

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
REINHOLD BEUER-TAJOVSKY
Army, Cold War
2014

OH
1917

OH
1917

Beuer-Tajovsky, Reinhold. (b. 1928). Oral History Interview, 2014.
Approximate length: 1 hour 40 minutes
Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

This oral history interview with Austrian native Reinhold Beuer-Tajovsky outlines his childhood and escape from Nazi-occupied Europe, dealing with anti-Semitism in Europe and the United States, his personal connection to the Holocaust, and the various positions he held in the United States Army from 1947 to 1980. Beuer-Tajovsky describes his experience as a ten year old abandoned child in 1938, who was put into a Nazi home for incorrigible children where he was considered a Jew by association. In November of 1938, he was forced to watch the Kristallnacht pogrom. Beuer-Tajovsky further outlines his escape from Nazi-occupied Europe via a Jewish welfare organization called OSE (Oeuvre des Enfants aux Secours) and his entry into the United States. He describes facing discrimination in the United States both as a result of his Jewish-sounding name and his place of birth. Beuer-Tajovsky signed up for the Army in 1947 and worked as a medic in Hawaii on task force seven for underground atomic testing. He explains his six year process of obtaining United States citizenship and his position as an editor for the Army's first logistics magazine. Beuer-Tajovsky later mentions his work in the Public Affairs offices where he wrote speeches for a new one start brigadier general. Beuer-Tajovsky transitioned into the Corps of Engineers in Albuquerque until his retirement in 1980. Other topics of note in the interview include: reflections on anti-Semitism in the U.S., the misuse of the word Holocaust, and experience of being a foreigner in the U.S. military.

Biographical Sketch:

Beuer-Tajovsky (b. 1928) served in the U.S. Army from 1947-1980 holding positions on task force seven in the South Pacific conducting underground atomic testing, editor for the Army's first logistics magazine, and the Public Affairs office.

Archivist's Note:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2014.
Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, 2016.
Reviewed by Matthew Scharpf, 2017.
Abstract written by Matthew Scharpf, 2017.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of Beuer-Tajovsky.OH1917]

Brooks: Today is May 30, 2013. This is an interview with Reinhold—can you pronounce your last names for me?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Two thousand fourteen.

Brooks: Oh you're right. It is, isn't it? I wrote that down this morning too, 2014. So this is an interview with Reinhold—

Beuer-Tajovsky: Beuer-Tajovsky.

Brooks: The interview is being conducted at King's Veteran Home in Wisconsin and the interviewer is Ellen Brooks. So if we can just start with you telling me when and where you were born.

Beuer-Tajovsky: I was born in Vienna, Austria.

Brooks: And when?

Beuer-Tajovsky: March 9, 1928.

Brooks: Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood?

Beuer-Tajovsky: I was brought up in, around, near foster homes. My mother was a single—she had divorced my father early age—service. She was single, and in those days it was difficult for women to get jobs, so she had to travel all over Europe for work. So to do something, she had to foster me out.

Brooks: What kind of child were you?

Beuer-Tajovsky: What kind of child was I? Normal child—pretty active. Happy, I guess.

Brooks: So tell me a little bit about what happened when things in Europe started to get a little controversial.

Beuer-Tajovsky: In 1938, March 9, 1938, my mother, who was engaged to a Jewish man, had to flee Austria—had to flee Vienna. Couldn't take me along because I didn't have the exit papers, so she put me into a Protestant orphanage for safekeeping. They escaped to Paris, and shortly after they got there, the man died of lung disease, so it left her destitute, she could no longer afford to pay my upkeep. When that happened, the orphanage turned me over to the Nazi regime as an abandoned child. Now, the Germans took over occupied Austria. They didn't occupy it, they absorbed it on the 11 of March, 1938. So anyway, after I was turned over as an abandoned child, I was

put into—at that time, the administration hadn't set up camps for children, experimentation camps and so forth, which was fortunate for me. I was put into a home for incorrigible children, and there I was considered a Jew—a Jew by association. The reason for that was under the 1935 blood purity laws of the Nazis, women who associated with Jews were considered infected with his Jewishness. It's incredible to believe such a thing but they did. So we became Jews by association and we got treated just like that. So I was under the hands of this home of incorrigible children where the younger boys were being trained to be Hitler Youth and I was one of the toys, I guess you'd call it. I was beaten. I was kicked.

[00:05:06]

It was not a very pleasant experience already. And then in November of 1938, there was a first pogrom, a big pogrom that was called Kristallnacht. That's the night of the broken glass. That's when all hell broke loose. The Hitler Youth—boys, these little hoodlums—they were sent out to ransack the homes of the Jews, to kick the people out and so forth. And I had to go with them because they say, You have to watch what we're doing. So we'll do that to you. That was my real initiation into it. Ah, at any rate, I've had a pretty tough life.

But in the meantime, my mother tried to get me out of Austria, so she had to develop a 48-page genealogy booklet and that was difficult for her to do because not only was she not in Germany, Europe—Austria, but all our family came from different parts, from Arabia, from Hungary, from Bohemia. So each one of those sources had to be contacted and very specific parentage, date of birth, et cetera, and all of it had to be stamped with a Nazi stamp. So after she was able to get that, to prove that I wasn't Jewish—that was the whole purpose of it—she was able to get me out. One day, they just put me on a train and off to Paris. Shortly after I got to Paris, I was totally emaciated. I'll show you something.

Brooks: Do you want me to pause this?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, shut it off.

[Break in Recording]

Brooks: So you were saying you were very, very thin when you got to Paris.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, I was totally emaciated. So, my mother was able to send me to a foster family in Switzerland, my "Swiss Family Robinson." I was there six months.

