

**Samuel B. Hegner**

**Tape 1, Side A**

**May 22, 1998**

**RG-50.106\*0098.01.03**

**Abstract**

Samuel Benedict Hegner was born on November 1, 1925 in Philadelphia, PA to Quaker parents and has an older brother born in 1920 and a younger brother born in 1930. Along with his parents and older brother, he joined the local Friends Meeting because of their pacifist feelings. He had a close friendship with a neighbor girl who warned him of Jewish persecution in Europe. After high school, he entered Oberlin College. The summer after his first year, he attended the Quaker work camp in Indianapolis, Indiana where he helped renovate and build a new settlement house. He completed 3 semesters and joined the Army in February '44 as a Conscientious Objector. His older brother was a Pacifist and served in the Civilian Public Services Camp. Samuel was placed in a Hospital Unit and after training as a surgical scrub nurse at several camps in the US, he was shipped to Europe. He nursed some wounded in Wales but when he got to Germany, his unit was always too far from the front to help the wounded. The National Services Board told Samuel that if he finds himself in a difficult situation, he should not waver and he followed their advice when his captain requested he carry a rifle and he refused. He was not disciplined and another soldier took his place. His unit went to Dachau where he experienced rage and fantasies upon seeing the sick, starving prisoners. He wrote to his parents and to his childhood friend, the only one who gave him some preparation to view the concentration camp.

Tape 2 starts out with Samuel discussing his experience at Dachau and the rest of the tape is interspersed with thoughts about Dachau, speaking about Dachau to others, getting psychoanalysis regarding Dachau and how Dachau influenced him to become a psychiatrist. His duty at Dachau consisted of spraying DDT into the barracks. He could hardly eat or sleep upon seeing Dachau. He can still visualize the gas chambers and the ovens. He spoke of his experience with his fellow soldiers and wrote to his friend, Doris, about it. Samuel explains that upon returning to the base after a pass in Ft. Lee, Virginia, he was in a car accident. This left him with a wounded foot which could have prevented him from going overseas but he insisted upon going. From Dachau, his unit went to a small hospital run by nuns and then to outside of Marseilles which was the staging area for the Philippines. There he spent 3 weeks in a hospital to recover from dysentery and then was shipped out to Panama. The war was over with Japan while crossing the Atlantic Ocean and their orders were changed for Newport News, Virginia. Upon arrival home, Samuel found his father in a major depression, spent three days walking and talking with his friend, Doris, and then three or four days talking with his brother and his wife in Maine. Then he was assigned as a scrub nurse to a plastic surgery center at a hospital near Cleveland, Ohio until May 1946 when he was discharged. Upon graduating from Oberlin in

1950 in economics, he entered Medical School which he completed in 1954 and became a psychiatrist. He got married in 1950 and has 2 sons and a daughter.

This final part of the interview continues with how Samuel's life was affected by viewing Dachau. He believes that his experience helped him empathize with his patients during his 36 years as a psychiatrist. In the 70s he experienced a major depression which he accounts the family history as being the cause. Perhaps maturity or having resolved issues indicates completed treatment. Random events bring Dachau to mind. He had a cold rage when he was at Dachau but did not act upon it. He seldom talks about Dachau or reads about concentration camps. He is still against war and does not believe there are "just" wars. When he visited Germany, he went to the gates of Dachau but did not enter. Samuel believes that Hitler was crazy. He thinks it a good thing that Germany became stronger after World War II. His unit did little organized activity after the War. He saw the French did not live in sanitary conditions but the Germans lived in more sanitary conditions like us. He understood that the farmers in Dachau could do nothing about the concentration camp. Samuel is no longer in touch with his childhood friend, Doris. He made the interview as there might have been some information he could add or his questions could be answered.

### **Summary**

00:00 Dr. Samuel Benedict Hegner was born on November 1, 1925 in Philadelphia, PA to George Willis Hegner and Evelyn Benedict Hegner, both Quakers. His older brother is George Hegner, Jr. and was born in 1920 and his younger brother is John Benedict Hegner and he was born in 1930. His childhood was quiet. His older brother was a conscientious objector (CO) and served in the Civilian Public Service Corps during World War II. Around 1936, Samuel was in a Philadelphia Public School but his older brother was not doing well in public high school so transferred to a private high school, the Germantown Academy Day School for boys. They offered a discount for the 3 boys so Samuel entered the private school's 7<sup>th</sup> grade and his younger brother entered 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Samuel graduated in 1942. His parents were concerned about Hitler's activities and they became active in the local Friends Meeting as they were pacifists. Samuel was not born Quaker and joined the Unitarian Church with his friends. His parents did not join the Friends Meeting for their politics or social ramifications but because of pacifism. His parents discussed these things around the family dining table. They did not require him to attend the Quaker Church. Attending the Unitarian Church was a social experience for him. His older brother entered Oberlin in 1937. Both were more interested in pacifism at the time.

