

**Charles Teske**

**Interviewed by Susan Fiksdal**

**The Evergreen State College Oral History Project**

**Interview 1**

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**FINAL**

**Teske:** My name is Charles Bahn Teske and I'm Charles rather than Karl because I'm named for my maternal grandfather, Charles Winton Bahn. He, though a German-American (Charles Winton is definitely not a Germanic name), was named for an English or Scots-Irish person who was very good to the family, and so he was named for this person Charles Winton Bahn, and I was named Charles Bahn in honor of my maternal grandfather. The Teske part: in Germany we would be "Tesk-eh." Here we are "Tesk." Now a lot of the people bearing that name, most of whom live in Wisconsin and the Chicago area and some of them in the Dakotas call themselves "Tesk-ee." That sounds a little bit Slavic and there is nothing East Germans of Prussian background fear more than being confused for Slavic people among whom they lived. So, my dad changed it.

My dad had a teacher in grade school who was Miss Fiske and he figured if she could be "Fisk" F I S K E, then he could be "Tesk" T E S K E. And the family had already changed his name from Franz Wilhelm to Frank William, so my father was Frank William "Tesk" and I preserved that pronunciation. As far as we can make out, Teske is an East German diminutive for Matthew: Matthias >Tiaske.

Date of birth is September 24, 1932 in Easton, Pennsylvania. It's on the Delaware. The old name was "Forks of the Delaware" because the Lehigh comes down from the former coal regions and joins the Delaware at that place.

Family heritage: German-American on both sides. My mother's side came from the Palatinate—a large German area, most of it west of the Rhine River, and it was from that area when William Penn needed farmers and was willing to offer land and religious freedom, he sent emissaries to invite these protestants to Pennsylvania. Frankly, the Germans were not told another reason—that at the time the Quakers who founded the commercial settlements along the Delaware River, these merchants knew nothing about farming so they needed someone to grow food for them. But they were also pacifists and when some of the Indians got upset about the Quakers coming in, the Quakers couldn't fight back, so they figured they could get some nice Germans. The Germans had the farmland as a sort of shield for the Quaker settlement on the river so when the Indians attacked, they'd get the Germans instead of them. At any rate in Philadelphia, Germantown is now part of the inner city, but originally it was part of the shield of farmland protecting Philadelphia.

**Fiksdal:** A good story.

**Teske:** Nobody in my mother's family knows for sure, but it would have been sometime in the 1710's or the 1730s that the family would have come over. My dad came over much later as part of the installments of his family. My grandfather, Johann (John) came over around 1889, and found work eventually in the anthracite regions of Pennsylvania. There's a big crescent that goes from Scranton, Pennsylvania down to Hazelton and that's where the coal seam is, along the Susquehanna River. At any rate, when he was settled at Plymouth, PA, he sent for the rest of the family, who came in installments. So, my dad came in the middle of the 1890s at age six with the older of his two sisters. In all, the

parents, two daughters, and five sons came. They were from the Posen area which, of course, now is Poznan, Poland. My grandfather was Johan and my grandmother was Caroline. My aunts were Florenz and Mathilde; my uncles were Emil, Gustav, Julius, and August. So, that's the family background.

My mother was Helen Elizabeth Bahn, and here I'll go back a couple of generations because I think it's important for this general background. My great grandfather, Benjamin Denlinger, was a New Order Mennonite. Now, the Mennonites are not so strict as the Amish. The New Order Mennonites are a cut below the Amish [laughs] in strictness. And my great grandmother, Elizabeth Dieffenbach, was not a "plain person by birth." She was "fancy": she was like one of us.

But when she married a Mennonite, she became "plain." And even though my great grandfather died relatively early, in an epidemic, leaving my great grandmother with five daughters and a farm, she kept "plain" all her life. She lived until I was six years old and I still recall she'd be sitting in the wheelchair with her white bonnet, her black long dress. And on the stairwell, I've got a photograph of four generations -- great-grandmother, grandmother, mother, and me as babe-in-arms. At any rate, she did not force her daughters to become "plain," but she herself, in honor of the husband, stayed so. Now when you think about that, that is quite a feat—raising five daughters by herself. My grandmother Ella Nora, was the oldest of the five daughters and so she became a babysitter and cook for the family. At any rate, she married Charlie Bahn and they both, at home, spoke Pennsylvania German. You know there's a big mistake: you say, "Pennsylvania Dutch" and people say "Holland." It's not that—it's Pennsylvania *Deutsch*. My grandmother spoke York County Pennsylvania Dutch and my grandmother spoke Lancaster County Pennsylvania Dutch. So that's my mother's background.

My grandfather had gone to what was then called a Normal School to get a certification to teach grade school. But I don't think he really did that. He had a haberdashery business, and then when my parents got married and moved from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to Easton, the grandparents came along and lived with us for 12 years and then got an apartment about two blocks away. So, they were an important part of my life.

My mother, Helen Bahn, was born in 1902, started taking piano lessons early on and got very proficient and very interested. She did not go to college; she became a piano teacher—she did some solo performing—but what she really enjoyed was accompanying. She had absolute pitch, perfect pitch, which used to drive me nuts because I would go to the piano as a little kid and hit a note and say, "All right, Mother, what is it?" And she, without thinking, could tell me. Or, I would sneak up on her and I would say, "Ok, sing an F sharp." You know, no problem; she could do that and she developed into a tremendous sight reader. So, one of her big strengths was as an accompanist. And she also loved chamber music, and during the late 30's and the 40's had a string trio which practiced at our home, and of course she taught her lessons at home, so my mother was a professional woman, and I had no doubt about what she did because I was right in the middle of it.

**Fiksdal:** Did you learn piano as well then?

**Teske:** She tried to teach me starting at 4 and it was not a good idea. It is true, Susan, that I could do treble-clef music notation at the same time that I learned to write, so the two of them went together. So, that was for a later part of my life and leading up to what I was doing at Evergreen.

When I was coming up on my eighth birthday, she said, "O.K., you're getting pretty long in the tooth, and I don't care what it is but you choose an instrument and we will get you a rent-to-own instrument, but whatever it is, you'd better get started." I'd heard our Sunday School orchestra that played on some special Sundays, and they had played for the September season- opening service. The band was there,

and Irwin Buss was playing trumpet and I looked at that and said, “Wow, that’s a neat instrument, so when my mother said, “choose something” I automatically said, “trumpet.” And thus, you know, got on the road to a life of genteel poverty, but [laughs]

**Fiksdal:** [laughs] I was going to say, “a star was born!”

**Teske:** A lot of artistic enjoyment.

A couple of things, going back to my mother, impressed me very much. First off, at the time she was going through high school, she not only had the chance to take some Latin, but some Greek, and she and my father from their high school experience, flirted with the idea of becoming Greek teachers, so that was part of their background.

