

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
GLENN E. TAGATZ
32nd Division, National Guard, Cold War.

2009

OH
1233

OH
1233

Tagatz, Glenn E., (b.1934). Oral History Interview, 2009.

User Copy: 1 compact disc (ca. 50 min.).

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Glenn Tagatz, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin native, discusses his stateside service in the 32nd Division, Wisconsin National Guard during the Cold War. Tagatz describes college at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, enlistment in the Guard, an interview that resulted in promotion to 1st lieutenant, and active duty transfer to Fort Lewis (Washington) in 1961. He talks about being placed in Division Headquarters with nothing to do and never getting an answer to a letter he wrote asking why he was he inducted while working on his Ph.D. He portrays his wife telling his colonel that requiring Saturday night formations was a bad idea. Upon coming back to Wisconsin, Tagatz explains he came down with terrible hives and edema, and he describes the different treatments he pursued while finishing his Ph.D. He details his career teaching for a couple years at Indiana State and then for thirty years at Marquette University (Wisconsin), all the while fighting illness. Tagatz talks about seeking disability payment, battling staphylococcus aureus, and reluctantly dropping out of the Guard. He relates evidence he has that sometime during his service he had been made a test subject for a Fort Detrick project, but he is fighting to have this acknowledged by Veterans Affairs. Tagatz describes communicating with other veterans who are struggling to be acknowledged or get compensation for being test subjects, and he touches on his case in the Court of Veteran's Appeals.

Biographical Sketch:

Tagatz received his doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and taught educational psychology and research design at Marquette University (Wisconsin) for thirty years. He currently resides in Palm Beach (Florida).

Interviewed by John Driscoll, 2009.

Transcribed by an unknown individual on the request of Glenn Tagatz, 2010.

Typed into a Word document by Jeff Javid, 2010.

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Interview Transcript:

John: This is John Driscoll and today is August 19, 2009. This is an oral history interview with Glenn Tagatz. Glenn is a veteran of the United States Army and we're at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in the conference room in the basement. Glenn, thanks a lot for coming and agreeing to the interview and why don't we start at the beginning; when and where were you born?

Glenn: I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on January 27, 1934 and went to grade school and high school in Milwaukee and Wauwatosa for a few years. Came along and did my undergraduate at what's now called the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. It was a state college when I started there and decided that that was a pretty good thing. I lived with my parents and as I remember it, kind of as an aside, tuition, including book rental was \$37.50 a semester.

John: I know, wow!

Glenn: I was talking to some of the recent high school graduates up in the area where we come in the summers. One young lady was going to George Washington University in Washington, DC. Her tuition was \$54,000 last year and I just freaked. I just absolutely freaked.

John: I have two grandkids starting in September and theirs is about \$4,800.

Glenn: This wasn't hundreds, this was thousands. She said, "We get some benefits," and I said, "What's that?" And she said, "We get invited to the Presidential Inauguration and the balls." Enough of that.

John: About early school, you mentioned in Milwaukee and in Wauwatosa.

Glenn: In Milwaukee and in Wauwatosa and then I went back into Milwaukee's public schools and really didn't have much of an impetus to even go, much less finish a degree. I recalled being put into kindergarten. They carried me in. I was reluctant. Anyway, went through grade school, high school and there I was. What am I going to do now? I thought well, they're talking about registering and I thought I could probably go down and see if they would let me register and to my surprise, they welcomed me with opened arms.

John: When was that?

Glenn: This would have been 1952 to 1956. No, that was '48 to '52 was high school, and '52 to '56 was college.

John: Did you graduate from college?

Glenn: They couldn't get rid of me.

John: What was your major?

Glenn: Educational Psychology. I went through a teaching curriculum and somebody assured me that there would always be teaching opportunities, so I did that and in the process became acquainted with some of the reservists, guardsmen and I thought, "Well I can get a few dollars for a day's drill," and I did that.

John: The Wisconsin Guard?

Glenn: Yes.

John: What outfit?

Glenn: Well, the division was the 32nd Division. I was in as an enlisted man. I was in the headquarters company and somebody saw my scores or whatever it was, but they decided that the board up here in Madison would probably commission me if I appeared so we had a day of interviews and I was at the very bottom of the totem pole and it was like one of those races where Tagatz's also ran.