05:00 He attended the Friends Meeting with his parents and older brother and decided to join. He made a formal request to join and the Elders came to his home and questioned him and welcomed him to their meetings. They wanted to know his concept of the Friends Meetings. He read a book, "Light Within," and indicated that is his concept rather than

focusing on the war in Europe. He became aware of Hitler around '37 or '38 when he was 14 or 15. He would discuss it with his surrogate sister, Doris Wile (?) who was two years younger and lived two doors away. He never had a sister and she took the role. Every Saturday evening they would sit in her living room and discuss boys, girls, sex, dating and the situation in Europe including the War, Hitler grabbing land and concentration camps. She obtained information of the latter from her Jewish relatives in Europe which non-Jews did not have access. Samuel would argue that it sounded atrocious and irresponsible. They would have these discussions until he entered college at age 16. He had some boy friends who were Jewish. Samuel and Doris had empathy and understood each other. They never saw each other romantically as there was a 2-year difference. She attended a private school for girls and was well-to-do. Her father was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

- 10:00 Her family had a summer home at the Jersey Shore. Samuel's father was a CPA. In the 30s he was manager of a Savings Loan Association and after the War went into private accounting practice which the other two brothers joined. Samuel attended Sunday School at the Unitarian Church from age 8 to 12 or 13. In '39 he climbed Mt. Washington with his father and older brother where they stayed overnight in a cabin. There he heard Neville Chamberlain give his famous speech on the radio and Samuel's father said, "This means war. Roosevelt won't stand for this." Samuel graduated high school in 1942 and entered Oberlin College in Fall '42. He does not recall bombing of Pearl Harbor or speaking about the Pacific Theatre with his girl friend. They only spoke about Europe. Her parents were born in the US. His older brother graduated the previous June. Samuel attended the small liberal college as they had little money, obtained a scholarship and his mother wanted him to attend a co-ed college with no sororities or fraternities so would be more democratic.
- 15:00 Samuel had no idea what to study. He would take liberal arts and wait and see. He was interested in social sciences and had a little knowledge of history. For the summer after his Freshman year, his mother suggested doing something that he would not have any opportunity to do again. That was to attend the Quaker work camp in Indianapolis, Indiana. There, after the race riots, he worked on a settlement house in a Black slum. Boys and girls helped renovate and build a new settlement house. At that time, Samuel became more interested in pacifism, like the other members of the work camp. His mother suggested that he visit his older brother at the civilian public services camp in Big Fletcher, New York between Corning and Elmira. It was a forestry camp where his brother pulled weeds. Samuel took the train in late August of '43 to the camp where he was appalled to see well-trained, well-educated people pulling weeds and other manual tasks. It made him feel depressed and he did not feel he could do that. The participants had poor morale and sat around and did little. There were 14 to 16 cots in his brother's tent. During his freshman year at Oberlin, Samuel attended a Quaker student meeting

where they spoke about the war as many were drafted every week. His roommate had polio so he was 4-F and two other housemates were 4-F due to rheumatic fever so they discussed what position in the war they could serve. They did not approve of his feelings. Samuel was upset about the war as felt it was the result of World War I.

20:00 By '43 there was no way to turn back as war was the only way to stop Hitler. Samuel felt that in the late 20s things could have been handled differently. His brother was a pacifist. Samuel was torn between feeling part of society and that he owed society so it was a dilemma as he wanted to identify with his family and also identify with the army. When he was 18 in November '43 he decided to serve as a noncombatant. It was traumatic when he reentered college at that time as he was not formally inducted until February '44 in Philadelphia. By that time, he completed 3 semesters at Oberlin but his professors excused him from taking final exams. His parents were pleased that he took a Conscientious Objector stand but not pleased that he serves in the military. He did not take the same stand as his brother. Doris was worried but pleased that he was serving. She thought that he was too young to go to war. She was pleased that he felt he owed society a debt to make a contribution. He heard from Doris that the Jews were being persecuted but nothing from the news media.

25:00 This was part of his reason for serving. Another factor for serving was to give credence for his parents' teaching. He was torn as he was not sure that it was sensible to be a Conscientious Objector in the Army. The National Services Board said they were taking a difficult stand as he was neither fish nor fowl. They decided that the Army would allow it but if he finds himself in a difficult situation, he should not waver, not tell the Army that he has doubt. First he was sent to Indianapolis, Pennsylvania and then to Abilene, Texas for basic training in the Medical Corps. He was placed in the Medical Department, not the Corps which was for officers. He was assigned to a basic unit which would be a hospital unit. There were six or seven Conscientious Objectors (COs) in the unit. COs were usually assigned to the Medical Corps with some to quartermaster or finance. He does not know how many COs served in World War II. Instead of two weeks of rifle training, the COs were assigned to mess to clean the grease traps. That is how he found out there were 6 or 7 COs in his unit and how the rest of the unit learned of them.