I don’t know if you know anything about this, but before WWI, if you were American and wanted to learn music, if you were a singer, you went to Italy. If you were a composer, conductor, or instrumentalist, you went to Germany. Well, WWI and the general German hatred sort of scotched that, and the French, with the “Lafayette we are here” kind of thing—the French right after WWI opened a summer school for Americans at Fontainebleau, which I don’t know if you have ever been there, it was a hunting lodge for Louis XIVth.

**Fiksdal:** Right, yeah.

**Teske:** It was a huge place and some of the big things that occurred there—they needed to hire teachers who could speak English and by luck they got a Belgian-extraction woman, Nadia Boulanger, who started when they opened—I think in 1920 or 21-- to teach composition, and she taught Aaron Copland and Copland came back and spread the word and a whole lot of American composers, who then became influential professors in American schools, studied with Nadia Boulanger. They’re called “the Boulangerie.” And, as a matter of fact, I ran into a retired theory professor from Centralia College who had studied with Boulanger.

**Fiksdal:** Oh, for heaven’s sakes!

**Teske:** If you were a composer, you were nothing if you had not studied with Boulanger. Well, my mother as a pianist did not study with her, but studied with some other great people, and she’s got the most lurid of the diplomas we have on the stairwell! It’s one with naked ladies on it and among the signatures is that of Charles Marie Widor, the great organ composer. So, we have his signature on the diploma.

Mother got to be the regional accompanist for the main New York voice teacher, Estelle Liebling. If you were, say, a program chairperson for a women’s club somewhere in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, or Connecticut or something like that, you would call Liebling and say, “Could you send someone out to do a concert for us?” Well, fine, who was going to accompany them? Liebling had a stable of accompanists around various towns, but she didn’t have anybody from northeastern Pennsylvania, and when my mother went to New York with an aspiring contralto who wanted to study with Liebling, the contralto wasn’t accepted, but Liebling asked my mother to accompany her students who were asked to do recitals in our area. And that’s how my mother got to accompany Beverley Sills, who became the great international opera star, on Sills’s way up as an American soprano.

**Fiksdal:** Wow!

**Teske:** It was great, Susan, because with my mother being a sight reader like this, I could take a piece that had piano accompaniment and plunk it down on the piano and she would play it perfectly. And that

went on—in her late 80s in her great retirement home, she was sort of the house pianist. There was once when I was going to see her I took along a cornet. I played the Sunday service and I took along some other pieces as well. We had some old times with my playing and Lilo [Charlie's wife] also went back and once sang with my mother.

One of the interesting questions here, "What was your relationship with your parents." That's a great question! I don't know what your feelings are about this, but my family, there are two large steps to get over. The first is when you realize that your parents are two human beings with their own lives and backgrounds and their own trajectories and so forth, and they're not just here to take care of you. Getting over that, realizing that they are persons—that's a big step. The other one, then is getting to be friends with them so that you can be collaborators, pals in a certain sense. Well, making music together is a very very strong relationship. And it was interesting—you know, here I was back at her retirement home in Allentown, Pennsylvania, but when we went into the big auditorium, she sat down at the grand piano and I took out my horn, wup! Now we're serious, now it's business! And of course, she would always follow me but she would ask, "Do you really want to do it that way." And she said, "Oh my, you're playing with a much more melodious attack — less penetrating." And I said, "That's switching over from brass band playing to something a little more humane!"

So anyway, that part was just great and we got along tremendously. But I still think that somewhere in the background was the strength that my great-grandmother must have had to get her daughters through [school] and not just have the family completely collapse. I hope that's somewhere in me. When you look back and hear the family stories you say, "Well, maybe I've got some reserves there I can draw upon."

**Fiksdal:** Well I think that steadfastness—you might think about it a little bit when you get to why you came to Evergreen and what people called you to do. You were the PR person, you had to go out and talk to groups and you accepted that role and you did it, so I think it fits, you know.

**Teske:** A great oversimplification: my dad as a Protestant minister was a man of words. My mother was a woman of music. But interestingly, it was my dad who was the improviser because my mother could not play jazz. She really appreciated that I was doing it but she could not. You could put in front of her some pop sheet-music and she could sight read it and she could do a good job, but if I would tell her "O.K., now improvise on it," she could not do it.

My dad gave his sermons the way I prepare my lectures. Opening, closing, facts, names correctly spelled, birthdates. A few other salient details but otherwise an outline. And over the years I heard him preach what you might call the same sermon, but it's a little bit like, Susan, when at Evergreen the scientists, especially the life-scientists, learned that I had some very strong feelings from my study of romanticism about the late development of "nature" as tree-hugging, they would ask me, "Charlie, can you come in and give your lecture on nature?" I do not have "a" lecture on Nature. It will never be the same twice. Why would you want to give it the same way twice? And I would point out, by the way, that in the [Oxford English Dictionary] OED the definition of Nature that we use when we say, "I love nature," is number 13 historically. Originally it means "how things were born." Of course, in giving that lecture I would always give S.J. Perlman's definition of a farm: "A farm: an irregular bunch of nettles growing out of rocks bounded by short-time bank notes, [all of which are due] and occupied by a fool and his wife without enough sense to go back to the city where they belong. A farm." That's an example. I would start with that and the OED definition and then sort of wing it.

At any rate, those were the two sides: music and words, both improvisation and strict attention to notation. But my dad's story, that part of the family's story, was really one of those "only in America"

things. My grandfather Johann's job that he got in the coal regions was as a heavy carpenter and as Lilo has said, he must have gone to a special training school for it. He would go down into the mines. He would be hired by the miner, who would hire his own support team. My grandfather as heavy carpenter would be the one who would put up the big timbers every few yards on the sides and then the columns and then the rafters holding up the ceiling. I know I asked my dad once, "Who was holding up the coal face while grandfather was putting that up?" My dad's answer was that there would be enough—with the moisture—enough surface tension that before it had a lot of air and it would dry out—if you got in there on time, you could shore it up. But that's what my grandfather did.