Colonel Runge was a professor of law at the University of Wisconsin here. He headed the boards and as the day passed, I could see people getting tired around me and I remember Colonel Runge saying to his board members, "Now Tagatz has good scores on his AFPT," or whatever it was, and gave them a summary. He asked me if I had any questions and I thought, "Hey wait a minute, you got this going in the wrong direction." The decision was that so they could get to their cocktail hours or whatever it was going to be they could get at it, and they did. I walked out, somebody came up with the hardware for an officer, and, oh, that felt pretty good. Well, in any event, I accumulated about eleven years of reserve time. I figured I would go through with 20 or maybe even 30. In fact, one of the fellows that was out at Ft. Louis with us was later to become—it was Pat Roach, he was a Captain and he was later to become the Attorney General, no, the Adjutant General. Well, in any event, one day I got a letter that said, "We're happy to inform you that you've been moved from the inactive National Guards to the active National Guards" and I thought, well here it comes, and the next day I got orders that said I was to report to Ft. Lewis, Washington.

John: When was that?

Glenn: 1961 I believe. Wasn't anything that anybody could do about it and I said, "Well, okay, we're going to Ft. Lewis."

Went out there and didn't even realize there were mountains surrounding us. It rained and rained and rained. By the 4th of July the next year, it was pretty well determined that yes, indeed, there were mountains around us and everything seemed to be okay with the world. I have a tenacious mind and when I get into something I like to follow it up to the very end.

John: Sure, sure.

Glenn: Well, went out there and I had been promoted to 1st Lieutenant and business as normal—business as usual. There was a shuffling of personnel where they didn't think they had people doing what they should have been doing and I was enrolled at Madison here in this Doctorate program and they thought that—well suddenly I found myself going up to Division Headquarters. I didn't really think there was anything coming of that. Division Trains was where I ended up. I was in the replacement depot and didn't have anything to do. So, they asked if there was anybody that would like to move, and if so, where would you like to move. One of my teachers from high school said, "Glen, you should go into 53 and you should spend your time helping Major Krueck with his job." Well that was writing lesson plans and all the same stuff I had been doing and I rather enjoyed that.

I read everything I could get my hands on, and one place I found an Army Regulations. There was a statement that anybody that was working on a PHD should not be inducted, and I thought I was, and I am. Let's write a letter. Never do that. Anyway I wrote a letter and asked this question which was absolutely straight forward and after about 6 months I got a letter back that didn't answer my question at all. It assured me that I had a home for the rest of my hitch. We finally were deactivated. I had taken my wife out there to Olympia, Washington. She was not militarily or politically astute. I remember meeting at the officer's club and we started talking about formations on Saturdays at 6 o'clock and nobody questioned anything, but my wife stepped in with my Bird Colonel there at the table with me and she said, "Yeah, whose stupid idea was that?" And this guy turned every color of the rainbow and he laughed and he said, "That is pretty stupid. I'll take care of that on Monday."

John: Good for her.

Glenn: So that made things a little better. We didn't get over seas. There were advisors; in fact, General Trains was the post commander. He lost his son over in Vietnam. They came along and we were awarded war-time

service, but then they changed their mind which seems to be a government prerogative.

John: Oh yeah.

Glenn: Then it was no, now you were in the peace-time army and I didn't care. I came back to Wisconsin, never got as far as Madison here which was my home station. The night that I got back, I started breaking out with hives and edema and I thought, "Uh, Oh, what's this." I don't know, I had commercial insurance, I had student insurance. I had military coverage during that period of time and I went over to the University of Wisconsin. They put me into what everybody laughed and referred to as "the tank".

John: Wait, okay, go ahead.

Glenn: Well, I would break out with these hives, somebody would take their thumbnail and run it across and I would just erupt. My face was out well beyond my nose and I thought well there must have been something I picked up. They put me in the tank for I don't know, 5 or 6 days. I said this is no place for me. There was blood on my sheets when I went in on Sunday and Thursday it was still there, and I told my wife if that blood is still on my sheets, I'm walking out of here.

John: Yeah.

Glenn: Well it was, and before I got out of the door, a nurse said, "You know Glenn, if I were you, I would go some other place than the University of Wisconsin here for my medical treatment." I said, "Why?" She said, "You're, quote, 'in the control group.'" Now I didn't know what the hell—

John: They were running some tests—

Glenn: Pardon?

John: They were running some tests.