30:00 The unit did not hate them but may not have understood them. He was the only Quaker. The others were from the Church of the Brethren, Mennonite and 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist. He was sent to El Paso, Texas to learn hospital tasks. At the Bowman Hospital he took a 90-day surgical technician course to become a surgical scrub nurse. He passed instruments and did some ward work as a bed nurse. The Army only told them of troop movements, nothing about concentration camps. He was aware of the campaign in North Africa as he heard of Desert Fox in the early '40s. Next he went to Barkley, Texas to the 81<sup>st</sup> Field Hospital to get his assignment. In late August or September '44 he went to Camp Lee near Petersburg, Virginia to fill the positions and obtain equipment. There were 150

Enlisted men, 15 to 20 Medical Officers, 30 nurses and 120 tons of medical equipment. Most of the participants from basic training were accepted into the Field Hospital. Samuel was the youngest at 18 and some were in their 30s (old men). Some of the older men had disabilities so could not serve in the active military.

- 35:00 He still kept his views at that time. His life was organized and no one questioned his stance nor was he harassed by the other men. He had to study hard to learn his trade. He got orders to move to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, the port of embarkation. His ship left December 20, 1944. He got a pass before the ship left and spent two or three hours at his parents' home singing Christmas carols. The ship went through the New York harbor in a convoy of 30 or 40 ships. **Tape 1, Side B.** It took 21 days to cross the ocean. It was an awful crossing in January with much seasickness. He only had a dull headache and could eat. He was assigned to the infirmary and dragged the sick there where they received intravenous feeding. When they arrived in Southampton, they had no orders. He was on the HMS Volendam, a Dutch ship with a British crew. They were sent to Le Havre where there were no orders and back to Southampton. Then they went to Scotland on the Queen Elizabeth, a huge ship and took a train to Southampton. He was assigned to a hospital in Wales where they received the battle wounded who were flown from Europe. He did bedside nursing for the seriously wounded. There were 40 colostomies in one ward in the six weeks he was there.
- 40:00 It was shocking and appalling but he got immersed in nursing and became engrossed in taking care of the sick and wounded. He would change the dressing on colostomy patients 12 hours a day. Seeing the wounded from war reinforced his negative feelings of war. Healthy men were permanently crippled for the rest of their lives. This reinforced his disgust with war though he felt he was aiding and abetting by taking care of the wounded. Then he got orders for Germany. They went by boat from Le Havre. They reached the 7<sup>th</sup> Army at the Mannheim River. The Commanding Officer asked why they did not arrive sooner.
- 45:00 It was scary to see burning tanks at the side of the road. Samuel did not see the actual fighting as he was too far behind the lines. He realized the situation was getting more serious. When he was in training, he wondered how they would help the wounded but he never found out. In early March '45 the Vermacht was on the run and the Lufthauser was blown out of the sky. When they would set up their hospital unit, they would always be too far from the front to be helpful. They had to be closer to the aid station so they kept moving. They moved about four times and never saw a patient. They tried to keep up with the battle. He had one very frightening experience but it had nothing to do with war or the wounded. It was time to move to the front line so they set up an advance party of two officers and a few enlisted men to select a site. Samuel was probably selected as he spoke French but no German. They arrived in a German neighborhood and the Commanding Officer commandeered a home for the soldiers to spend the night. The

residents got 15 minutes to leave. It bothered him to see the people leave as he felt like a bully. The soldiers moved into their assigned rooms. Captain Reisman wanted an armed guard. The ambulance driver had a rifle which Samuel felt was not following the Geneva convention which the Germans knew. They periodically got strafed but they should not have been armed.

50:00 Samuel was selected as the first guard and he told the captain that he is a Conscientious Objector but the Captain did not know what that meant. Samuel said he would walk without a rifle but the Captain could not rescind the order. Samuel thought it ridiculous for him to walk with a flashlight. After 20 minutes, the Captain asked where his gun is. Samuel recalled that the National Service Board told him that he should not waver so he said, "Sir, as a religious objector, I came into the Army with the understanding that I would not bear arms." Samuel knew that in a combat zone, the Commanding Officer was in charge. The Captain returned to the house. Samuel did not know if he would live or die. He did not know the Captain very well. His friend came out with a gun and told him to go back into the house (Samuel is crying). Some guys were playing cards and some talking but it was quiet in the house. The Captain said nothing.

55:00 Samuel felt alone. He went to his room and his roommate, Mark Stark was there. He said, "Sammy boy" with a Brooklyn accent and put his arm around him. His roommate was 28, old like his father. Samuel said that he was in Germany because of Hitler and what he did to the Jews but he could not kill anyone. Nothing happened the next day. Neither the Captain nor anyone else said anything. The topic never came up again. He worked under the Captain in surgery and was promoted from Tech 5 to Tech 4 to Tech 3, Staff Sergeant. Perhaps the captain just thought he was a religious fanatic. Samuel thought himself a good worker. He never saw the battle wounded. The war was almost over. The unit got a mysterious order to move from Munich to an unknown destination. The next day they went to Dachau. They had no preparation. They suddenly arrived. He had heard of it along with Buchenwald and Auschwitz. They arrived by truck, ambulance, and a semi-trailer where the equipment was stored. His first reaction was numbness upon seeing the bodies and smelling the stench. He doesn't recall seeing a crematorium with ovens. He recalled all the discussions with Doris that such things could not happen.

