They ended up in Dartmouth '47. We ended up in Dartmouth '46 and they ended up in Dartmouth '47.

DONIN: Right.

FRANK: So I know some of those fellows too.

DONIN: It seems that during those years there's a lot of bleeding between classes in terms of friendships because some of these assignments were sort of random, whether you ended up in '46 or '47. So that, like you, you have friends in '46 and '47.

FRANK: I don't know. I'm getting mixed up. There are a number of people in my class of '46 who... I'm mixed up between Tuck School and

Dartmouth. So... I think those of us who have Dartmouth '46 degrees were awarded them just the way I explained to you. The college awarded us those degrees.

[pause; phone ringing]

[End of Interview]