**Fiksdal:** He must have been incredibly strong.

**Teske:** Yeah, and you know, dangerous work. But you know in that area real men went into the mines just as in the state of Washington real men became either loggers or fishermen. You know, none of this namby- pamby going to college stuff. My dad just never really talked about this [emphasized with hand on hand]. He mentioned it once as if it were a sort of lark during summer vacation for school that he had been down in the mines. And about as definitive as he got was when you're digging your galleries and passage-ways you'd dig them slightly uphill and you would lay rails. At the coal face, the miners who were digging the coal put it in these relatively small trams—railroad cars—that had brakes and you'd hire kids to be the brakemen. With the force of gravity, they'd come down through the side tunnels until they'd get to the main trunk line and then again by the force of gravity, they go until they get to the center of whatever level they were on. That's where the huge elevator is. The elevator takes the tram and goes up not only to the surface but to the top of the breaker tower. The mining towns would be dotted with breakers that would go up 4 or 5 stories. The tram goes up to the top story to a cradle which then dumps it. And the coal goes down a slow-moving conveyer belt, and at various places on the conveyer belt are what are called the breakers where the big hunks of coal are broken into smaller hunks and they go through another breaker until finally when they get down to what would be the ceiling of the first story, that's where the regular open railroad cars are waiting. The coal goes into the first car and then the car is shunted and the next car pulls up. The empty tram then goes back down by the elevator. How do you get them up the slope to where the coal is being up there?

**Fiksdal:** Did the kids have to push it up?

**Teske:** Mules.

**Fiksdal:** Oh, mules, good.

**Teske:** But the boys again, having been brakemen on the cars coming down, would then hitch up the mule to the tram and lead it up through the passageway to the coal face. Then they would take the mules back down until they got the signal to go back up again. These mules by the way, once they were taken down, usually they died down there. The boys worked with the feed and the water.

It sounded at first as if he was doing it for one summer. But when Lilo and I last went over to Europe, year 2000, one of my aims was to visit the areas my families came from. Not that there would be anybody left, but just to breathe the air and look at the landscape. I was able to do a very good job through Pennsylvania German Heritage Center with mother's side. I asked a scholar whom we visited where would be the magnetic center of the area in the Palatinate where my mother's family came from. He said "You're in it. Right here." The other side going into what is now Poland: Poles did not want to see returning Germans. If a stranger came in, the assumption was that you wanted to reclaim your land. Or your house because you had been driven out.

But anyway, in the process, trying to find out about my father's side of the family, I was able to go to our local Mormon stake -- the Latter-Day Saints Church -- and was able to get hold of some things, thanks to a Mormon researcher sitting next to me working the microfilms, who was very helpful. I was able to order stuff from Salt Lake City and I found the 1900 census. And there it was. My grandfather, "coal worker," my uncle Gustav "slate picker," and there was my dad, "breaker boy." If you look on the web for "breaker boy," wow, it's like getting kicked in the stomach. These were the kids being used as poster boys for getting a child labor law. They would go in—my dad did this for at least three years. When he should have been going to school. You would go in early in the morning, you would have a half-hour break for lunch, so in the winter you would get up in the dark and go home in the dark. You had heavy boots and what you did when the conveyer belt was bringing ever smaller hunks of coal, you would sit on a sort of pipe holding on for dear life. You were not allowed to wear gloves. I guess you would hold on with one arm and try to pick out the slate as it's going by. And you would continually be pushing with your heavy boots the coal as it was going down. No air conditioning in the summer. No heat in the winter. And there would be usually a former breaker boy who would be there with a very long switch and if he caught you nodding off, he would hit you with the switch. And there were a lot of fatalities where the kids would simply fall asleep and fall down into the stream of the coal and into the teeth that were breaking things up. That's what my dad was doing and I did not realize that until 2004.

I realized he was a breaker boy in 2000 but it wasn't until we were back in the coal regions and I got a booklet about the mining and looked it up on the web. What saved my dad and the younger uncles was the meat market. My oldest uncle got apprenticeship training as a butcher and then the capital to open a meat market, and he pulled his brothers out of the mine and they worked in the meat market before school and after school -- but they could go to school.

My dad had to go some extra years to a prep school to make up for what he had lost. He was an excellent athlete, played football in the prep school and got good grades and was offered a football scholarship to Harvard. At that time Harvard was a big sports mill like Ohio State or U. of Oregon. His prep school coach said, "Don't go. You'll be eating at a separate table, living in a separate dormitory, and the competition will be so intense that if your foot is sticking out of a pile someone will twist it and you'll be out of action and out of a scholarship." So instead, he went on a combined grades-and-football scholarship to Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster PA, where he played football, and then went from there to the Lancaster Theological Seminary where he did his training and became ordained.

At that time, it was the German Reformed Church. Reformed as opposed to Lutheran; and German as opposed to Dutch—Holland Dutch. It's the Holland Dutch Reformed who were the strict Calvinists, the believers in predestination —no, my dad did not belong to that breed of cat. Then in 1934 the mainly Pennsylvania Reformed Church merged with the Evangelical Synod of the Midwest to become the Evangelical and Reformed Church. The congregation in which I was raised had over 900 communicating members plus the Sunday school. My dad had no assistant pastor. The only full-time employees were my dad and the janitor. He had a part-time music director, part-time treasurer, part-time secretary. He ran the whole thing himself. That's a big congregation. He then became the president of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (70 churches). He received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Franklin and Marshall.

The final thing about him and his accomplishments: the joke going around in the 30s, 40s, 50s was that the Congregationalists at Harvard and Yale and Union had the high level theological schools but the teachers were Evangelical and Reformed Germans. They were using the same material, practiced pretty much the same theology, and you'd think, "This [duplication] is ridiculous." There are hardly any Congregational churches in Pennsylvania; there are no Reformed churches in Connecticut or the rest of

New England. But they're so close that my dad started, after WWII. doing exchanges. [He and three of his colleagues would go up to Connecticut churches, and four Congregational ministers would come down to Pennsylvania.] In 1957 there was a merger -- the first time that two different national background denominations merged -- becoming the United Church of Christ. My dad did not make a big fuss about it but he was proud.

He had been an excellent football player and stayed an outstanding athlete. He had played some tennis at Lancaster, and his first pastorate was down in the area near Philadelphia called the Main Line. They played on grass courts and in the old days the white flannel trousers, the white shirts. He had a whole bunch of cups. He might have been from the coal mines, but he was beating the first singles guy from Princeton and so forth. So that's what I grew up with and I guess a further thing that I mentioned: I had no doubts about what my mother did because of her doing it in our home. Our parsonage was right next door to the church, and so I had very little doubts about what it was that my dad did. My dad was a widower when he married my mother, my older brother was 11 years older so there was a fairly big gap there and he was away during World War II, from 1942 to 1946. But one of the advantages, Susan, that I sort of took for granted. My dad's heavy work was on the weekend.