60:00 They were there about an hour or two when the numbness wore off and they received assignments. They had teams to run the barracks. The typhus inoculation teams came later. Something happened inside him – unspeakable rage. That scared him as he felt that he could kill. He had fantasies; he imagined throwing an SS guard into the prisoner compound. He thought he heard screams but was unsure if it happened. He was in a cold, mirthless rage which scared him. It was not hot anger. He imagined all kinds of things such as torturing guards. He felt the soldiers were like them but the SS were

Gestapo. He never saw one in person, just in his mind. He wrote a letter to his parents and wrote to Doris and told her she was right.

65:00 He wasn't sure what he would be like when he returned home. Six weeks later Doris replied. It was May or June '45 in Philadelphia. The letter was tear-stained with a poem she wrote. She was glad that he saw the world as it can be but she was sorry that he found out the way he did. She wanted him to come home but will be afraid of him. (Samuel cries.) He felt that the whole world is crazy and he might be crazy, too. When he arrived home, Doris had the letter. The letter to his parents is in the Holocaust Museum Archives. There was no anger in their letter as he did not want to frighten them. If he told them about his anger and rage, it would hurt them. As Quakers, they were kind and did not prepare him for this experience. He felt his parents betrayed him but Doris tried to prepare him. Samuel just intellectualized to his parents. He could not believe the Germans would allow this. They were just farmers with pitchforks. He did not talk about his rage. He stayed about a week in Dachau.

70:00 At the barracks, he saw people wearing striped uniforms and their eyes looked like in sockets. They could hardly stand, had urine dripping and were lying in their own waste. There were 38,000 prisoners. They could not eat solid food. The Army did not know what to do with them. Although liberated, they were still locked up. The Army did not realize the immensity of the problem and they could not handle it. They were ordered to leave. Two general hospitals with 1,000 soldiers each took over. The warehouse of bodies was terrible. They left on May 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>.

Samuel B. Hegner

Tape 2, Side A

May 22, 1998

RG-50.106\*0098.02.03

#### Abstract

Tape 2 starts out with Samuel discussing his experience at Dachau and the rest of the tape is interspersed with thoughts about Dachau, speaking about Dachau to others, getting psychoanalysis regarding Dachau and how Dachau influenced him to become a psychiatrist. His duty at Dachau consisted of spraying DDT into the barracks. He could hardly eat or sleep upon seeing Dachau. He can still visualize the gas chambers and the ovens. He spoke of his experience with his fellow soldiers and wrote to his friend, Doris, about it. Samuel explains that upon returning to the base after a pass in Ft. Lee, Virginia, he was in a car accident. This left him with a wounded foot which could have prevented him from going overseas but he insisted upon going. From Dachau, his unit went to a small hospital run by nuns and then to outside of

Marseilles which was the staging area for the Philippines. There he spent 3 weeks in a hospital to recover from dysentery and then was shipped out to Panama. The war was over with Japan while crossing the Atlantic Ocean and their orders were changed for Newport News, Virginia. Upon arrival home, Samuel found his father in a major depression, spent three days walking and talking with his friend, Doris, and then three or four days talking with his brother and his wife in Maine. Then he was assigned as a scrub nurse to a plastic surgery center at a hospital near Cleveland, Ohio until May 1946 when he was discharged. Upon graduating from Oberlin in 1950 in economics, he entered Medical School which he completed in 1954 and became a psychiatrist. He got married in 1950 and has 2 sons and a daughter.

## Summary

00:00 This tape begins with Samuel discussing his experience at Dachau. He was given no prior information to walking into the camp as a group. They were only warned not to get too close to the prisoners, perhaps because of their diseased condition. They wore neither rubber gloves nor special uniform. Perhaps the typhus inoculation team wore special clothes. Samuel was on the DDT Team and they had no special garments. He knew they could not feed the prisoners regular food and the Feeding Team took care of that. Perhaps the 7th Army knew about Dachau but his officers did not. The enlisted men swept out empty barracks and moved into them. Samuel does not recall where they ate, took a bath or brushed their teeth. He was 19 at the time and could hardly eat after viewing the starved prisoners. He had no appetite and could hardly sleep. He felt like he was in a numb dream. He walked around, got orders and felt rage.

