

**Jim Beverwyck Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
Administrative Information

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**Biographical Note**

Jim Beverwyck served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya from 1968 to 1970 in a secondary education project.

**Access**

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Jim Beverwyck

April 29, 2003  
Velarde, New Mexico

By Robert Klein

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

KLEIN: [00:00:00] Bob Klein. It's April 29, 2003. I'm interviewing Jim Beverwyck, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya in 1968 to '70 in secondary education. So let's go back maybe a year before you joined and tell me what was going on about that time.

BEVERWYCK: [00:00:22] That would have put me in my final term at the, at the university.

KLEIN: [00:00:31] Okay, which university?

BEVERWYCK: [00:00:32] Michigan State University. Um. I had to do an additional term because I'd broken my leg playing football. Couldn't finish up the term and dropped out for a term and went back to finish up. Finished up in December.

KLEIN: [00:00:51] What was, what was your major?

BEVERWYCK: [00:00:53] Uh, you know, it was what they now call general studies I think. In those days it was called university studies. A BA generalist.

KLEIN: [00:01:04] Oh, so liberal arts.

BEVERWYCK: [00:01:07] Liberal arts, yes. Lots of history, lots of political science, economics.

KLEIN: [00:01:11] Did you have any idea what you planned to do with the degree?

BEVERWYCK: [00:01:14] I probably had a better idea then than I do now, which is to say I had very little idea what it is I wanted to be when I grew up.

KLEIN: [00:01:23] You weren't thinking in terms of, well, I'll become a teacher. It was just sort of open.

BEVERWYCK: [00:01:28] It was very open. Yes.

KLEIN: [00:01:32] While you were in college, did you do, what did you do with your summers? Did you do any volunteer work? Any travel?

BEVERWYCK: [00:01:40] No, neither. Um. I was from a working class background in western Michigan. Very poor family, poor in the extreme. And somehow, you know, I hadn't read my first book till I was 13 years old. I didn't know what reading was. The house didn't have books or magazines or anything. But I was a good ballplayer. And so that, that helped me in high school. And it turns out I was a pretty good student in high school. And next thing I knew, I was heading off to college. I really didn't know how it happened.

KLEIN: [00:02:21] Were you the first of your family to go?

BEVERWYCK: [00:02:23] I was the first of the family of six to graduate from high school.

KLEIN: [00:02:29] Even high school? Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:02:30] Even high school. First to go to college.

KLEIN: [00:02:32] Yeah. Did you get a sports scholarship?

BEVERWYCK: [00:02:35] No. I'd had some feelers from Division II colleges to play football. And I actually had a uniform ready for me at Michigan State. And, you know, I was mature enough, presumably with hindsight, to recognize when I ran into some of those fellows before school started my freshman year that, that I just wasn't good enough to play football at a place like that.

KLEIN: [00:03:04] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:03:04] A really good decision, I mean, you know. So my orientation over time became academic and, uh.

KLEIN: [00:03:13] But you did play football in college?

BEVERWYCK: [00:03:15] No, no.

KLEIN: [00:03:15] Oh, you didn't. Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:03:16] I played lacrosse in college and that was fun. It was a club sport then. We traveled around, went to Notre Dame, went to Ohio State, banged around. We'd take our own vehicles and we'd, you know, play lacrosse and carouse, you know? Yeah, it was really fun, um, until I hurt myself playing that too. So, you know, ball playing was important probably because it, it, I don't know, got me through school, got me through this dysfunctional family stuff that was going on. And, uh, yeah, college was wonderful and then graduated from college. I really didn't know what I wanted to do. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:04:02] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:04:02] Had very little idea. I was a provincial guy.

KLEIN: [00:04:07] Had you met Mary?

BEVERWYCK: [00:04:08] Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Mary Parsaca. I met her the day I first attended that high school in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

KLEIN: [00:04:19] Oh.

BEVERWYCK: [00:04:20] Yeah. That would have been in the eighth grade? Ninth grade. Ninth grade. So we're maybe 14, 15 years old. Fourteen I guess. Thirteen.

KLEIN: [00:04:31] On through late high school, early college. Were you at all aware of Kennedy and his presidency?

BEVERWYCK: [00:04:41] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:04:42] Do you recall how?

BEVERWYCK: [00:04:44] Yeah, I do. You're interested in that?

KLEIN: [00:04:47] Sure.