Now he had other work--he did a lot of visitations and a lot of studying during the week, but he still was sort of on his own time. He'd decide when to go to the hospital, when to give communion to the shut-ins, so in the summers, at least once a week, he and I would go fishing, then he taught me how to play golf, and we'd play golf together. I joined the tennis team, and I did letter in tennis for three years while I was in high school, but my dad refused to play tennis with me. He would give me advice, but not take me out and play me. He was incapable of faking it and letting me win. Golf was a different matter. He would give me a handicap and then we would both play very hard. And, also at times with my brother, we would go down to Philadelphia and see our beloved Red Sox when they were playing the old Philadelphia Athletics or over to Yankee Stadium when the Red Sox would be playing, so I got used to being taken along. And with very few exceptions, once I got to be about eight, when my parents went on vacation or went to see a show in New York, they would take me along and I got used to it. So, the long answer to that question, what was your relationship to them over time: great.

Now I hear stories about so many people who had a rough time. Wow, I was so fortunate, and I don't think they tried to force feed me but in my high school there were four tracks. General, if you didn't know what you wanted to do; Commercial if you wanted to get into business; Vocational--a very good small program with internships; and College Prep. That was for those of us who wanted to go to a liberal arts school or nursing or art school. And the key to getting in was that in eighth grade you had to take half a year of Latin. And my parents were the kind of people, when we were traveling [while I was still in middle school], they'd start playing games with me about Latin derivations of English words.

**Fiksdal:** They would test you, yeah.

**Teske:** Yeah. O.K., One of the prepared questions here is "memorable moments in K-12". We can shift to that. Well, one of the really memorable moments was when in eighth grade I was in Junior high, the Latin teacher walked in, brandished a wooden thing with markings on it and said, "regula est" and then went on to explain how "regula" became "reule" in French, and so "regula" in Latin is a "ruler" in English, and then got into kings being "rulers" and then to "rex, regis" being the Latin for English "king," and so forth ,and I was hooked!

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** Yeah. I took French for only one year in college but after four and a half years of Latin in high

school

**Fiksdal:** You already knew a lot

**Teske:** Yeah. And in 11th and 12th grades there were only seven of us

**Fiksdal:** I can imagine! Not many left, yeah.

**Teske:** I know when I got into college, which was in my home town—Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania—when I got into a European history class and the teacher gave a three hour exam and one of the questions you were supposed to write on for at least a half hour--one of the options was "discuss how the medieval manorial system grew out of the Roman colonial system." and I thought, you know, the rest of the people are going to be answering the other questions. I know something about this and I bet the teacher isn't going to get that many answers. So, I wrote about that. And, of course it was fascinating. A lot of the big authors when you get into imperial times, even with Augustus, did not live in Rome. They lived in villas even up in what is now Germany and because of the Roman road system they could be in touch. When the empire collapsed, the master of the former villa became the "lord of the manor"

**Fiksdal:** I see. Yeah. Thank goodness because they kept their libraries.

**Teske:** Yeah. About a week later I saw my professor and he had looked at the exam answers. He said, "Look, there was stuff in there that I didn't know, and I looked it up and it turned out you're right. Where did you learn that?" "I went to Easton High School, Sir." "Oh, you studied with William Wagner." So, I must say, Susan, in our school, unless you really had to show off that you were wealthy or unless your kids were brats, you didn't send them to prep school. The College Prep track of our high school was absolutely first rate. And the other important teacher, the head of the English department, had a doctorate in education from Yale. When we were studying Hamlet, we went through it line by line so you really learned.

I guess those were the big moments. Now in my other life, which is music, I took 10 years of trumpet lessons up to graduating from high school. My teacher did raise the option—we lived 90 miles from NY. "If you really want to go on to a conservatory, you're going to have to start now going over to NY once a month. I'll find you a teacher and then next year it'll be twice a month. And then your senior year it will be every week. But if you're going to be serious about a career as a trumpet player, that's what you're going to have to do."

I went home and my dad was quiet; he just listened to the discussion. But my mother gave some excellent advice: "If you really want to go, we'll find a way to support you. But the trumpet is not a solo instrument. (Around that time there were 11 symphonies in the country that paid a living wage.) You get most of your work by teaching, but what you can command as a teacher depends upon which symphony you're in and what chair you're playing and you've got all of the people coming out of all the music schools and you've got so many other interests. Frankly, the thing I would be worried about is that you might get to hate music." That turned out to be very good advice. But I did play as first chair in high school.

I guess another thing about that career was in spring of 9th grade, I started doing weekly jobs in a dance band. So that went along quite well. And then although I got some nibbles to go elsewhere, one of the reasons why I stayed home or at least used my parents' home as a sort of home base while I was going to college was that I had musical connections. And if I had gone—Yale and Princeton were trying to get me. And frankly, I was sort of scared of being with the preppies. I don't know how I would have reacted.



I would have had to cut all my musical connections. So, in college I played in a society band, a well-paid weekly job, and then I was playing in the Lehigh Valley Symphony, also in the Allentown Symphony in my junior year. In my senior year, I got picked to go to the Pennsylvania Intercollegiate Festival Symphony and on the way home got into a car accident and lost my upper four teeth.

**Fiksdal:** Oh my gosh.

**Teske:** Well you can't run the tape back. But any hopes of being a symphony trumpet player were over. I played a little with the Olympia symphony and the Olympia Chamber Orchestra, but you can't be top flight. Jazz however is a different story. And so, it was very often that I would be playing on Saturday night my 9-12 Society job. 12pm was closing time in Pennsylvania, then I'd drive back to Easton and go up to an illegal party with a keg in the cellar at a fraternity and play until 3 in the morning and go back home, get a few hours of sleep and go and teach Sunday school class at my dad's church and then sing in the church choir. So, I kept the music going.

Now, important for my work at Evergreen: I entered college as a pre-theological student. I had been overweight and inept when I was 12 at Boy Scout camp and just feeling sort of out of it. But the Chief Scout, knowing that I was a minister's kid, asked if I would give a little sermon at the Sunday morning service. And I did the easy thing--here are the 12 points of the Boy Scout law, here is the career of Jesus. "How would Jesus fare with the Boy Scout law?" He [the Chief Scout] thought this was such hot stuff.