05:00 He has few visual memories except for the ovens which were still warm and the gas chambers that looked like showers. He thought there might have been hot air ducts from the crematorium to warm the German barracks. Samuel did not talk to the survivors. He got through 1/10th of the 30,000 prisoners' barracks with the DDT. Samuel felt we won World War II due to our money and supplies. He breathed in the DDT spray that he used on the barracks as he did not wear a mask. He saw two or three prisoners in their bunk but they were too weak to get out. It was so overwhelming so he hardly remembers the details. The first time he saw a dead body was on the way to Dachau when he saw the body of an American soldier in a tent. His grandparents and great-grandparents were still alive so he never saw a dead body before then. Samuel feels his poor memory of that time is due to his internal feelings.

10:00 His group talked among themselves about Dachau and walked around in a daze. He does not recall specific conversation or writing to his parents. The letter to them was dated May 11th so he had already left Dachau. Samuel had to keep going as was under military orders. He felt a wellspring of strength like when he was walking guard and was petrified but felt that he could handle it. He is thinking way back when he knew he took the Conscientious Objector stand in the Army, he felt he could handle it. He did not waver with the captain but wavered in Dachau when he was so angry and felt that he could kill. He had such rage and wondered if he was still a

Pacifist. He has discussed this and could not solve it at Oakland or other groups. Though he still abhors war, he entertained fantasies of revenge that scared him so that he thought he was as crazy as the Nazis.

15:00 On his way to this interview, Samuel spent a night with a classmate who was also a Conscientious Objector who he had not seen for 30 years. The friend had served several years in prison as he refused to register for the service. Now the friend is 76 years old and retired from being a General Practitioner and a Psychiatrist. Before he learned the truth about concentration camps, the friend thought it a hoax and afterwards was shocked to learn the truth. Samuel told the friend that he was scared to do the interview and the friend wished him, "Good luck." Samuel did not think to speak to the chaplain at Dachau as he was not close to him so just spoke to his peers. He spoke to Mark Stark who was 28 years old. He still recalls the screams of an SS trooper thrown into the prison compound and wonders if it was his imagination. He recalls the prisoners staring at him with their eyes in sockets. He learned nothing about any medical experiments performed at Dachau until later.

20:00 He felt both 19 and 98 at the same time as he felt that he suddenly aged 100 years. He did not think about being young at the time. A neighbor once commented on his being so young when he saw Dachau. He did not have to go overseas and that was his mother's wish but not his. He had a week pass from Fort Lee, Virginia before heading for Camp Kilmer. He and his friends left Friday from Fort Lee and drove to Philadelphia and tried to return on Monday by reveille. The owner of the car did all the driving and drove all night Sunday. At Richmond the car went off the road and rolled over. The driver was hurt and had to go to the hospital. The one who rode shotgun fell out the back. The friend at the door wedged him in tightly so he landed right side up with bruised legs and was taken to the hospital. His legs hurt and he could not walk and was x-rayed. His mother came from Philadelphia and said that he did not have to go overseas. He was afraid that he did not have a permanent disability and would be sent to Repo where he would be placed in a new unit. His mother returned to Philadelphia. Samuel asked the doctor for a cane and he went to the bus station in Richmond and took the bus to Petersburg.

25:00 He forgot about the Jim Crow laws. Samuel saw a black soldier in the back and he sat down next to him. The bus did not leave and everyone stared at him. The driver told him to move forward as the seat was for Colored people. There were no seats in the White section and he had to stand with the cane on the 40 mile trip. When he reached his unit, the 1st Sergeant asked him what he was doing with a cane. They were leaving in the morning and was about to strike his name but agreed to take him even if he had to be carried. Samuel threw away the cane and walked. He would not tell the story to his mother. At Dachau, Samuel's unit did not touch the dead bodies or the town people, just had armed guards all around the camp. He was not concerned about catching the prisoner's illnesses.

30:00 Samuel's friends felt the same about Dachau as he did and he did not know other soldiers' attitudes. He remembers working in the barracks, standing around and writing to Doris. He

wondered if the letter would be censored as he did not know what one was allowed to write. His parent's letter was not censored as it did not mention military information. He was aware that his unit did not have a sophisticated general hospital and personnel to deal with 28,000 prisoners. He was glad when they left Dachau so he could get calmer. He did not notice any prisoners that were his age though a 19-year-old prisoner would probably look older. Next Samuel's unit was commandeered to a small community German hospital staffed by nuns. It was located inside a cloister and had no patients. They took it over to treat displaced persons. They were there for a week and got orders to go to Southern France. Samuel did not keep a journal. A miserable, disgusting thing happened. There was a binocular microscope in the hospital lab which had precise, high quality. An officer told two soldiers to crate it though the nuns begged that they do not remove it.

35:00 Samuel was not aware whether the Army medical officers had a different opinion from his as he had no contact or friendship with them. He did not know what duties the medical officers had. The only females in his unit were the 30 Registered Nurses. There was no contact with them either as they were officers. He never considered crossing the line. Each soldier had a buddy to look after each other and protect each other. You could leave your wallet and watch with your buddy when you took a shower. Tape 2, Side B. He probably spoke with his buddy about Dachau. His buddy was Avery Hall, 25 years old, an old man from Fostoria (?), Ohio. Samuel said he is easily moved to tears but does not feel that he has greater insights than others. They went to an area near Marseille which was the staging area to move troops to the Philippines.