BEVERWYCK: [00:04:48] I just retold the story recently, just within the past few days, to someone. Um. The religious heritage with which I grew up, in an extended way, was Calvinist Dutch and Western Michigan is filled with those folks. And that's important because at the time of John F. Kennedy's campaign for the presidency in 1960, when I was 15 and I think a sophomore in high school, he came to Grand. Well, I have to go back a little bit. Um. This, this Calvinist church that we attended. There was a Sunday when, at that age 15, I went to church and listened to the, the Calvinist pastor, a Dutch person, do a sermon that was really a harangue about the Democratic candidate for the presidency.

KLEIN: [00:06:07] Uh huh.

BEVERWYCK: [00:06:07] You know, 15 years old. I played ball. I chased girls. And that's, that's all my life was.

KLEIN: [00:06:13] Yeah. Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:06:14] But there is something awry in this time in church that Sunday morning. I had never heard anyone in that conservative congregation say anything interruptive of the pastor's words.

KLEIN: [00:06:35] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [00:06:35] But there were numerous amens and hallelujahs. In retrospect, it was kind, I might call reminiscent of a Baptist sermon rather than a conservative, you know, Calvinist sermon. And what the, what the sermon was all about was, was the dangers of electing this person to the presidency because of the possibility of the pope taking over the United States and all this stuff. And, uh, and even as a kid, I knew something was wrong.

KLEIN: [00:07:10] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:07:11] And after church, may have been the same day, I can't recall, it was so long ago, but maybe later that week I told my mother, um, you know, I'm not going back to church. Not sure why. I'm just not going back ever. And I never have.

KLEIN: [00:07:31] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [00:07:32] So somehow indirectly, John F. Kennedy kept me from the fold of the religious and the saved, for that matter.

KLEIN: [00:07:40] But you mentioned that Kennedy came to Grand Rapids.

BEVERWYCK: [00:07:44] Yeah. So within a month or two months, it must have been late summer or early fall of that year, 1960. School was in session. I know that the Republican candidate had come to Grand Rapids and school, if I recall correctly. My wife believes this is the case. Students

were allowed to attend the rally in downtown Grand Rapids for the Republican candidate. I didn't go. Um, probably not on political grounds. Maybe I had football practice.

KLEIN: [00:08:19] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:08:20] But when the Democratic candidate came to town after, students were not excused from school. I know that's true.

KLEIN: [00:08:31] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:08:32] I'd confirmed that years ago with other folks. And so I ditched school and I was not the kind of person who ditched school. I just did.

KLEIN: [00:08:42] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:08:43] And some buddies and I went downtown and we climbed to the roof of a building, and the Secret Service were up there, and they made us get down. And we banged around in the crowd and we'd listen to a few words of the candidate. And, uh, I wasn't particularly interested. But when the, the speech ended, people were milling about and it was behind this, this famous downtown hotel called the Pantlind. And my buddies and I were working our way back across the river to get to school, I guess, and there was all this activity on the street. And, um, next thing we knew, there was a limousine rolling down the street slowly. Hey, that's him!

KLEIN: [00:09:32] Uh huh.

BEVERWYCK: [00:09:32] That's Kennedy. Oh, yeah. So my buddies and I sprinted alongside the limousine, and I literally leaned into the limousine, reached to the other side where the candidate was sitting, and shook his hand. I remember it well. Red hair, ruddy complexioned. Yeah. And that was a nice moment.

KLEIN: [00:09:58] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:09:59] For a guy who wasn't political or activist or anything else, I was just a bush kid. And, uh, but that was my contact with John Kennedy. And so.

KLEIN: [00:10:09] And then moving through high school and college, do you remember when you first heard of the word Peace Corps or the name Peace Corps?

BEVERWYCK: [00:10:22] Oh, gosh. No. It was probably. It was probably not during my college years.

KLEIN: [00:10:40] Mm hmm. You don't recall?

BEVERWYCK: [00:10:41] I have no recollection of it.

KLEIN: [00:10:42] Yeah, okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:10:43] Maybe I did. But my first remembrance of the phrase Peace Corps surely came from my fiancée of the time, who is my wife today, in early 1968.

KLEIN: [00:11:05] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:11:05] Upon graduation from college in December of '67, I still had some debts. I had lived off campus with some buddies and had to pay rent and a few other things and.

KLEIN: [00:11:20] Let's be off for a moment.