Glenn: Yes, were they ever. There were 149; I'll send papers to this; there were 149 in that particular bunch of research that was being done. I figured conservatively there were probably 20 to 50 people involved. As a control subject, I wasn't made aware of anything.

John: That's hard.

Glenn: I finally walked out of the student infirmary and all of a sudden the nature of my dissertation changed and I was trying to figure out how you could

use exemplars and non-exemplars of concepts to determine what concept was being delineated or taught or whatever term you wanted to use, and I had a lot of fun with that. I said my thinking is not what it should be. Well, gradually these hives would have a frequency that lessened, but every once in a while I would still bust out with these things. I followed the nurse's advice and I went back to a doctor in Milwaukee that I had as a physician. He pushed me over to one of his young assistants that was a recent graduate of the medical college at the University of Wisconsin Medicine. I kept saying that my allergies are far different. When I was inducted I was seasonal and moderate. I came out of there and I was devastated. Here I'm trying to finish the PHD and I talked with my advisor just recently and I said, "Herb, you and I talked," and I said, "I recognize that I'm not going to ever be Wisconsin's best advisee, but I am going to be their fastest." He said "Glenn, I don't recall that, what was the situation?" I said "Well, I came into the fall semester and I did the requirement for learning 2 foreign languages, learning enough about computers to pass their tests and I did as much course work as they would let me take and in less than one calendar year I had everything for the PHD done except a couple courses and writing the dissertation and that would have been the fastest anybody went through there." I was persistent. I had told my company commander that I would, you know, resign from the Guards if it got too much and with that illness it was too much.

John: So did you resign from the Guard then?

Glenn: Not at that time.

John: OK.

Glenn: I was, let it run.

John: What was the hives and the—

Glenn: That's why this is a story in progress. I got back here and the nurses' comment and about 10 years went by and there was a newspaper report in what's now the *Journal Sentinel* down in Milwaukee and on the TV news, and it talked about 149 different studies being sponsored by the Government. Specifically, the Central Intelligence Agency and the University of Wisconsin with funding coming out of the University of Wisconsin Foundation, and that was about it. It was one page and I thought, "Well now we're getting some place." So I decided I'd use the VA as a repository for whatever materials and I apologize because at sometime in the future you're going to get this stack and I'm a good researcher.

Finished up my dissertation, graduated, and didn't feel good. You know, never felt comfortable so I had job offers from USC, Penn State. I had a non-academic offer for a job from the Wisconsin Research and Development Center which followed a post doctoral year. Had prestigious job offers and I told my wife I can't do that, I won't get through a year so I decided I'd take a less taxing appointment and I went over and taught for two years at Oshkosh.

John: Okay.

Glenn: State University at Oshkosh. There wasn't anybody at Oshkosh that I could talk to about my research and things. My major professor, Herbert Klausmeier, said, "You go down and interview and if you don't want to get into the major universities," he said, "you know I graduated from Indiana State in Terre Haute." I went down there, and I was there a year, and Herb came through with a fellowship, so I took the fellowship, came back here and enjoyed it, but just about the time that year was running down, I got sick again and that was the same thing, you know, nose, hives, edema. So I said, "No, I'll go back to Indiana State." Went back there for a year, back to Indiana State and decided that I had some responsibilities to my parents. Came and interviewed at Marquette; and I had a friend that was Associate Dean of the law school, he's recently passed away. He said, "Glenn, if you're ever coming to Marquette, you better do it now." That was strange because from 1962 or 3 to 1968, I had a job offer from Marquette in my pocket all the time. I said, "Chuck, I've had this offer in my pocket, but I don't have it now," and he said, "where are you going to be for the next 15 minutes?" He got on the horn and I had a job offer with a substantial raise and everything was looking rosy. We had built a house in Milwaukee' the tenants were moving out so we moved back in it. We finished the upstairs of the house and I went to work.

John: You said you lasted how long in Marquette?

Glenn: Thirty years, and you know that was more—in 1982 there was a change to the civil rights act and the religious institutions like Marquette were exempt from needing to fill quotas. My good friend and neighbors said, "Glenn, you're going to do a law degree," and I said, "I don't want to do a law degree." He said, "You won't have to take any entrance test; come and do the course work which we know you can do." That wasn't for me. Anyway, he got me pursuing affirmative action for minorities in law enforcement and we had a center at Marquette and we had the people from all over the country working for that center. We would go into a community in Tennessee or whatever and we would look at what they were doing and we would tell them how they could do it in a little better conformity with the law. I did that for 5 or 6 years and by that time it was coming to the middle or end of the 80's and during this time there was a

complete flip over in terms and I didn't know why, I should have. I felt like I was persona non grata. And I was. I couldn't figure out why.