40:00 They crated equipment to move to the Philippines. He still thinks of Dachau today. He was busy packing up and he became seriously ill. He got dysentery from drinking bad water and spent three weeks in the hospital. There were no antibiotics at that time. He went down from 140 pounds to 110 pounds. Samuel did not have a camera in Dachau. Perhaps he wrote his parents from the nuns' hospital where they tried to gather the ill but accomplished very little. (Samuel reads the letter he wrote to his parents.) He feels that the German Army performed their duty. German civilians might have opposed it but could not do anything like when the people in the Midwest opposed the draft and it was passed. Samuel believes that as a 19-year-old he intellectualized Dachau as he did not think like he does today. He still places less guilt on the civilians than on the military. He calls it "intellectualization" when he tries to explain the unexplainable.

45:00 In mid-August they were bound for the Panama Canal for Manila. Atom bombs were dropped on Japan while Samuel's ship was in the Atlantic Ocean. Japan surrendered and their orders were changed to Newport News, Virginia. He was relieved that the war was over (August 15) so lives were spared but he was frightened by the atom bomb. He did not know the immensity of the atom bomb until later. He was thankful that he would be home soon instead of years later. He arrived in Newport News on August 21st and 72 hours later was in Philadelphia and 48 hours later walking the sand dunes in New Jersey with Doris. They walked and talked for

three days. She was the one who originally questioned him and he could not talk like this to his parents. She did not say anything; she just listened. She felt he was not the same and he was not surprised. He felt that support from a peer was precious. He told her everything and she wanted to hear it all.

50:00 His younger brother was 14 and at summer camp. His older brother had left the Forestry Camp at Big Flats, New York and requested more significant work. He was sent to Maine to the Institute for the Feeble Minded though he had no training. He worked 12 hours a day as a ward attendant until May 1946. These mental defectives were wards of the State and had no medication. Samuel spent three or four days with his brother and his wife at their home near Portland, Maine. His brother wanted to hear it all and he told him everything. Samuel's unit reconvened in Gadsden (?), Alabama and was assigned to the Crowley (?) General Hospital near Cleveland, Ohio. The hospital had a plastic surgery center for those wounded by shrapnel. Samuel had to serve until May 1946 when he had sufficient points for discharge. He worked as a scrub nurse. The Center was given sufficient funds to try new techniques. Samuel would scrub up for surgery and when there was no surgery, he went to Oberlin to get ready to return to college. He entered Fall '46 and graduated in '49. Summer '46 he had time to return to civilian life. He spent the summer with his parents who were worried about him as though he was sick, depressed and detached. Samuel was footloose. He wondered how to be with civilians and was annoyed with their complacency. He had a hard time at the Quaker meetings as they turned the other cheek. He felt he was on a different planet from them and they would come up to him and ask how he was and tell him that they were glad to see him back.

55:00 Samuel tried to write a poem about Dachau but could not. He could only remember the urine running down the bedposts and could not put it in the poem. His mother suggested he study typing that summer. By the time he returned to campus, others had returned and they had a lot in common but the girls thought them strange. He had a roommate and they lived in a small private house. There were six students in the house and they all conversed but the others did not want to hear much about the war as it was over. Some of the students had been in battle and did not want to tell their stories and Samuel had not been fired on. He only spoke to one professor. Samuel majored in economics so was the black sheep as his father, older brother and, later, younger brother were all CPAs. The GI bill saw him through college and his father did not expect him to get anything more than a B.A. He was not happy in economics and took as much social sciences as he could.

60:00 When he arrived home, he found his father in an acute major depression, suicidal, male menopause and delusional. Samuel was terrified as he had never seen him like that before. His mother was in California attending a psychology seminar as she was a Carl Jung fan. Samuel did not know what to do. His mother came home a few days later. Samuel was seeing a psychologist twice a week who said his father should be in a hospital and get electroshock treatment. His mother would not give consent. One night Samuel borrowed the family car and had a few beers with a buddy. He arrived home around 11 in the rain and found his father crying and

asking for the car keys. Samuel did not want to give him the keys as he was in such an emotional condition and the weather was bad. His father raised his fist, cried, ran upstairs and slammed the door. Samuel felt his father was the child and he was the father. His mother returned two days later and Samuel met Doris at the shore. He was angry at his mother for leaving home. His mother talked in psychological terms of defenses and projection which influenced him to become a psychiatrist. He was close to his mother and listened to her but did not always agree with her. His two brothers turned her off.