BEVERWYCK: [00:11:21] Yeah. [tape break]

KLEIN: [00:11:29] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:11:29] Yeah. So, uh, finished school and really at loose ends. Had to take care of these few debts, and I had to do that with a job. So I applied for a position at the Oldsmobile plant in Lansing making,

what was the name of that Oldsmobile? Oldsmobile 88 or something. Don't ever drive one because I was responsible for putting in drive shafts, but I had to get my hair cut to do it. I guess something had gone on in college and I'd grown my hair long and they wouldn't hire me unless I cut my hair. Okay, this is a piece of the real world here. I'll get my hair cut and work on the assembly line for a few months, which I did. And not exactly what I wanted to do with my college education. So Mary was in Washington, D.C. I decided to go out there and bang around, which I did.

KLEIN: [00:12:30] Had you done any travel outside Michigan up to that point?

BEVERWYCK: [00:12:34] Yeah. You know, my family were like The Grapes of Wrath. We, uh, we once drove in a beat-up vehicle from Michigan to Los Angeles and lived there for two years.

KLEIN: [00:12:48] Wow.

BEVERWYCK: [00:12:48] And then ended up back in western Michigan.

KLEIN: [00:12:52] Yeah. How old were you then?

BEVERWYCK: [00:12:55] 1957. 12. 12 to 14. Yeah, something like that. 12. 11 to 13.

KLEIN: [00:13:02] It wasn't quite vacation travel?

BEVERWYCK: [00:13:04] No.

KLEIN: [00:13:07] Okay. And outside the country not at all?

BEVERWYCK: [00:13:10] No, I had not traveled at all.

KLEIN: [00:13:13] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:13:14] No, the only thing I knew was Western Michigan.

KLEIN: [00:13:16] So now, for the first time, you're going east?

BEVERWYCK: [00:13:19] Yeah, for the first time, I'm going east.

KLEIN: [00:13:21] And to the big city.

BEVERWYCK: [00:13:22] Actually, no. There was a time when I traveled to, uh, Kentucky with my father and my older half-brother to sell things. My father was a door-to-door salesman, an alcoholic.

KLEIN: [00:13:38] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:13:39] And that was a very fun trip. I must have been 12 years old.

KLEIN: [00:13:43] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:13:44] Somewhere around there.

KLEIN: [00:13:45] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [00:13:46] 13. And it was crazy, you know. It was across the border from Cincinnati and Kentucky and, and all those rolling hills there. And, and these very poor people. They're the people who my father would try to sell things to. Pictures, baby pictures. I can't remember what.

KLEIN: [00:14:03] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:14:05] But we did that for a couple of weeks. So I had been east like that on a trip.

KLEIN: [00:14:10] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:14:10] It was a memorable trip, I must say. But no, um, a real trip east. That was the first time when I had gone out there to, uh, be with Mary and we were engaged to be married. So it made sense to be in

Washington, D.C. I banged around, got a letter of introduction from my congressperson, Gerald R. Ford from Grand Rapids, and the president of the university. I knew him through his son, who was a good friend of mine. So I had a letter of introduction there. So I poked around a little bit. I got a job with OEO.

KLEIN: [00:14:52] Ah, okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:14:53] And it was my job to, uh, produce the applicants for VISTA positions. That was interesting. That was fun. Right downtown and met some fun young folks who are doing the same kind of work. It's memorable in that we had been given directive by our supervisor not to accept applicants from certain colleges and universities, without even looking at the applications.

KLEIN: [00:15:30] Interesting.

BEVERWYCK: [00:15:31] Yeah. And that was Bob Jones University and, uh.

KLEIN: [00:15:35] Oral Roberts?

BEVERWYCK: [00:15:36] Oral Roberts University. Those are the two I remember. There was a small, short list of places where they just didn't want to deal with the applicants. Very interesting. And I thought it was discriminatory, and of course it was. But somehow it made sense to me too at the time, I'm not exactly sure how.

KLEIN: [00:15:55] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:15:57] So I did that for a while and then there was more money in doing contract work with some agency that did the same thing. So I would take the applications home with me and I'd work at the Library of Congress in one of their quiet rooms and do my work. It was piecework. You were paid by the application. Anyway, it was, it was good to bang around in Washington. Um. I think the experience for that portion of a year, a good portion of a year, was enlightening. You

know, up until that time, I really had not developed much of a political consciousness.

KLEIN: [00:16:44] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [00:16:45] Um. Married by this time. Shirley had suggested that we look at the Peace Corps as something we might want to do.