**Fiksdal:** Well it is hot stuff [laughing].

**Teske:** On the spot, he offered me a free week, room and board, at the camp if I would preach again the next Sunday. And, of course, the guys in my troop, were saying, "Wow, hey, he's one of ours!" Hey, maybe I've got a calling here. So, it was almost the line of least resistance. My dad's a minister, my mom's a musician, so I entered college as a pre-theological student. But there's nothing like having a really good college course in religion to stir up serious doubts. [So, at the end of my sophomore year, I went for the big money and chose an English major.]

In my junior year, I was taking third year German, first year Greek, history of philosophy, the American novel, and 17th century English Lit; but the important course was called "The Creative Centuries." It was under the aegis of the English department. But what would happen would be that we had as visiting lecturers and then seminar leaders after the lectures representatives of Classics, religion, history, philosophy, psychology, comparative literature and then even for a five-week unit, biology and physics. We read the real books, not "surveys of ...," but things like the Compendium of Calvin's Institutes. We spent two weeks on Kierkegaard's writings, two weeks on Machiavelli and learned to put *The Prince* in the context of his Discourses. The class would meet for three hours, a two-hour hunk at the beginning of the week where the visiting speaker would come and give a lecture with a long question period. Then he would come back for a seminar meeting at the end of the week. That course developed such momentum that at the end of the year there would be 15 of us students and as many as 18 faculty members, people who had appeared in the course before or had heard about it. I don't know how often they repeated that course, but it was hands down the most exciting and the most interdisciplinary course. But for me that was one of six courses.

## **EVERGREEN MEMORY**

When on February 8, 1970 -- the three of us deans had met [for the first time] just the day before -- the crucial conference was February 8, 1970, and crucial in a whole bunch of ways because the President and Vice Presidents and the Trustees and the National Council of Advisors that they had hired to meet a

few times with them had all decided [to wait for specific curricular planning until the deans who would have to run the program were hired, and until then to] "Put a strict framework around it [the goals and main assumptions about what kinds of educational opportunities would be offered]." I'd seen it as a blank piece of paper but very carefully arranged with strong borders. [Charles] McCann that morning made a big statement in which he described what the general outline ought to be and the kind of people we wanted to turn out. But they [the earliest planners] deliberately left the actual programming blank until we, the middle managers, Mervyn [Cadwallader], Don [Humphries] and I, could come on board. And we started flailing around.

By the way, we have the tape of most of that [meeting]. I want to leave a log so that if you'd be a future historian and you'd say, "at what moment did Mervyn Cadwallader first suggest interdisciplinary team-taught programs?", I can send you to the exact spot on the digitized recording. And as Merv started talking, I got this feeling of familiarity. I said, "Wait a minute; it's like Creative Centuries back at Lafayette. But it would be like Creative Centuries done full time [and not just as one course competing against three or four other commitments]".

Fiksdal: All the way through.

Teske: Wow! And I immediately started trying to figure out now what would be the kind of subject matter that you could do through that vehicle that you couldn't do otherwise. And of course, I immediately began thinking of the Romantic Era because you cannot study it with just one country and you can't study it in just literature or painting or music or philosophy, you have to have it all together. That's the only way you can really do romanticism. And I just sort of sketched that out for myself.

Now what would be something else? Well, something I had always yearned to do. Do the cultural history of the US but go back and forth between literature, history, and music. I put that piece of paper away and when I found it again in 1981, I had taught with Hiro [Kawasaki], Brother Ronald [Hurst], and Gil Salcedo, "The Roots of Our Romanticism." And with Tom Foote I had taught "America's Music in Cultural Perspective." I had absolutely done that. That's why I was interested. I never really asked Don why he was so enthusiastic. Mervyn had hoped that maybe of the first thousand students, that maybe 100 could be involved in the kind of thing he had been doing at San Jose State and that Tussman had done at Berkeley and that Meikeljohn had done. Maybe they could do that with 100. And Larry Eickstaedt drove Merv to Kennedy and Merv said, "well I'm hoping to talk them into having at least one program like that. When Merv got back and Larry was driving him back to Old Westbury, Larry said, "Well how'd it go?" He said, "Merv was stunned." Merv said, "They bought the whole thing. They're doing the whole first year of the school like that."

Fiksdal: I remember that story. He didn't realize that everyone would want to do it.

Teske: I don't know what it was that appealed to Don, but I looked into that. I knew Don's saying was, "If it's good for a hundred people, why isn't it good for a thousand?"

Fiksdal: Yeah, there you go.

Teske: And I think on that tape, I think I say something to the effect of, "I haven't talked with Merv about this, but I think I see a way that we can do almost all our curriculum through this [model]." And, again for later discussion, Merv never quite forgave Don and me for having done that. Richard Jones in his "Experiment at Evergreen" makes the point very strongly that although it was Merv's idea and it was something he had tried before, nobody in the planning faculty or the opening years' faculties taught that program; instead, they found ways of using [the pedagogical method] for a whole bunch of other things.

Is it Joni Mitchell, "Look what they've done to my song?" [It was Melanie Safka.]

Fiksdal: I don't remember, but probably!

Teske: Yeah, Or, you know, the camel is a horse made by committee or something like that. So Merv must have felt that we had stolen this beautiful idea. See, I guess the point is this, Susan -- and Jones makes this [point] rather well [in his book, *Experiment at Evergreen*] -- you have two issues: you have what is to be the content, what are the particular problems or ideas that you're studying and on the other hand what are the pedagogical methods that you will use to study this. So, what happened was, we took hook, line, and sinker the pedagogical methods, of team-taught interdisciplinary full-time studies, but did not use it to teach the Athens/Sparta and Viet Nam wars that Merv had in mind -- comparing Viet Nam to the Peloponnesian war.

Fiksdal: So, what he had taught at San Jose State, that idea?

Teske: You can get the whole thing if you go on line and look up "Mervyn Cadwallader." Because in 1980 -- it's interesting, because he had left us in '76

Fiksdal: Oh, that early.

Teske: But in 1980 for a symposium to be held at Evergreen for which he came back, he wrote a long paper, "Experiment at San Jose." He never wrote about Evergreen, but he has this long paper and you can find exactly what his methodology was. The deal at college with this Lafayette course Creative Centuries had prepared me

Fiksdal: Great story.