Brooks: Go ahead. I'm just adjusting the volume.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Until the Swiss mobilized when World War II began in Europe, which was September of 1940. The Swiss required all foreigners to go back where they came from, to leave. They kicked us out, so I went back to Paris. Well, ah, stayed in Paris until—until the German occupation of France. Again, my mother with some foresight—I don't know how—but she was able to find and put me into the hands of

a Jewish welfare organization called OSE, O-S-E. Oeuvre des Enfants aux Secours. They corralled us children, all that they could find, and sent us to central France for safety, for hiding.

[00:10:00]

Then the first thing that happened was at the train station. I made friends with one of the boys and when we got into the railway compartment, the first thing we had was a fight over who was going to sit by the window. [laughs]

Brooks: And who won?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Well, we worked it out truthfully so—and we're still friends today.

Brooks: Oh wow, that's great.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, so anyway I mentioned that because I'm going to mention him later on.

Brooks: Okay, what was his name?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Charles Martin Roman. In 1940, 1941, we were separated, Charles and I. We were living in this chateau, a called Chateau Les Chabannes. We were separated. I came to the United States and he was left behind. Well, took a fourteen-day trip. We came here on the affidavits in lieu of passports. I came in under German quota because by the time I was considered German. [laughs] We went by sealed car from Marseille to Lisbon through a Nazi-occupied France and—

Brooks: Spain.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Spain. It was—it was interesting. I was told when the train slowly goes through the town of Toulouse in southern France, very slowly, it wouldn't stop. Said I'm supposed to look out and somewhere in the distance I would see my mother. So I did, but she couldn't wave back otherwise she would've given herself a way or given us away, but that's the last time I saw her until 1950.

Brooks: What was your mother's name?

Beuer-Tajovsky: H.V. Beuer.

Brooks: H.V.

Beuer-Tajovsky: H.V. Hildegard V. Beuer, B-e-u-e-r. And It took her fourteen days to go from Lisbon to New York. When we got into New York, into New York harbor, it was a hot, sunny afternoon in August. This was a Sunday and, of course, we were all driven to embark the next day. Well it came Monday, flags went up. Yellow flag meaning that we were—what do you call it? Quarantine. The whole boatload was huge. We were a convoy of forty-five children. So it was pandemonium. People are ready to jump overboard and so forth and so on. Later on I found out that the reason the adults acted

that way is because the shipload before them was turned back. The United States wouldn't accept them.

Brooks: Do you know why?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, because they're anti-Semitic. It was anti-Semitism. It was rape here in the United States.

Brooks: It wasn't—they didn't—there was no health reason? They just said too many?

[00:15:02]

Beuer-Tajovsky: No, no, no. They just said we were Jews. So anyway came Monday we couldn't disembark. Well, Tuesday they finally let us off and later on it turned out the reasons that we couldn't get off is because it was Labor Day. Monday was Labor Day, and there was nobody working. Stevedores, nobody was working. They couldn't tell us those things. They didn't have walkie-talkies then.

Brooks: You just have to wait.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, I mean anyway. But to get back to this story. One of the unusual things in my case. First of all, I'm not Jewish. I'm Christian. Secondly, there were three organizations involved to move us out of France. There was OSE, the one that was responsible for us, the Quakers, and the other ones that were a go between—between OSE and the Nazis, and of course the organization here in the United States such as sponsored by Mrs. Roosevelt—to receive us. The Quakers, however, required of OSE that they have at least one non-Jew aboard ship so that if they were stopped, they couldn't be accused of being part of something.

Brooks: Interesting.

Beuer-Tajovsky: So I was the token Jew—I was the token non-Jew. On the ship's manifest I'm listed as born in Vienna, Germany with [inaudible] Hebrew.

Brooks: Interesting.

Beuer-Tajovsky: And of course that's just sort of been my bag, so to speak—my cross to carry throughout.

Brooks: So why did your mom end up putting you with that organization if you weren't Jewish? How did you end up with the OSE?

Beuer-Tajovsky: There just weren't any organizations other than this Jewish welfare organization that handled it. When the occupation of Paris came along, everybody was fleeing. She had to flee and, of course, I had to flee too. Everybody got separated and what have you. Besides, OSE was a reputable, old organization. It started out when the Czarist Russia and then when the communists took over, it moved to Berlin. And when the Nazis took over, it moved to Paris and it's still there. They're still active. They're still

doing good work. So once I came to the United States, they discovered I wasn't Jewish. All the Jewish kids, they were farmed out to different homes. Some, some very good ones and some, some not so good. One of the good ones, there's a film that you can find on Netflix now called *The Children of Chabannes*. You might want to look at that sometime. It's kind of a glorified version of our life in Chabannes. But that was written and directed by the daughter of one of the boys that I came over with. He and his brother, they got placed into very good homes, so one was able to go to Yale and the other went to Harvard. There was money there. Many of us just didn't have that opportunity. For me, because they found out I wasn't Jewish, they didn't know what to do with me. So for about a month, a month and a half, I languished in New York until they could find out what to do with me. Well, eventually they sent me to Chicago to an orphanage there and they farmed me out. My first two years in the United States I was in six different foster homes, two different states, and when I was sixteen—oh and two different high schools. When I was sixteen, I had to go to work.

[00:20:18]

Brooks: So when you got here, did you only speak German?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Well, that's interesting too. When I went to France, I only spoke German. When I left France, I had forgotten German and only spoke French. By that time I was known as "Rene" because Reinhold is too Germanic, too borscht. So when I came here, I only spoke French. So good people in Oak Park, they tried to put me in a graduating class—grammar school graduating class.