65:00 When he was in his senior year, he had to write an international trade paper and realized that he was in the wrong field. He consulted his thesis advisor and told him there was just 8 weeks to graduation and knew that he was in the wrong field. The professor asked him what he would like to do with his life and he responded, "Psychiatrist." The professor laughed. Samuel had a steady girl friend who had transferred from Smith College who said she knew this was going to happen. He told her that it would be rough for him to go to Medical School as he had not studied chemistry. She said that was all right. Samuel completed his thesis in 8 weeks and two weeks later enrolled in freshman chemistry. He thought he could get the GI Bill and loans from the VA. They approved his goals if he got accepted into Medical School. His experience at Dachau and his father's condition influenced him to go into psychiatry. He wanted to undergo his own psychoanalysis to understand his feelings from Dachau. Even if he did not graduate, he would get psychotherapy.

70:00 He was accepted into Medical School with difficulty. Nine out of 10 Medical Schools did not accept him. He was the only son at home at the time. They had tense conversations at the dinner table. He got married in the summer of 1950 before entering Medical School in Fall 1950. He completed Medical School in Philadelphia in 1954, completed an internship there, completed a psychiatric residency at Temple University in 1958, had his own analysis and opened his own practice. His analysis was done by a Jewish psychoanalyst who understood him. Samuel told his wife about his wartime experience. When they were courting at Oberlin, he told her that he was so confused and asked if she could put up with someone who might not defend her and she accepted it. When their sons were of draft age, his wife told them to go to Canada. Samuel did not relate his experiences to his children when they were young as it would be too horrible for them. When they were grown, he spoke only a little as they did not want to hear much. Their daughter who lives near them knows that he was coming for the interview. They have two sons, one in Detroit and the other in Bar Harbor, Maine. They did not ask much about it. Perhaps it is due to their generation. Both their generation and the grandchildren's generation have trouble with this. An acquaintance told Samuel that he does not believe there were concentration camps and Samuel replied that he would come and speak about them

75:00 Even if he does not go and speak, Samuel is satisfied that he showed his letter to the acquaintance.

Samuel B. Hegner

Tape 3, Side A

May 22, 1998

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### Abstract

This final part of the interview continues with how Samuel's life was affected by viewing Dachau. He believes that his experience helped him empathize with his patients during his 36 years as a psychiatrist. In the 70s he experienced a major depression which he accounts the family history as being the cause. Perhaps maturity or having resolved issues indicates completed treatment. Random events bring Dachau to mind. He had a cold rage when he was at Dachau but did not act upon it. He seldom talks about Dachau or reads about concentration camps. He is still against war and does not believe there are "just" wars. When he visited Germany, he went to the gates of Dachau but did not enter. Samuel believes that Hitler was crazy. He thinks it a good thing that Germany became stronger after World War II. His unit did little organized activity after the War. He saw the French did not live in sanitary conditions but the Germans lived in more sanitary conditions like us. He understood that the farmers in Dachau could do nothing about the concentration camp. Samuel is no longer in touch with his childhood friend, Doris. He made the interview as there might have been some information he could add or his questions could be answered.

### Summary

00:00 Samuel was in general adult psychiatric practice for 36 years until he retired in 1994. He started out in Philadelphia and after 11 years moved to a semi-rural area of New Hampshire where he practiced for 25 years. He felt that having gone through the War helped him empathize with those who suffered major depression or traumatic conditions. In the 70s he had experienced a major depression so he knows what it is like to experience. He did not believe that his major depression had to do with Dachau but to do with the predisposition of the Hegner family. His father was depressed in '45 and his daughter suffered three depressions with her three pregnancies. He feels he has learned to live with the Dachau experience though he has not made peace with it. It is like a permanent disability that you live with but don't like it. Recently, he knew this interview was coming up and thought of Dachau more frequently.

05:00 He may be watching TV or reading and for no rhyme or reason, he starts to think of Dachau. He does not read much about war or about concentration camps as it is not pleasant; just like this interview is not pleasant. He does not like to remember Dachau more than necessary. He did not have more remembrances when his children were 18 and 19. Just random events bring Dachau to mind. Man is capable of the dark side of himself but that is not a satisfactory explanation, only a theoretical explanation. He cannot explain other acts of violence such as killing a spouse, parent or child. He is not happy with psychiatric theoretical

explanations of this. He walked away from the death instinct. When he experienced the cold rage, he wondered about committing evil but never did. He had a murderous impulse but did not act upon it. He does not know if there is such a thing as a "just" war though people told him that he was lucky to have served in a "just" war.

10:00 At his war reunion, he thought there might be a World War III. He did not hold this belief due to the nuclear bomb though the bomb changed the way he feels as he is more afraid. There are nuclear advances for good purposes. Psychoanalysis did not answer his question about a "just" war. Samuel still abhors war and believes it is miserable and awful. He reads in the newspaper of small wars all over the world. People blowing each other up disgust him. He does not see the purpose. He did not act upon his rage. He is 72 years old and still does not understand. To stop a second Hitler, he would not allow him to get a foothold. We learned how Hitler got his start and we should handle things differently. The Marshall Plan helped Germany. Samuel likes to think that we could avoid another Hitler. We are unable to keep Africa from genocide but like to think that we have developed. He returned to Germany with his wife to visit friends in Munich and took a two-week auto trip through Austria. He drove by the entrance to Dachau but did not go in.