### **Back to Biography**

Teske: Next slot here. I went to Yale, I got accepted with money at Harvard and Columbia and Yale. My dad had always loved the congregational theology of Yale and loved Yale Divinity School. On one of our trips -- we used to take our golf clubs along while my mother did something else -- my dad and I played the Yale golf course, and I was in high school so when I decided on Yale, he was very pleased about that.

I put in two very hard years living in the Hall of Graduate Studies. And the advantage there for my interdisciplinary background is if you were an English major and you got an apartment off campus, the only people whom you would know socially were English majors; whereas if you lived in the Hall of Graduate Studies you were on the same floor as a physicist, a chemist/clarinetist, and a music historian. In the second year, I made two very close friends, one of them a Hindu, the other a Pakistani Muslim, so that part was just tremendously exciting and at the beer or cheap red wine parties late at night you'd have all of these different people. Of course, you're at the point where on the one hand you're scared to death because in a few years the money is going to be on the table, and on the other, there are so many things worth trying and doing.

I had taken three years of German at Lafayette and two of my buddies [were classmates in the courses]. Both came from High Bridge, New Jersey, which was High Bridge because there was a high bridge. Five of their small [high-school] graduating class went on to higher education. One became a nurse, two went to teachers' schools, the other two went to Lafayette, got Fulbrights and went to Germany, and then to Yale grad school. Who would have imagined a graduating class like that [laughing], but anyway these guys both got offers from Yale but they wanted to get Fulbrights and Yale gave them a leave, "Come back next year and we'll accept you with the same scholarship."

One went to Tübingen, the other went to Marburg-- and again these coincidences:

Normally I would not have seen that much of them [when they came to Yale] because one was in comparative literature, the other in history. But somebody fouled up and their rooms were not ready for them, so they had to get an off-campus apartment for a month. Well, where were they going to leave their books (they had several classes on the same day)? They could leave their books in my room.

We started all together in September and along about the second week in October, they were getting their books and [they said] "Charlie, you did your Honors Thesis in college on what Carlyle learned in translating Goethe that influenced his style. In college, you took three years of German, why don't you go to Germany?" And I'd sort of been thinking about it but I thought I would go after I got my doctorate. But they said once you get your doctorate, you'll be in competition with everybody, but here, you're in second year grad school, you'll be in competition with college seniors. I hadn't thought of that.

My classes were all in the same building [where I also lived and ate] and the Library was right next door, so the big moment of the day would be when I'd go a total of three blocks to the Yale Post Office where I had my postal box. I was thinking about this [the idea of going to Germany], and I went to the Post Office and here just across the way was the Foreign Study Office. So, I went to the Foreign Study Office and asked if they had any brochures about the Fulbright program. The secretary said: "I have a complete application packet. That'll tell you all you need to know." So, I was standing, holding this application packet, and instead of going back the way I'd come, I went to the front of the building, and right across the street was [Saybrook] College where the Head of the English Department had his office. I had just started taking a course with him. He was a Lafayette graduate, if you can imagine a Lafayette graduate becoming the Head of the Yale English Department. Now the most miraculous thing is, I went to his office and he was there!

I don't know what had happened to him that morning but when I asked him, "Do you think this would be a good idea for me?" He said, "Go...go! I never did and I should have. Go! I'll write you a recommendation." In the space of a couple of hours, I'd made up my mind to go to Germany. [I] called up my parents, got my Lafayette teachers ready to write recommendations, and went to Germany.

Fiksdal: That was for one year?

Teske: One year.

Now why University of Bonn? Because there was a great professor there who taught English/German relationships. Irony: I never studied with him, but the man who was running the German family stay and orientation for the Experiment in International Living, was also in that English Department. We got along so well, I took three courses from him. It wasn't until about half way through his course on the English and Scottish popular ballads that I realized he was the German authority and I hadn't known that and here I was studying with him. And I had originally decided that my dissertation was going to be on Carlyle, and I got into the graduate seminar on Carlyle, and among other things that fascinated me, Nietzsche had been influenced by Carlyle. Nietzsche had then been warped as a major figure by the Nazis. And of course, the universities sort of lined up. Fine, but how about the Germans in the 1930's teaching Carlyle himself in the English Department? Susan, one of the questions you did **not** ask at a German university in the mid-50's was: "What were you guys doing in the 30's?" "The 30's -- hmmm --, let's see. That was in between the 20's and the 40's. Let's see ..., what were we doing?" I did well in that seminar, but I decided, "No. It's not for me."

I was left in the spring taking some interesting courses, including the Ballads of Oral Tradition with the

very friendly German professor, I had already studied Wordsworth [and Coleridge] and had given a lecture on the genesis of their "Lyrical Ballads," which in English were the big watershed between Neoclassicism and Romanticism. Well, two younger teachers were running a seminar, which I audited, on the "Lyrical Ballads." [I thought:] "Well, wait a minute, those don't have anything to do with what I'm learning about the oral traditional ballads." But what would happen, why when you have a ghostly ride over here [in German] do you have a ghostly sea-voyage by the Ancient Mariner over there [in English]? What's going on? And that, of course, became my dissertation: the literary ballad of the 18th century leading up to Wordsworth and Coleridge.

**Fiksdal:** Oh interesting.

**Teske:** I was working quite hard, writing seminar papers and so forth. But of course, my other life...I took along, because my teeth were still not in good shape, instead of playing trumpet, I played fluegelhorn, which is fatter and it plays pretty much the same range, but much easier blowing. At that time, hardly anybody was playing it.

I'd never really seen one before, but I went into NY when I was waiting on table in the summers in Pennsylvania. Some of us who had a day off on the same day decided to go over to New York. I went in the summer after my teeth were knocked out and I saw my first fluegelhorn and what really sold it to me was that it came in a corduroy soft gig bag. A great French maker, Couesnon. So that's what I took to Germany with me.

On the first night that a [German acquaintance] in whose family another American student was staying, who was a big jazz fan, took me to a jazz/dance club, I took the fluegelhorn along to sit in. I came up just before the break, and they [the band on the stand] said, "Well, you could sit in on the second half. Why don't you go backstage and warm up quietly?" I did. And suddenly the back door opened, and six strange guys walked in carrying instruments. They said, "Who are you?" I said, "I'm an American student at the University of Bonn." "What are you doing here?" "Well, I came to sit in and they told me to warm up." "We're going to be playing a set in a couple of minutes. Do you play jazz?" I said, "I've played some jazz." "O.K., why don't you sit in with us?"