Brooks: What school?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Hm?

Brooks: What school?

Beuer-Tajovsky: What school? Oak Park Elementary School.

Brooks: Okay, I'm from Forest Park.

Beuer-Tajovsky: From where?

Brooks: I'm from Forest Park.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Are you? Yeah, we're just neighbors. Yeah.

Brooks: Sorry.

Beuer-Tajovsky: And they, of course, they not only misspelled my name and made it B-e-r-g instead of B-u-r-g and that immediately made me a Jew besides being a refugee. They put me in this graduating class because the woman spoke German, knew German. By that time, my German was practically gone and I only spoke French. That was quite a

bad situation. [laughs]

Brooks: That's tricky.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Anyways when I was sixteen, they said, Well you're sixteen, You have to go to work now. That's when my life was a rolling stone since it began. I would try to go to work in the defense factories where there was some money and I would work a couple of weeks. They'd call me in and say, You're fired! Well, why are you fired? Because you're—an enemy alien. "Why am I an enemy alien?" Because your paperwork says you were born in Vienna, Germany, and Germany's the enemy. This is all never mind that—this is the way it's been going on. I traveled from East to West Coast and hitchhiked several times across country trying to land somewhere where I could—so my nineteenth birthday was rolling around and I was to be drafted and I didn't want to be drafted, so I signed up for the Army. That was my—so in the Army I was in and out, in and out several times. When I wasn't in, I was going to university—Columbia University. Here I was, I had no high school education, working at Columbia. [laughs]

Brooks: In New York?

Beuer-Tajovsky: In New York.

Brooks: I went there too.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Did you go to Columbia? When were you there?

Brooks: I just finished actually, last fall.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Did you?

Brooks: In the fall of 2013, I finished my degree.

Beuer-Tajovsky: You were at the women's college then, weren't you?

Brooks: No, it's co-ed now.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Oh is it co-ed now? Wow, not in those days.

Brooks: Yeah, then it was—

Beuer-Tajovsky: In those days they had panty raids. [laughs]

Brooks: Right, we can take that out. Yeah, that was—and Barnard is still a school, but now there's a co-ed. Yeah, sorry.

Beuer-Tajovsky: So what did you graduate in?

Brooks: I actually have my degree in oral history, so this is exactly what I went to school for.

Beuer-Tajovsky: I see.

Brooks: I sit interviewing people and then taking care of the collections. Yeah, so that's what I do at the Veteran's Museum.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Oh very good, and where is that museum?

Brooks: It's in Madison.

Beuer-Tajovsky: In Madison, very good. Well, congratulations!

[00:25:05]

Brooks: Thank you.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Nice to meet—

Brooks: Another alum?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Meet an alum, yeah.

Brooks: What were you studying when you were there?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Social psych and philosophy.

Brooks: Oh that's great.

Beuer-Tajovsky: But anyway I spent ten years in the military—different positions. I was in occupation duty in Germany. We served up P Pack dime.

Brooks: Yeah, what was that like to go back?

Beuer-Tajovsky: It was weird. It was really weird to be the boss over these. That's when I met my mother again. I got leave and go to Paris—and met. At another point I met my father. In 1955, I was stationed in France, then we met in Munich. He came from Vienna. I hadn't seen him since 1936.

Brooks: So he was still in Vienna?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Pardon?

Brooks: He was still in Vienna?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, he was in Vienna, but he too was quite a life. He was in the Austrian Army and put into the German Army. He got involved politically and got interrogated by Gestapo and put in a camp—in a camp where they did experimentation for the Luftwaffe. They did for [inaudible]. Anyway, so we had an interesting reunion there.

Brooks: So you enlisted in 1947?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah.

Brooks: Did you have to go through basic training and all of that?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Oh yes, I went to Fort Dixon and so forth. I enlisted to—I wanted to go to veterinary school. Well, by the time I was processed in, they had discontinued veterinary school.

Brooks: You wanted to go to veterinary school in the army?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah. So instead they sent me to Fort Sam, Houston, Texas to the Army Medical School there and turned me out as a physical technician. After graduating that, I was went to Hawaii to a hospital I worked out. While I was there, there was a group of us medics that became a detachment and put on this super-secret assignment in the South Pacific on task force seven. We were the group that were involved in establishing the area, the atoll, for underground atomic testing. It was interesting.

Brooks: So what did that entail? What were your assignments?

[00:29:41]

Beuer-Tajovsky: I was a medic. We were—well, I was a medic surgical technician able to take care of the people that got sick. We were the—that was interesting. But anyway, I came back. When I was discharged in 1950, I decided I was going to University of Illinois, the one in Champaign, and I got into that and three months later I was recalled to active duty for the Korean War. That's when my European tour started.

Brooks: So at the time that you enlisted, were you an American citizen or no?

Beuer-Tajovsky: No, not by that time. That's another story. First of all, when I was in Hawaii, I got my high school diploma, so GED. At that time you were able to also take a one year college GED for college credit. I took that. So I was thankful for all that, I was able to get into university. When I was in Hawaii I started, worked, to get my paperwork for citizenship. Well, by the time all that got processed, I was back stateside, discharged. So I asked them to send it to Chicago since I was down in Illinois. And by the time it got down to Chicago, I'd been recalled to active duty and sent to Fort Hood, Texas—Second Army Division there. The division was getting ready—total, people and everything—was getting ready to be shipped to Germany. So I was with G2 then and interrogation of prison war team when we got to Germany. Then my task, we were a small group, our task was to find Nazis, groups, and also to interrogate border crossers in the East. But the time the paperwork got through Austin, Texas, I was in Germany. So I'd heard that there was such a thing as a judge [inaudible] writer that could perform naturalizations and I applied for that and they said, You have to get until you get back stateside. So finally I got stateside, I started out and had all that sent to New York and finally I got citizenship. [laughs]

Brooks: And what year was that?