15:00 He did not want to bring back all his memories. Once experienced was sufficient for him. He has since resisted talking about Dachau. He did not want people to say, "There's a vet telling stories again." Sometimes he does not want to have feelings about Dachau and other times he does not mind it for a short time. It depends on the situation that he is in and who he is with. Some people knew he was coming for the interview and he told them why he was having it and others he did not tell. It depended on how much he trusted the person. He did not want to appear like an old man telling stories. He feels he would be a different person if he had not been to Dachau. He would not have gotten in touch with his dark side. It was a humbling experience to touch that part of himself that he did not know existed. At times he feels angry that he was exposed. It was not fair. You should not do that to a 19-year-old. Other times he does not feel bitter as it taught himself something about himself and others.

20:00 .He feels that he grew up in Dachau. His feelings depend upon when he is asked. Samuel questions why some people can do so many forms of evil while others are altruistic and put their lives on the line. Why are some selfish and others selfless? Perhaps, at least partly it is conditioning or nurture. Earlier, he thought it was 100%. Not everyone is born equal as it concerns feelings. Not all are born with the same capacity to control or deal with the anger. For years he wondered about the resolution of conflicts. He wondered how do you resolve something or become less intense or in a different form? Psychiatry has not written much about it. A person finishes treatment when they allow themselves to experience a whole gambit of emotions available to man and decide rationally what to do about it. Anyone is capable of genocide but what they do with their feelings is different. Perhaps maturity or having resolved issues indicates completed treatment. Samuel believes that Hitler was crazy. He only saw himself, not society or other people. He was delusional.

25:00 He was able to carry his country with mob psychology as he was a strong, charismatic leader. There were social factors as some people swung over to Hitler as believed that he could bring a new social order. Samuel does not feel comfortable in Germany. He thought it ironic that the enemy is now the leading industrial nation in Europe but it is better than what happened to Germany after World War I. When he drove through rural France in trucks, he saw the French lived under unsanitary conditions and when he came to Germany, he saw the Germans lived in sanitary conditions like us, not in filth. We have more in common with the Germans than we like to admit. Today when he meets a German it depends on the person whether he feels comfortable or not. He tries to take them at face value, like other races. He realizes that 98% or most of the prisoners were Jews and that just a few were political prisoners. He is no longer in touch with Doris. He and his wife visited her after she had her first child who was allergic to milk and difficult. He did not meet Doris' husband and she no longer keeps in touch. The husband was not Jewish and too macho for Samuel.

30:00 He does not believe that Doris lost any family in the Holocaust. Samuel is no longer a practicing Quaker. He tried to rejoin but it did not work out. He felt the Quakers were not seeing things clearly and he could not tell them about himself so he drifted away. His wife is an Atheist though she is religious and his son is also an Atheist. His wife never attended church nor did she stop him from attending. Gradually, attending church became meaningless and he does not miss it. He worships in other ways. His political views have not changed as he voted for Norman Thomas for 30 years. He, his wife and sons are all liberal Democrats. His daughter is a "Yuppie." Samuel does not think about the war more now. Random events make him think of it. Sounds or smells do not trigger thoughts of Dachau. When he reads about atrocities such as genocide in Africa, he may think of it. He has mostly visual thoughts.

35:00 He worked very little with the DPs. It wasn't too long before he was sent to Southern France for deployment. After Dachau, he was in a rest camp in Germany near a river. He had time to sit at the river and talk to German children. He was offered a ride on a motorcycle. He did not know why he deserved the rest. Tape 3, Side B. After the War, Samuel's unit did little organized activity as they were a field hospital, a Mash-type hospital, which is only designed for war. They weren't adapted for post-war illnesses such as chronic illness or battle-fatigue but more for acute, traumatic battle illness. They could not deal with the dietary problems and the pharmacy was not sophisticated. It was more sophisticated than a first-aid station. He spoke with some German youngsters but did not discuss Dachau. In Dachau he asked a few citizens how they could have let it happen. At first, they did not admit they knew that Dachau existed and later said they were terrified that they would be killed.

40:00 Samuel was satisfied that the Bavarian farmer was not sophisticated and did not have knowledge how to deal with it. He did not meet any German aristocracy or well-to-do. This interview covered more ground than expected. He made the interview as there might have been some information he could add or they could answer his questions. Samuel wanted to know if there were air ducts from the crematorium to the German army quarters. He was curious what

questions would be asked and, perhaps, he would respond differently than expected. He did not realize that he would have this catharsis. He was surprised that he got so emotional.

43:00