Susan, after we'd played about three numbers, they got me away from the restaurant stage and said, "O.K., here's the deal. The trumpet player playing with us tonight is not a regular member of our group. This was an audition. If we get the job, would you like to be our trumpet player? They did. That became my Wednesday night job for the rest of the year except for the big two-month university vacation.

Well, it turned out that the band that the ringer trumpet player was playing in—they were called the "Duesseldorf Footwarmers," and he came by [to meet me in Bonn]. He was at a residence hall in University of Cologne with my piano player and once when they were down in Bonn, he said, "Would you like to play some concerts, some dances with us Duesseldorf Footwarmers? At that time, I knew very little Dixieland. I knew some. I said, "Oh, yeah, that would be fun." I did write the Fulbright commission and said, "I'm starting to get into a position here where I'm earning money and I'm getting away from home turf, it is O.K. for me to do this?" They wrote back and said, "So long as it does not impair your studies and for goodness' sake, if you're going to do it, play well!"

And it wasn't until they (the Footwarmers) came down in a van and picked me up and took me to Aachen and the big university theater [that I had any idea who they were]. There were a thousand people there. The band was the Amateur German Jazz Championship combo -- "amateur" meaning that it wasn't their complete livelihood. They all were students in trade school or conservatory or something. They had an LP out, and here I was in the middle of that group. And this got to be big-time stuff. I ended

up playing more for pay in Germany than I've ever played here before or since. And during Carnival time, I got a lot of work. I did not let it get in the way of studies, but I did a whole lot of playing.

Fiksdal: That's just fabulous.

Teske: It was a very rich experience, and I guess the other part of it, I don't know what it has to do with my work at Evergreen, but it didn't hurt. I needed some form of transportation. A Fulbrighter buddy of mine had bought a motor scooter, which really impressed me.

I bought a motor scooter, and I used it mainly for commuting to jobs back and forth. A couple times I went up to Duesseldorf and Cologne. He and I took it into our heads during March and April to make a trip. We took our motor scooters. We were out for over 60 days. We went up the Rhine to German-speaking Switzerland, over the ridge to French-speaking Switzerland and then to Lausanne, Geneva, Lyon, France, and then went across the southern fringe of the Massif Central. What was really exciting was going through the Auvergne. I didn't realize there were extinct small volcanoes there. If you know Canteloube's "Songs of the Auvergne," it is something you don't really hear elsewhere. Boy, when you're riding on a motor scooter, [... in the middle of the landscape that produced such music....] We went down to Biarritz and down into Spain to Madrid where we spent quite a bit of time then across to Valencia, Barcelona and then inland to Perpignan, and Nimes, then back to the Mediterranean at Marseilles and then went around the French Riviera, Italian Riviera, Pisa, down to Rome, and up to Florence then Florence to Venice and Trieste and up to Vienna and Salzburg, Muenchen and back home. 3,000 miles. And the stuff we were able to see and experience!

Fiksdal: You had money, I mean, you were lucky to do that!

Teske: Yeah, and also, see, this was the time of Chancellor Adenauer and Economics Minister Ehrhardt, and it was called the "economic miracle." They kept the German mark as such a hard currency. I got only \$100 a month from Fulbright; that was 480 marks. But there were lots of German students living on 180 or 200. And then I had all of these jobs. That was a big shot in the arm.

Fiksdal: That sounds amazing.

Teske: And then it led to other connections. It's sort of weird to contemplate, but both my musical and scholarly reputation in Germany were much higher than they've ever been here.

Fiksdal: Well, when you think about it, though, you were already with amazing professors you know in a much smaller place so people knew each other. Could I just ask through all that time and at Yale, did you ever have a female professor?

Teske: Ahh. Interesting. In college no. In graduate school no, though there was for Chaucer an E.T. Donaldson [former] student whom he let take over the class a couple times. Lafayette was all male. Yale did have women in the graduate school but the undergraduate school was all male. I was just thinking about that when I was reading this article about early Evergreen. It's all "he".

Fiksdal: Yeah, and you had mentioned that you noticed "he."

Teske: It's just the way it was. Now I had very good female teachers at elementary and interspersed in high school, but you'll be glad to know that when I was teaching at Oberlin [I was very much aware that] it was the first co-educational school in the country. [From the founding] in 1833, they brought in women and few years later, black students. In the 1960's there was a wave of all-male schools' thinking about having women come in. And Lafayette, my alma mater, started thinking about this. The alumni association knew I was teaching at Oberlin; they asked me to participate in a writing symposium with

the topic of making Lafayette co-ed. I wrote a very strong statement in favor of co-education.

Fiksdal: Yeah, because you were experiencing it.

Teske: Yeah. The difference between getting to know the women only on weekends only for parties and on the other hand if you've both been up until 3 in the morning and have breakfast together, there are very few illusions. [laughing]

Fiksdal: Yeah, there's a shared experience that is much more interesting.

Teske: The only problem there was that when women came to subjects such as English literature, or English comp, the women were in advance of the men. So rarely did you have freshman women being dated by freshman men.

The freshman women who wanted to date would be dating juniors and seniors.

I recall once I had an office where there was a fire escape and no air conditioning and if I worked there in a summer evening, there were students, male and female students sitting on the fire escape, not realizing that I had my window open and I could hear what they were talking about. And I would hear young resolute women saying, "the trouble with you is...."

Obviously, with my experience at Oberlin...

Fiksdal: But I didn't have female professors either in college. It wasn't until I came back from my junior year abroad that they had hired someone who was head of the French department, not the Foreign Language Department. But, anyway, I took courses from her to make sure that I had achieved what they had hoped I did, but she was my only experience. You know, if you think about role models for teaching.

Teske: Yeah. But see even at Oberlin, there was a rule that both in a married couple, both could not have tenure and could not be full-time teachers. So, you had this absurdity that in the English department was Arthur Turner, a full-time teacher, Chaucer specialist. His wife, a poet, was very well versed in the study of poetry, creative writing. There were a couple of years where Alberta was teaching 6/6ths of a load. But she was not counted as "full time" and she was not allowed to vote in departmental meetings.

The first time that I got into the Deans' Office as Associate Dean at Oberlin, my buddy Don Reich was taking over as dean. The first thing we did was get a great woman history teacher and put together what at Evergreen would be a DTF, and studied where that rule came from. Because we had lost some excellent couples -- the only married couple with tenure--they'd gotten married after they both got tenure. Otherwise, you got tenure and you automatically ruled out your wife.