Beuer-Tajovsky: It was in 1953.

Brooks: Okay, so it took a while.

Beuer-Tajovsky: From '47 to '53. It took a long time, but it finally caught up. So my life in the United States has been sort of ruthless, even after I got married, because I was in the Army and being shipped all over the place. My last job was in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Oh, in 1960, [inaudible] just prior to that, I decided I'm not going to go again because Vietnam was just beginning, and at that time I was working as a military man. I was teaching at the [inaudible] school at Fort Bragg. I'm not going to go there. So I got out and I applied for a civil service commission. And I got PS 9 and it took me a year to find a job. Finally, I did. I became editor of a newspaper in Fort Lee, Virginia. Interesting position—didn't know anything about editing. [laughter] That's been my life. I've had all these jobs, never knew what I was doing.

[00:35:06]

One time at one point I had to apply for work at a gas station out in LA and he says, "You know how to drive?" I said, "Sure, I know how to drive," of course by that time I had a real thick brow coming out. He says, "Here's some keys. Go down the block a couple of blocks. Bring back a truck." Well, I'd seen people drive because I'd been in cars, you know? But I didn't know how to drive. I couldn't even find the ignition! [laughs] The old Ford had the buttons, but I finally had the thing cranked up after banging it a couple of times. Are you from LA at all?

Brooks: No, I've never been.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Well, it's completely different now but in those days, Figueroa state was a six-lane, main road for LA. I got stuck in the middle of a road. It was four o'clock in the afternoon. I remember vividly. It was hot and I got stuck in the traffic right in the middle of the road. I forget what you call it. Flooded. Flood the carburetor, so I had no idea what to do. Finally someone stopped and says, "Stop giving it more gas. Let it rest." I was terrified because I didn't have a driver's license, et cetera, and here this guy was expecting his truck. Finally an hour later, I came chugging into the station. He says, "Okay, tomorrow morning come here. People bring their cars here to park them someplace else." Okay, so I had that experience with all of the cars.

Brooks: Yeah, like a valet?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah. [laughs]

Brooks: Yeah. What job was that for?

Beuer-Tajovsky: For a gas station. People come pick their car and I have to take them someplace else to park them. But this is—sorry, to get back to the editor position. I got that and that was an interesting experience. That was seven years and I did quite well actually. I

learned how to become an editor. I learned how to read font upside down and all that stuff.

Brooks: So is that a military position?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, by that time I was a DAC—US 9 DAC. From there, same post. I was able to transfer and get an upgrade to 11 with the United States Army logistics management center because they were in the process of printing—of publishing—the first Army’s logistics magazine—very technical stuff. I was a news editor for that. [laughs]

Brooks: You probably didn’t know much about logistics?

Beuer-Tajovsky: No, I would get people’s papers and so forth. I had to read them. This is papers from people up at the headquarters, you know? They pitch these and I’m supposed to edit their paper, which I did and I did a pretty good job because they were very commendable about it. They thought I did a good job or something with their work. So that was that, and from there a position came open in another DA, Department of the Army agency. By that time, the DA was taking a lot of the little agencies and putting them out in the field to give them field experience. So they just brought in that agency from the country. They had a position open, the Public Affairs offices. I applied for it and I got the job. Well, one of my duties was to write speeches for the new one star, the new brigadier. [laughs]

[00:40:36]

Brooks: Wow!

Beuer-Tajovsky: So, the fellow that interviewed me, very stern fellow—again, one of those hot summer days. We sit down, he says, “Write me a five-minute speech.” “I don’t know anything about the man,” says the general. He says, “The only thing I can tell you is that he’s a new brigadier and he’s also a preacher.” “So, what subject?” He says, “You choose your own subject but it’s close to Veteran’s Day.” I think [inaudible] I’ll never forget. Anyway, it was a very patriotic day thing. So I decided, this guy’s going to go talk to the veterans, to the patriots, so I’ll write them a patriotic speech. So on one hand, I pulled out the Bible, on the other hand, some information about veterans and so forth, patriotism, and between the two, I assembled something and salted the speech with a little scripts from the Bible and all. At that time, I really had never written anything. [laughs] So how am I going to compose this thing? So I decided, well, I’ll take the word “veteran” and make an acrostic out of v-e, all the way, and each paragraph would stand out one of those letters. The general loved it! He said it was great. So I got the job and a promotion. And I was able to—he was very happy with my public affairs work and my speeches. One of those things I had to get involved in is you have to give a presentation at the Pentagon about his organization supply agency, so I had to write all that up. [phone rings] Don’t worry.

Brooks: Don’t worry about it

Beuer-Tajovsky: So anyway, that’s my daughter. I was able to—this was being filmed and I was able

to manage to get that off for her. I'd never been to the Pentagon before. I had to accompany him one time and he was a man who rushed loudly, hearing him puffing and huffing. [laughs] So anyways it turned out pretty good because he got his portrait on one of the leading merchandising magazines. I forget the one. Big hit for him—big brownie points.

Brooks: So that was like a supply company?

[00:44:35]

Beuer-Tajovsky: No, it's not a supply company. It's just an agency. He always saw supplies, clothing, shelter, all those, this was all being combined in the rush to do what we were going to do. So then a couple years later, a position came open—public affairs officer. It was the Corps of Engineers in Albuquerque. So they flew me out, I got an interview—got a GS-12 out of it. There, that position was public affairs officer, security officer, and historian.