The first boss that I worked for talked to me about my having skills that their faculty didn't have. Research, confidence, and Wisconsin is a research-oriented school. I wasn't going to let anybody force me out. That would have been unheard of.

John: You had tenure?

Glenn: Oh yeah, I went to Marquette as an associate professor. The first year on campus I was given tenure and the second year I was promoted to full professor. That was still coming the way it should.

I came along, I did my job far better than I felt my colleagues did theirs, but my employment at Marquette was for all intents and purposes over. I sat there and I thought, well now what? Suffered a heart attack, went and had triple bypass surgery and never could get that thrust, you know. I was a different man than I had been. Anyway, I thought to myself you can stay here with tenure and full professorship and live your work life out. Well, it came up about 30 months before I was due to retire that all this stuff flared up again. I'm sitting there saying, "Why?" No reason for it.

In the intervening time we found out that Carl Rogers was not only a researcher for what was called the Society for the Investigation for Human Ecology, but he was also part of a front organization which awarded money to 149 different organizations. I started putting these things together, and, geeze, I had a good seminar going. So I taught my seminar, and I taught statistics and research design. I was having fun I guess.

During the intervening time I decided I had 11 years seniority; so I needed 8 ½ years to get 20 and didn't think I could do that, and I couldn't. I started working out the time and, God, then I really got sick.

John: The same thing?

Glenn: The same thing, and I thought, well, let's go back now; and went back to the very first piece of news that I got. It said that they were doing staphylococcus aureus and Carl Rogers was not an MD. He was a PHD, but had appointments in the psych department and the psychiatric department. From what I could see on the stuff that I began to read of his, it looked to me like he was helping his son accumulate a record, a publication which was impressive. I came up to the University of Wisconsin—boy, those doors slammed shut. I went to the VA—those doors slammed shut and I thought what the hell is going on here?

I was told that I could go on disability for 30 months, at which time my retirement would take effect. It sounded OK. My wife and I had put money down on a condominium in Florida and we went down to live there.

John: Good, good.

Glenn: It was OK, I never recovered this health business, but none the less, I was getting disability, then I was getting retirement and we could live.

John: Did you ever find out what caused this?

Glenn: Yes, it's called staphylococcus aureus and referred to as—I'll have to get that for you.

John: Is this something you get out of the air, or is it something that develops in the body, or did you come into contact with it?

Glenn: Didn't have the slightest idea. All of a sudden here I am a guy coming out of the military; I was hearty and so on. I remember the company commander said, "Tagatz, take them through the confidence course." I thought oh, hell, I'll have a little fun. I'd been in track and athletics so instead of taking and vaulting these 6 foot barriers, I decided if I went up to the top of the first one and then went from the top to the top to the top to the top—well, by the time I got through 6 or 7 barriers, I turned around and looked and there wasn't anybody within a half mile. That gives you an idea.

John: That's really strange.

Glenn: Well, I came back and started being treated by Dr. Howard Lee. Now it was 20 years until I found out that he worked for the Veteran's Administration and those doors would open a little bit and then they'd slam shut again.

Went down to Florida and wasn't rated. My primary care said there's enough evidence here for me to recommend that you get a rating. So I ended up with a very minimal rating and they put it up to 40%, but never got over the 50% for medical expenses of all sorts to be paid. That didn't sit well with me so I kept going. Every time I'd get an idea, I'd get my graduate assistant and say, go the library. I'd tell all the librarians that I knew, "Get me all the information," and that's how I accumulated my seminar content. Eventually, went on disability, then retirement, and before I went on retirement I had my graduate assistants scurrying around and finding everything they could.

During that time, I dropped out of the reserves or the Guard. I didn't like that, I would have liked 20 years. Pat Roach stayed in and became the Adjutant General.

John: How long did you actually put into the Guard?

Glenn: How long?

John: Yes.

Glenn: Oh I had, let's see, I had 11 and some odd months. I think I needed 3 years. I was serious about this.