KLEIN: [00:16:52] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:16:54] And I think, you know, maybe in the summer we'd filled out the application for the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:17:00] Do you recall filling out the application?

BEVERWYCK: [00:17:02] No, I honestly don't.

KLEIN: [00:17:03] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:17:04] I don't remember filling it out.

KLEIN: [00:17:05] You don't recall giving any preferences for assignment?

BEVERWYCK: [00:17:08] Yeah, I do. We, we had a preference for Southeast Asia. I think it was Thailand. And then I think there was a South American country, maybe Colombia, I don't know. And then there was a third. But I don't remember what it was.

KLEIN: [00:17:24] Had you had any foreign language training up to that point?

BEVERWYCK: [00:17:27] Yeah, I'd had Spanish in college. I'd had a year of Spanish.

KLEIN: [00:17:30] Just a year?

BEVERWYCK: [00:17:31] Yeah, just a year. Yeah. And I really spoke no Spanish. Yeah. But, uh, yeah, we, we got involved. I got involved a little bit with some activism in Washington, D.C., in 1968.

KLEIN: [00:17:49] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [00:17:51] I spent some time down on the Mall with the Poor People's Campaign.

KLEIN: [00:17:55] Ah, yeah. Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:17:56] Yeah. And, you know, putting up tents and things like that. And it feels like ancient history, but in one, you know, in a certain regard. But in another, I can imagine myself, I can picture myself running around with a bunch of very happy young people doing these things that were so different from, from what I had known before.

KLEIN: [00:18:23] But it was almost like going from 0 to 60 given your background.

BEVERWYCK: [00:18:27] Going from 0 to 60. That's a good way to put it.

KLEIN: [00:18:29] And but you, you very, I gather, happily got yourself involved.

BEVERWYCK: [00:18:34] Oh, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:18:36] And was it simply adventure or was there conviction?

BEVERWYCK: [00:18:40] There was clearly conviction because it was the beginning of, kind of a revolutionary beginning to ultimately what is an evolutionary process that has allowed for me to become more progressive and, uh, more radical politically than I was then, today. It never stopped, and it continues. Um, the draft of course. I got my draft notice, not my draft notice, but my number. And I was sent to Baltimore for a physical examination. It was very harrowing. I hated the experience.

KLEIN: [00:19:31] Was it a military facility that you went to for the physical?

BEVERWYCK: [00:19:35] Camp something or other in Baltimore. I can't remember.

KLEIN: [00:19:38] Yeah, but it's a military something.

BEVERWYCK: [00:19:40] Yeah, it was a military camp of some kind. There were barracks and things about. Yeah. Took a bus with a bunch of inner city kids from, from Washington, D.C., and, and, uh, man, I hated it. I really did.

KLEIN: [00:19:58] Now, your official residence was still Michigan?

BEVERWYCK: [00:20:01] Still Michigan, yeah. I didn't have to go back to do that. So they made some kind of arrangement for me to go elsewhere to have my physical examination.

KLEIN: [00:20:09] But if you're going to be drafted, it would have been from.

BEVERWYCK: [00:20:13] Would have been through Kent County, Michigan.

KLEIN: [00:20:14] Yeah, okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:20:15] That's right.

KLEIN: [00:20:15] Yeah. All right.

BEVERWYCK: [00:20:17] Where Grand Rapids is located. That was, that was, uh, a powerful influence. And I'd actually talked with friends about, you know, if I'm going to get drafted - this was before the examination - I'm taking off, you know. And I don't really know what it was all about. I mean, it was all happening so fast. It was the war in Vietnam, it was the civil rights movement. And Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in April. I was very much part of that. You know, I couldn't move from where I worked. I had walked all the way home to Capitol Hill. Um. All of that was so transforming.

KLEIN: [00:21:00] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:21:01] For young person. It was for me. And so there had been this talk of, you know, moving away, going to Canada, and thinking real hard about it. The major reason that I was prepared to take such radical steps, perhaps I was prepared, was because I was really beginning to have a hell of a good time. I was really enjoying my life.

KLEIN: [00:21:28] In the movement?

BEVERWYCK: [00:21:29] In the movement, in the crowd I hung with, with my partner, my fiancée.