Brooks: Press pause for a second.

[Break in Recording]

Beuer-Tajovsky: I had a vast territory from the middle of Kansas down to Brownsville, Texas and it was tri-nationals. It was Angles, Spanish, and Indians. It was very interesting because it had to deal with all those people.

Brooks: So you were public affairs security. So does that mean you were in charge of the security troops?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Of the dams.

Brooks: Oh, what does that entail?

Beuer-Tajovsky: I had to go and inspect the dams and make sure that they were being secured from—what do you call it? From the enemy—from the bad boys, the bad people.

Brooks: Communists? At that time was it the communists?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Communists, yeah. But in New Mexico at that time there was this extreme right wings organization called La Raza, and they did several harm whenever they could. For instance in one area where we were building a dam, they would come and they would bulldoze the road. They would do all sorts of harm. It's hard work to build a dam. As far as the New Mexicans were convinced, we were the dam builders. They didn't like us. [laughs] So that's why I retired in 1980.

Brooks: And being the historian, what did that entail?

Beuer-Tajovsky: I had to do the annual history for the agency, for all of the projects that they had.

Brooks: So you just kept track of everything that went on and wrote it all up and made sure it got archived somewhere?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah. Regurgitate it in a way that people could understand. Take it out of a scientific realm.

Brooks: Then you said you got out in 1980?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Nineteen eighty is when I retired, yeah. After eighteen years of civil service. Altogether my military and civilian service was twenty-eight-plus years.

Brooks: Okay, can you just tell me a little bit more about when you were at the atoll—the island?

Beuer-Tajovsky: No, not really because a lot of it was classified. I was a medic and I bandaged the wounds of the people who got hurt and so forth.

Brooks: Okay, is it still classified?

Beuer-Tajovsky: As far as I know.

Brooks: Okay.

Beuer-Tajovsky: I haven't heard it being declassified. This is another thing. I think this thing—eventually I did get a secret clearance. So here's the former enemy alien with a secret clearance. [laughs]

Brooks: Somebody trusted you.

[00:49:28]

Beuer-Tajovsky: Anyway, so that's—I retired. While I was stationed in France in the Army, I was stationed in a little town called La Rochelle. I worked as Army now, not civilian—got a job in the General's department of the headquarters. I worked there as an interpreter. They were trying out a new stenography method. It's called Stenomask, have you ever heard of that? It's a mask you put over your face and you sit in the court and you repeat everything that you hear—all the conversation, In French. And then you have to go and type it up from that they—it was an interesting experience.

Brooks: Did it work, the mask?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Not too well. I mean, it worked but it was too cumbersome. Way too cumbersome, by the time—because when you have a number of individuals in court talking, to get each one right was a problem. But it didn't work out. In the meantime, my wife gave birth to our first child there in La Rochelle and had to be evacuated the same day to a hospital in Germany—an American hospital there—because of severe problems and it died there eleven days later.

Brooks: I'm sorry.

Beuer-Tajovsky: On the basis of that, the Army gave what's called a compassionate transfer. I was able to get a compassionate transfer to Paris where my mother was living. She was liberated in southern France by the Americans. Here's another one of those stories where from—she eventually got a PhD at Toulouse University. Her studies was Cistercian art history. That's what she wanted.

You're a historian, right? One thing I can show you, she met a man there. She met a Polish man. He was in the Polish Army. When Poland capitulated, he went back to his hometown, settled with a wife and children, two children, but he had to flee. So he fled to France. He joined the free Polish Army there in France, fought there, got wounded a couple times, so forth. Was incarcerated in a Stalag and when the Germans left France, they gave him his papers. He went to Toulouse and he was quite a brilliant man. I'll give you a copy for your own records.

Brooks: Sure.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Oh, he resides now at the Holocaust Museum in Washington.

[00:55:02]

Brooks: So you wrote up a little biography of him?

Beuer-Tajovsky: It took me five years to collect it all.

Brooks: Or maybe not so little.

Beuer-Tajovsky: It was a long time.

Brooks: So he and your mother were friends?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Pardon?

Brooks: He and your mother were friends?

Beuer-Tajovsky: They eventually married, yeah. That old map said everything. That's my mother and he. So he became a professor at the Sorbonne in Paris.

Brooks: Thank you.

Beuer-Tajovsky: You can have that if you like. He became the foremost authority of Sumerian law.

Brooks: So Emil—how do you say his last name?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Schlecter.

Brooks: Schlecter?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Schlecter, yeah.

Brooks: Okay, I'll put this in the file that we'll have for you.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, you can have that. You're welcome. The last—that's the French version of an article that was written for him after he died. These are all his publications on Sumerian law, international law. He taught himself how to read the Sumerian script, cuneiform script, he translated. I think you might find that interesting.

Brooks: Yeah, certainly.

Beuer-Tajovsky: So between her running around reading Cistercian art in stone, he was in his own little cubicle.

Brooks: That's what I meant.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Reading and interpreting little bits of cuneiform.

Brooks: That's amazing. That's great. So when you were done in the military did you join any military organizations or did you use any of your veteran's benefits or anything?

Beuer-Tajovsky: No. When I got out I did buy a house through the VA.

Brooks: And where was that?

Beuer-Tajovsky: That was in Petersburg, Virginia.

Brooks: Was it hard for you to decide where to settle because you'd been so many places?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Well, yeah it was. I wanted to stay in New Mexico. That's God's country. Have you been there?

Brooks: I haven't. I really want to.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Oh, you must go there.

Brooks: I really want to.