Susan: That was it, just fear of nepotism, right?

Teske: That was the cover story. "You can't have two people voting in a departmental vote; you can't have two people voting in a faculty meeting." [The real story:] it was in the Depression and this is what Marcia Colish and her group found out while digging. Up until that time you had [tenured] couples, women and men teaching. It was in the Depression, the idea that one couple should not be getting two salaries. As a temporary emergency measure, you would have to choose—you could not have both with tenure. They did not put a sunset clause in there. And it [the reasoning] got lost.

Susan: People forget, yeah.

Teske: The moment that we brought it to the faculty, the faculty instantly changed that. Some of this

stuff you have to learn the hard way.

The other big thing about the Oberlin work was a sideline for me. I was not on a tenure track. When I was hired, it was for two years, and if you do a good job and don't put a bomb under the President's chair, you get two more years. But that's it. Four years and out. Because the English department was too heavily tenured so you were told, "No hope of that." But on the other hand, I'd heard some very good things about Oberlin, I'd met some interesting people from there and I also heard that it was a great place to look for work from.

It was a whole big other thing going on with jazz. One of the big things I knew about Oberlin was a 10" LP (yes, there were those), 10" LP Dave Brubeck did: "Jazz at Oberlin." Great prize-winning recording. I thought it had been the college who had brought Brubeck. No, Brubeck was brought by a bunch of students in spite of the college. But I was like Humphrey Bogart's character, Rick, in Casa Blanca—when Claude Rains asks, "How did you end up here?" and he says, "I came for the waters." "But," Rains says, "Monsieur, we do not have the waters." And Bogart says, "I was misinformed." Well, I was misinformed, assuming [they had jazz]. I got to be the faculty advisor of the Jazz Club

Fiksdal: To keep things going, yeah.

Teske: To keep things going.

I put in two years and then at the end of that time I was married and then Boris [his son] came along and my dissertation had gotten much more interesting but also much more demanding than I had thought. And I did have Western Reserve Library. Oberlin did have the largest free-standing undergraduate library in the country. And there was a very good special collection in Cleveland Public. But I still needed the Sterling at Yale and the libraries of Harvard and Columbia. I had to get back. I needed time. And when you get hung up like that, as you know, with the [ABD] All But Dissertation, as you know, there can be real pressure upon you. I was saved by the Danforth Foundation, their Teaching Associate Program. Your college had to recommend you but they also had to take you back for a year, so they couldn't use it gracefully to get rid of me. [laughing]

I was fortunate enough to get the Danforth [support]. They paid half my salary and then 1/6 for each member of the family, so I was getting 5/6ths salary. We moved back to New Haven. My dissertation ran to over 500 pages and the absolute deadline for getting it in was 4:30 the first Friday in May, and I got it in, in three bound volumes, at 4:25.

And then got back to Oberlin after what would have been my fourth year spent in New Haven, but since they had recommended me for it, they had to take me back for another year. They said, "We still don't have room for you, but you're doing a good enough job that if you want to have two more years, you can have it, but then of course, you hit the six-year rule. The AAUP [American Association of University Professors] rule: either up or out. And then in the second semester of 1964, a bunch of exciting things happened. My wife, being native German, had not been back to Germany. We figured, in 1964, since I was in the first of my extra two years, we could get her a charter flight from the Cleveland German Society. On a Wednesday, the nonrefundable tickets came that she and Boris were going to use to spend the summer of '64 in Germany. The next day the Head of the English Department came to my office. If it's something completely on the up-and-up, they call you to their office. They don't come to see you.

Fiksdal: Yeah, that's a good point. It's true.

Teske: Yeah. He said, "We've changed our minds." It turns out that the [elected] Faculty Council had changed the English Department's mind. They said "You're going to let him go? You're nuts." "So," he



said, "You're going to get tenure." Which means in 1965 I'd either have a full year at half pay or half a year at full pay [for sabbatical]. But here were the tickets, nonrefundable! So, this is how Boris got to go to Germany in 1964, and in 1965, and when June of 1966 came along, he and I were going shopping in a nearby mall, and we passed under the Ohio turnpike. Boris said, "Oh boy, pretty soon I'm going to go to Easton to see Nana and Papa and then take the plane to Germany." [I said] "Boris, we're not going to Germany. "But we went when I was four, and we went when I was five." I think the poor fellow assumed that once you come to be four, you go to Germany every summer.

I took the half year. Started in Scotland National Library. Then I spent about six weeks at the British Museum. While I stayed in London, my wife and son went over to her mother's in Germany and then came just a beautiful deal. I got Visiting Research Professor status at Göttingen. I wrote to my main [friendly German] professor and asked, "Do I know anybody at Göttingen?" All I wanted was permission to use the library. "Yes, Goeller was just a Dozent when you were at Bonn, and he has become the head professor at Goettingen. And I wrote him one of these "You won't remember me, but" letters. And I got back an effusive letter. "Oh, I remember when you gave a lecture to our English Society about the genesis of American musical comedy and how again at Carnival you got the band you were playing with to play free for our party. I remember you very well." All I had asked him was whether I could have permission to use the library. And he said, "Oh, yes, you can have permission to use the library. Tell you what, right now we have only two full professorships on board. A third has been funded, but he won't be coming until second semester. Would you like to use his office and his secretary when you come here to do your research?"

I wrote back and said, "Gee, yeah, and by the way could you give me the name of a real estate firm so that we can get an apartment?" He wrote back, "You'll be staying on the fifth floor of a new high-rise building in a new development area up on the hill. It will be furnished. [It was, even down to even the brandy snifters, Susan.] And your rent will be thus and such." Well fine, ready to go. Another letter came. "While you're here, I'm signed up for a seminar in oral traditional ballads. Would you like to teach for us and run the seminar?" So, I went to another buddy at Oberlin, the Provost, a bass player, and I said, "What do you think?" He said, "We know you can teach; better to do some more research." I wrote him [German professor] back, "Thanks for the offer, but I can't do that." But the very fact that he had offered me the job meant that when I arrived, I was considered to be the third highest ranking person in the department.

Fiksdal: For heaven's sake.

Teske: And here I was 33. There were teaching assistants older than I was.

Fiksdal: It's such a hierarchical system, it's just amazing.

Teske: I'd be walking down the street. We had a very distinguished English conversation expert from Cambridge. When he and I--We'd be walking down the street and if a student passed us, it was, "Guten Tag Herr Professor Doktor Teske; guten Tag Mr. Fletcher."