KLEIN: [00:21:36] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:21:37] Just enjoying life and feeling really, really alive. And Washington was a good place to be. My roommate at one point worked for Stu Symington out of Missouri, and he was, he was a liberal and he was supporting Gene, he was supporting Robert Kennedy. And I didn't want Robert Kennedy because he came in late behind Gene McCarthy, and I was staying clean for Gene. And, you know, there was all this stuff going on, you know, and it was, it was wonderful. And so mostly the avoidance of the draft, I think, was just selfish. It was, you know, I was enjoying myself so much, but it all dovetailed into pretty much the same thing.

KLEIN: [00:22:21] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:22:22] And when we finally found out that we'd been accepted to become Peace Corps volunteers, we jumped at it. We really jumped at it.

KLEIN: [00:22:36] And the initial letter you got was inviting you to Kenya?

BEVERWYCK: [00:22:40] Yeah. Yeah, we, we'd. We'd been invited to go to Kenya.

KLEIN: [00:22:45] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:22:46] My wife, a smarter person than me, knew where Kenya was, for one thing. I had no idea where Kenya was. I guess maybe I knew it was in Africa.

KLEIN: [00:22:58] But what was the project you were invited to?

BEVERWYCK: [00:23:02] Secondary education.

KLEIN: [00:23:03] Do you have any reaction to that, particularly at the time?

BEVERWYCK: [00:23:07] I liked the idea.

KLEIN: [00:23:09] You had never taught?

BEVERWYCK: [00:23:10] If I'm recalling correctly, I liked the idea of being in a classroom.

KLEIN: [00:23:14] Okay. But you had done no teaching up to that point?

BEVERWYCK: [00:23:18] No, I'd done no teaching. No, no. My, my work experience was extensive, but basic.

KLEIN: [00:23:27] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:23:29] A lot of work. I mean, through all those high school years and college years, I always worked, but they were funky jobs.

KLEIN: [00:23:35] And it was, it must have been. I know it was. Well, were you and Mary completely in tune about yes, let's go?

BEVERWYCK: [00:23:48] Absolutely.

KLEIN: [00:23:49] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:23:49] Yeah, we were absolutely in tune about let's go. She had gotten her degree in medical technology from Michigan State and then did a year's internship at the Washington Hospital Center. She was really prepared for laboratory work. But was sufficiently anxious to leave the country and do this thing that sounded really adventurous, to become a schoolteacher. She would have preferred to have been in a lab or doing something else related to medical work, but, but decided to give it a try.

KLEIN: [00:24:32] So what was the time frame now? You got, when did you get the letters?

BEVERWYCK: [00:24:35] We probably got the letter signed in July, August?

KLEIN: [00:24:41] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:24:42] Something like that. We got married in September. Third week in September of 1968. Two weeks later, we were on the plane for New York City.

KLEIN: [00:24:53] How did training? How did your family react to your, your going into this thing?

BEVERWYCK: [00:25:03] They had no idea. They had no idea what I was up to. Um. I don't know. It's, it's. An analogy might be my father's reaction over those years I played football in high school. He always went to the ball games and I was really good. And we had good teams in a good sized city. And he was always there.

KLEIN: [00:25:40] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:25:41] But he had no idea what football was. No idea. He was not a fan of any kind of sports whatsoever, but he was always there. And so I suppose, I suppose Dad and Mom were, were supportive of what it was I was doing, but had no idea what it was that I was doing.

KLEIN: [00:26:05] No inkling of danger and going to Africa or?

BEVERWYCK: [00:26:08] Their inkling was that I was going to a place where there were Black people.

KLEIN: [00:26:12] Right.

BEVERWYCK: [00:26:14] And that was not pleasant for them.

KLEIN: [00:26:18] Uh huh.

BEVERWYCK: [00:26:18] Yeah. Yeah. It was a racist family.

KLEIN: [00:26:23] Did either your family or Mary's family try to suggest that you hold back or not go?

BEVERWYCK: [00:26:33] No. Mary and I both were most willful. And, uh, she with her family and extended family, I with mine.

KLEIN: [00:26:47] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:26:48] And we just made our own decisions. By the time we were 22 years old, our lives were our own.

KLEIN: [00:26:55] Yeah. Flew to New York?

BEVERWYCK: [00:26:58] Flew to New York.

KLEIN: [00:26:59] First time in New York City?

BEVERWYCK: [00:27:01] Yeah. Yeah, it was. It was quite something. Met the other, uh, trainees.

KLEIN: [00:27:12] It was a big group, wasn't it?

BEVERWYCK: [00:27:13] It was a very large group. I think there are 120, 128 trainees in this group.

KLEIN: [00:27:20] Do you recall what your impression was? I mean, here's the two of you now, you're meeting other people who are doing?