Beuer-Tajovsky: It's beautiful country, but my wife. She was from Richmond, Virginia. She was a southern girl. She wanted to go home, you know? So after I retired, we moved back east—and there she died. And there eventually a heart attack and slow recuperation—thought it would be better living by myself and thought it best if I came out here to Oshkosh.

Brooks: What brought you to Oshkosh?

[00:59:52]

Beuer-Tajovsky: Well, my daughter was living there then. So I stayed with her for two years and it didn't work out. So when her house went up, she had to find another. We split up and for the last three years I've been living by myself. In the last episode—it was the end of December—I had an AFib problem. They were getting—the cardiologist was getting me ready for a conversion episode. Not episode, but treatment. To do so, they had to thin my blood, so they put me on Pradaxa. Do you know anything about Pradaxa? Nobody does. The only thing is that Pradaxa is advertised on television. They say, Well, you don't have to—it's better than Coumadin or Warfarin because you don't have to monitor it. So he's like, oh good. Don't have to monitor it. He overdosed me and didn't monitor it, so on the second of January I came down with nosebleeds. I was half dead literally by the time I got to the ER.

Brooks: And that was this year? This year? This January?

Beuer-Tajovsky: In Oshkosh, yeah. Since then, I've been bleeding in different places until about a month ago. This was all because of Pradaxa. It thinned the blood so much, it not only thinned it so much, it acts differently than Coumadin. It has a very severe coagulation problem. So to make a long story short, I have to go in and out, and in and out of the hospital and so forth. I developed a congestive heart failure where my heart got so weak that it can't pump enough blood back into the lungs. I'm only getting one-third of the chamber out, that's why I'm stuttering. So there were some people who died from Pradaxa, from hemorrhaging, because they had no antidote. They never developed an antidote. Well, this German company—my nemesis.

Brooks: The company or Germany?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Both. Read this paragraph.

Brooks: Okay. Fritz Fischer born October 5, 1912 was a German medical doctor who under the Nazi regime has participated in medical experiments, in quotes, conducted on inmate of the Ravensbrook concentration camp. He joined the SS in 1934 and became a member of the SNDAP in June 1937. In 1940, he became a physician at Ravensbrook concentration camp as a surgical assistant to Karl Gebhardt, who was hanged for his crimes against humanity. He was given a life sentence at the doctor's trial. His sentence reduced to fifteen years in 1951 and subsequently released in March 1954. Fischer returned to practice medicine and started a new career at the chemical company Boehringer in Ingelheim where he would stay until his retirement. How nice.

[01:05:02]

Beuer-Tajovsky: They're the ones that produced Pradaxa.

Brooks: One of the world's top twenty pharmaceutical companies and they produced Pradaxa.

Beuer-Tajovsky: So he was with them during a period that—

Brooks: So is that Pradaxa, is that still being used?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Oh yeah.

Brooks: It's still used.

Beuer-Tajovsky: It's still being advertised. There are two thousand lawsuits against them. But this is very interesting because here you have this Nazi working for them. He's dead now.

Brooks: This Fritz Fischer is dead?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, he died in 2003.

Brooks: Okay, and this is—where did this come from?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Tech-science books, Kristallnacht, and that's him.

Brooks: Kristallnacht, The Long post-WWII Lives and Forgotten Pasts of Criminal Nazis: Doctors. J.F. Ptak Science Books, LLC. Wow.

Beuer-Tajovsky: So here they have this man working on all this stuff, that man who undoubtedly was just seething with rage. Number one, had been incarcerated and found guilty and sentenced for life imprisonment. Even fifteen years imprisonment is a long time. So he is hired by this company to work on products like that, it can kill really. I have a rather strong persecution complex from those experiences and the rest of my life. So I was looking—there's always somebody in back of me who wants to push me out. This doesn't help any because I can see where this man unquestionably was involved in the development of that product and the very fact is that in the study to produce it, they disqualified people age eighty and over, saying they were statistically not significant. But to me, that's—the Germans, Nazis as far as they were concerned, all of us, Jews, and these other non-Jews, we were all different categories, we were considered unfit for life. This was the fundamental belief, so that's why they could do all this experimentation.

Brooks: So you've had a long struggle with Germany and the Germans?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, not only that but here with the anti-Semitism, the United States too.

Brooks: Do you have any thoughts on—

Beuer-Tajovsky: This is my—let me go—this is my third name. My first name is Reinhold Tajaburg. I had so much trouble with it from an anti-Semitic point of view, when I got my citizenship I changed it to Renault Beuer—Renault being a Frank's version of Reinhold. Beuer was my mother's maiden name. Well, I carried that or about twenty-five years, something like that. After my mother and Emil died—mother died in '88 and he died in '95—after they were gone, I changed it again to Reinhold Beuer—her middle name, so it's a hyphenated name—Tajovsky. Tajovsky is my grandfather's

name. My father had changed it to Tajaburg. So anyway, go ahead. I'm sorry.

[01:10:34]

Brooks: Oh no, I was going to ask what your thoughts were about serving in the United States military, especially because you weren't a citizen yet even when you went into service and even then, I don't know if you ever felt like the United States was your home. So serving in the military, I was wondering if you had thoughts on that.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Say that again.

Brooks: I'm wondering about your thoughts on serving in the military. A lot of times people do it for patriotic reasons and reasons like protecting their homeland, but you weren't a citizen yet and I don't know if you ever felt like the United States was your home. So I'm wondering how you felt about serving.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Well, I had a degree of patriotism, yes. But I would say principally it was—what it afforded me. It afforded me education and so forth. A reasonably stable life, *à la* military. So that was something that was very helpful. Anyway.