John: Sure, the military had been good to you.

Glenn: The military had been good to me up to the point that I was released from active duty at Ft. Lewis. When I got back to Wisconsin, I never got to Madison, I just busted out with the hives and edema. Then I learned that my brother had developed the hives and edema. I started talking to other people, like Arden Boecker, the guy whose records I showed you and you said, "Hell, Glenn, they put an atomic bomb on a pole and told us to cover ourselves with rain gear and they detonated this bomb and then we were supposed to walk into Ground Zero." Well, the poor bastard, his prostate was being eaten up by cancer. I tried helping him. I got his senator, and, "Oh yeah, we'll take care of him." He said, "You know, I never got one penny from those people."

John: Yep.

Glenn: I was sitting in my living room and I got a telephone call. The person on the other end said, "Are you Glenn Tagatz who was a research subject for a project from Ft. Detrick, Maryland?" And I said, "No, I had never been up to Ft. Detrick"—had some evidence that I was a research project. Told them about the nurse's comments. He said, "Glenn, I've got a remand from the Court of Veterans Appeals that names you and where you were, etc. Would you like to see it?" Would I ever. By this time, I had a reasonable rapport with the guy in the DAV and so forth. He sent this to me and, indeed, it's chapter and verse. Everything was right there. I thought, okay, now I certainly have enough information. My students brought in Carl Rogers' book and there was a test subject, control subject, identified with the letters TAG, the first three letters of my last name. I thought surely they can't deny. I sent the records and, God, I got another rejection. A fellow I worked with, Nick Topetz, said "Glenn, there's something going on. I don't know what it is," but he strangely used the same words "persona non grata." I finished 2 of his students that were doing dissertations and I think he felt like he owed me. He wrote a letter

to the VA, and I didn't know it at the time, but he worked for the VA. He presented the letter to me and there were 2 of those students that I had been helping. He said they were no good. They didn't even support you or acknowledge anything. So he wrote this letter and I sent that in and I got all the ducks in a row and I thought, well, surely now nobody could be that immune. Anyway, when I moved down to Florida, the fellow down there said I can't give you 100%, but he worked me up to 40%; and for the first time in my life I was back with military people as opposed to these two guys that had never seen the butt end of a rifle working for the VA.

I said I'm going to keep at this until I'm dead. I'm going to get exposure of the whole damn thing; and then I started helping other people like this Tom Gleason. I did what I could for him, but they had closed the door on him. He said, "Glenn, I went into the equivalent of the tanks that they had these guys in." They were feeding them with LSD, they were being reduced to almost an animal status. I exchanged information with him and I've learned since that he died without ever getting an acknowledgement.

Now I keep doing what I can, and Congressman Petri was one person I sourced. In an open forum, illustrating a point, he said, "I have no doubt in my mind that Glenn was researched upon, but," he said, "a Congressman doesn't have enough clout." Then they had the Church committee and you'll get these materials. The Church committee and Teddy Kennedy was on that panel too. Now it's being run through the mill for the umpteenth time and I'm sitting here strategizing what it's going to be in another three years, should I live that long. As long as I've got strength—

John: Are you going to stay with it?

Glenn: I'm going to stay with it.

John: That's admirable.

Glenn: Nobody, nobody should be experimented on.

Anyway, all these papers, I was premature. I sent them to the Court of Veteran's Appeals and they started putting a file together that consisted of two cardboard boxes; and then my attorney—incidentally, if you do much of this, there is a National Organization of Veteran's Advocates or NOVA. Those people are bright attorneys and there is a cadre of them that's making a very comfortable living going back to day one on stuff.

John: We're getting toward the end of the tape here.

Glenn: Yeah, I'm going to quit.

John: This is admirable what you're doing. This is a remarkable story. This is really a wonderful story.

Glenn: When I get to the point where I start sending you documents, everything is documented. All of this is documented.

John: We would love to have that. This is what the archives exists for.

Let's wrap this up. This is remarkable. They don't put this out for anyone that wanders in here out of the rain, but anyone doing research or studying this serious, the records are available there to them. We will send you a copy of this transcript, and then it will be here. This is just remarkable.

Glenn: What will happen is as this wraps down, and it should wrap down, but it won't. It's not going to.

John: Ok, God, this is a remarkable story. That's about it for the tape.

[End of Interview]