Brooks: Do you think that your military experience was what you expected it to be?

Beuer-Tajovsky: I didn't have any expectations as such. I'd been involved in institutional life all my life, so that wasn't new in that sense. You just had to learn to get along, that's all.

Brooks: Was there a lot of camaraderie? Did you feel like you bonded well with your fellow service members?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Oh yes. Oh yes. Still corresponding with one boy from Hawaiian days. Here's an example, another one contacted me several years ago from Hawaiian days. No, I always had a good time. We always got along and I was socially fairly active. When I was in Hawaii I belonged to the Hawaii Theater Guild, I belonged to, sort of, the Hawaii [inaudible] society that sang—full set of ten of them. Twenty-one years old. You'll see, I was fairly active. No matter where I went I made good friends. I make friends easily. I don't divulge much of my personal life, but I don't have to do that in order to be friendly. It's only when I get to know someone that I open up a little because—it's difficult to explain to people who were like mushrooms staying in one place all their life. [laughs]

Brooks: Yeah. Can you just tell me a little bit more about what it was like gig back to Europe after you'd been here and then having been sent there in the '50s?

[01:14:52]

Beuer-Tajovsky: Well, it was like going back. It wasn't different in the sense that I was still European in that sense. And in some sense, I still am too in some ways because America's a different country. It's unimaginable, really. Because in Europe unless you were rich, you were poor. We're just beginning to learn that over here. The rich had the castles

and the spas and so forth, the good restaurants and what have you. The poor grubs in the dirt. Over here, I see America as almost sort of a—people act like they're on the playground, the merry-go-round, they're so fun oriented, which is nice if you can afford to do that but if you can't then this is not—there were times then even here in the United States I just didn't have enough money to buy food. I got to the point where I would have to eat dog food, dog biscuits—got a dog bone, yeah. When we were at Columbia for instance, we were poor. There were five of us and we considered ourselves the international annex because we couldn't afford to be in the international house. We were renting in one of those old apartment buildings and we had quite a combination. We had the American who was renting the place out who was studying Urdu. We had an American boy who was getting his master's in Russian. We had a Pakistani Muslim, he was just seething with rage. That was when Pakistan had just become Pakistan. We had an Indian from Bombay. He was a Parsi. You know what that is? Then there was me. [laughs] We had quite a combination, but we were all so poor that we would, the little money that we had we would put together and we'd buy—I had a pressure cooker—a chicken and we'd pressure cook the thing.

Brooks: Did you use your veteran's benefits to pay for school?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yes.

Brooks: So you had that.

Beuer-Tajovsky: But that wasn't enough. In those days that didn't buy anything. I think it was \$75 a month, but it was just—it was tough. I have no regrets over my past life, it's just that I'm still looking over my shoulder.

Brooks: Do you feel like being in the military protected you at all?

Beuer-Tajovsky: No, not at all. At one point when I was in Germany, I was called into G2 and they said, "You're an enemy alien." Yeah, well. "We're going to send you to France to a position where you can't do any harm." So that's been sort of a—

Brooks? Hard to fit in? It's been hard to fit in, it sounds like you're saying?

[01:19:54]

Beuer-Tajovsky: No, it's not me who was hard to fit in, it's the attitudes of all the people, you know? Even today when you say, "You were a refugee," well, you were if so, in fact a Jew. The fact that you weren't is irrelevant because they don't know. They don't know that there were four other different classes of people who were incarcerated and then annihilated. They were blacks, they were political prisoners including some Americans, they were the gays and lesbians, there was the antisocial—that's the group we fell under—and there were the Jews. And of course there were the Poles. Five million Poles were annihilated—seven million Jews. It's staggering. And again, one of the things that really gets my goat is that the word holocaust is so abused and misused. They're using it for everything now. Everything is a holocaust and that's not

what the word meant. The word wasn't invented until after the war when they discovered the horrible situations that had occurred. It comes from a combination of two words: "holo" and "caust." Completely burned. That's what the word means and a lot of the stuff that's being called holocaust is not even involved in that. Annihilations, yes, but not just baked. Not just burnt up. So the word should not be used except for in that context. I do give my talk. I've talked at universities. I've talked at church groups. I've talked at schools. They've asked and I have a little talk that I give. Back east I actually made a—I had about sixty slides that I would project and I would talk through the slides—more comprehensive things. Out here, I don't have that with me, it's all in storage. A couple years ago, I spoke to the history club of UW-Oshkosh. I've spoken to Unitarians. I've spoken to the Jews. I've spoken wherever.

Brooks: And you speak on the Holocaust?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, my experience. So the reason is that the slow one—Jews have the slow one—never again. I see myself as in the last decade of survivors. After me, the deniers will have a field day. They already have, but as long as there are people like me around who can at least say, Here, touch, you know? They have to back off some. After we're gone, look, I'm eight-six and ten years from now, I and most of the other people will have gone. The deniers will be able to say, well, it's all made up. So the word has to get out, which is not a mission, but that's—

Brooks: Important.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Very much so. Very important, and as far as my—I don't have tattoos, but it's all engraved in my psyche. I am, to some extent, damaged psychologically. That shouldn't happen again.

[01:25:20]

Brooks: When you were a kid and all of this was happening to you and you were being moved about and then you had to escape, do you remember what was going through your head?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Fear. We were in constant fear. We were kids, okay? Kids are kids, but when the bell rang, everybody rushed out and hit the ground because the bombers were coming over or the roads were being strafed. At nighttime we were afraid that the French Gestapo would come and grab us. They did. In one case, they grabbed all of them in one home and shipped them to Auschwitz, including the women who took care of them who were not Jewish. They told them, You can't take these children unless we go. They said, Okay, you go too. They sent them to Auschwitz too—Innocent people.

Brooks: When you were telling me about your friend that you were on the train with, how did you meet up with him again?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Oh, that's an interesting story. In 1996, I got a little note that said, "Finally found you. Call me." So I called him and we've had three reunions since then.

Brooks: How did he find you?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Through the Internet. Not only that, but he Googled my name and he found my name. I just happened to have my name on there and that's how he found me. So it was quite interesting. But oh yes, we still correspond. He calls me and stuff. He had quite an experience. Shortly after I left, he—one night he was told that they were going to raid the Chateau, that he had to disappear. So by that time, of course, he was what, fifteen? Something like that, and he did. It's unimaginable, but he was in contact with his mother. His mother and father were divorced, okay? He didn't know where his father was, but he was in contact with his mother. So when he left the Chateau, he found his way to his mother and together they tried to get into Switzerland. When they got to Switzerland, they said, No, no. You can't come in. You have to come back where you came from. So they went back down the mountain. They went over to Italy and quite the experiences they had. But he eventually joined the Italian partisans and fought alongside them and he was liberated by the Americans like the rest of the Italians. So he spent some time in a DP camp after the war ended and he tried to come here to the United States and had some sort of eye problem and they wouldn't let him in because of an illness, disease. So eventually that got cured and he was able to come over here and he'd no sooner got over here, he was drafted and sent to Korea. Well, he got out, fortunately, and settled in Teaneck, New Jersey. Found himself a nice little family and living happily ever since. But every year, he's invited to go back to Italy when they're having memorial services. It's quite an experience.

[01:30:44]

Brooks: Do you take part in any memorial services here now?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Here?

Brooks: Or you know, in the US?

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yes, like Veteran's Day for instance. Even just last Sunday, a week ago, when we had that memorial plaque. I was in their audience. I felt it was necessary. What is really strange, you're asking all these questions and up until 1995, I'd suppressed all that. I wouldn't talk about it because I was trying to hide myself, so to speak. Even though I was being persecuted as a Jew, I tried to sort of hide from that here in the United States.

Well, in '95 after my stepfather died, I decided I needed to search for his family. He had a wife and two daughters. After the war he tried to find them and he was told they disappeared. And I'm still trying to find them now. I'm still working on it because this is one of those things that got through the rating [inaudible] it's where I got all this information. While I'm searching, the early period while I'm searching, I'm searching everywhere—books and so forth. I was in this synagogue. They had a little section for Holocaust. There was a book there and I opened it up. I forget the name of it—*Children of the Holocaust*, something like that. I leafed through it—and there is a picture of a little girl, Simone. I remember her as clear as day, and that was

exactly the clothes she had on and so forth. She was so forlorn. She constantly cried because she was separated. It really touched me and it still touches me today. So all these years, I thought about little Simone and wondered—thought that she'd probably just gone up in smoke. Sure enough, I found out she did. She eventually got caught up in the Holocaust. I met her sister, whom I didn't know then, who lived through it and married a GI and got over here to the states. With OSE, we had a reunion—all of us children, as many as we could, and I met her sister there. That's where I found out what happened to Simone because Simone stayed back, see. [inaudible] a bit.

Brooks: Of the reunion?

Beuer-Tajovsky: The reunion, yeah.

Brooks: Where was that?

[01:34:52]

Beuer-Tajovsky: In New York. No, I'm sorry, in Washington. Now, a couple weeks ago, I was in contact—when I was east, I became deeply involved in the revolutionary and colonial history. I was a member of the York County Historical Committee and did a lot of—not a lot—I did research and writing on black history. I also was a member of the Holocaust Commission in Virginia Beach—about six or seven of us who were survivors. Jewish organizations tried to keep things going. I'm still in contact with them. So a couple weeks ago, about three or four weeks ago, I got a call from one of the ladies and she wanted to know whether I would be interested in attending a reunion, [laughs] some of the children—Charles, my good friend, and a couple of other people—sometime this year. So I don't know whether I'll be able to make that. It will be interesting.

Brooks: Yeah, well it's good that you can still stay in touch though, you know? It's hard to travel. I think as a long of veterans get older, they try to attend these reunions but it gets rough.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Well, I mean I'm in a wheelchair. I'm on oxygen twenty-four-seven and it has complications. I have a speaking problem and so forth. The logistics of it is—because they would have to pay for it. I don't have—I don't have a dime.

Brooks: You know, you can do—have you ever done the Skype on the computer?

Beuer-Tajovsky: No.

Brooks: So they can do it so like you'd be on a camera. You wouldn't be there, but you could still participate.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, well I suggested that perhaps there could be some kind of a—but that's not in blood. There's nowhere that—

Brooks: It's not the same. Yeah, I understand. Anything else to add about your military career or anything?

Beuer-Tajovsky: It was interesting—fascinating—met a lot of interesting people. I had a good time on the whole. Good positions. Didn't know anything about them—learned a lot and became successful in them.

Brooks: When you got out of the military, did you have a career afterwards?

Beuer-Tajovsky: No, I was too old by then.

Brooks: You were just done?

Beuer-Tajovsky: I tried but I was either overqualified or too old.

Brooks: You had a lot of skills.

Beuer-Tajovsky: Yeah, but that happens to a lot of people. So anyway, do you have any other questions?

Brooks: I don't. That's all I have. All right. I'm going to turn this off if that's okay.

Beuer-Tajovsky: If you like, it's up to you.

[End of Beuer-Tajovsky.OH1917] [End of interview]