BEVERWYCK: [00:27:26] I do, I do.

KLEIN: [00:27:28] Go ahead.

BEVERWYCK: [00:27:30] I'm a young man. I'm a married young man. And but I'm still somehow aware that I have not been anywhere. I've really not done anything. And I'm meeting other young people who have been places and done things and had taken a junior year abroad and had, you know, gotten their master's from Stanford and who'd gotten their, you know, their degree from an Ivy League college. And I was a little bit in awe of, of so many of those in the program who are like this. But. Because of, you know, physical proximity during our training, because of who Mary and I were, because of who these people were, because of the, uh, the common goal, we were drawn to one another.

KLEIN: [00:28:41] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:28:42] And in many cases, we, we've become lifelong friends.

KLEIN: [00:28:49] You weren't worried that you might not be able to compete in the training program against?

BEVERWYCK: [00:28:53] Yeah, I did.

KLEIN: [00:28:54] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:28:55] I worried about that with my language training. And, you know, I just felt that, and a considerable portion of the time in the first few weeks, I think a month, was devoted to language training almost exclusively.

KLEIN: [00:29:13] Did you stay in New York for that?

BEVERWYCK: [00:29:14] No. We went to a place north of New York City in the Catskills called Monroe, and we had taken over this old resort hotel. It was beautiful and had wonderful grounds, and it was actually pretty funky. But we loved it and we could run around a lot, but we had to speak Swahili all the time. And there were Swahili instructors and it was all very exotic and exciting. But, you know, I'm not proficient with language, and maybe I, I just didn't trust my ability.

KLEIN: [00:29:51] Going into it, had anyone said, I mean, how did they justify your doing this Swahili immersion?

BEVERWYCK: [00:30:03] The necessity of, of, of fluency in the primary language, presumably the primary language of Kenya. Although, of course, we had been informed that we would be instructing in English.

KLEIN: [00:30:22] Right.

BEVERWYCK: [00:30:25] Uh, they convinced us, admirably I conclude, that fluency or somewhat fluency in this lingua franca of East Africa was a good thing.

KLEIN: [00:30:40] Did anyone say, imply or say that your ability to learn the language would affect your being selected or not?

BEVERWYCK: [00:30:48] If so, I don't recall.

KLEIN: [00:30:50] Okay. So four weeks of language immersion?

BEVERWYCK: [00:30:54] Yeah, something like that.

KLEIN: [00:30:57] What do you recall of it?

BEVERWYCK: [00:31:02] I remember the married couples, and there were quite a few married couples, all very, very young.

KLEIN: [00:31:10] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:31:12] The eldest of the married couples had to have been 25 and 26. Lynn and Al Malkinson, I think he still teaches at the University of Colorado. Wonderful people, but they seem. [tape break] And then finally being able to get to our rooms. And all newly married. So there were arguments about how much we could speak English when we were together in the dark. And of course, you know, everybody drew the same conclusion that, well, what this is all about is, is universal language. And we don't have to speak Swahili or English to get on with this business. It was a gas, and the married couples would talk about that.

KLEIN: [00:32:05] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:32:07] I remember the, you know, the single guys, the single gals chasing each other around and all that. All that nice stuff that kids do. And a lot of serious conversation about what we're up to.

KLEIN: [00:32:20] Did you have at least one day a week off, when you're up in Montauk?

BEVERWYCK: [00:32:25] I don't think we did.

KLEIN: [00:32:26] Oh, okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:32:27] Yeah. It wasn't Montauk. It was Monroe.

KLEIN: [00:32:29] Yeah, Monroe. At the end of the four weeks, were you all tested?

BEVERWYCK: [00:32:36] I guess we were tested up there.

KLEIN: [00:32:38] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:32:39] Yeah, we were tested up there. There was the FSI. FSI?

KLEIN: [00:32:43] FSR, the Foreign Service rating.

BEVERWYCK: [00:32:45] Yeah. Foreign Service Institute rating.

KLEIN: [00:32:46] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:32:47] And I did fine.

KLEIN: [00:32:49] Good.

BEVERWYCK: [00:32:49] Yeah, I did fine. I was pleased enough and my wife did better. And some of my best buddies, our best buddies did very well. You know, that whole intimidation thing. How are these guys still there? Yeah, they were still there.

KLEIN: [00:33:08] I mean, your sense that they were way ahead of you?

BEVERWYCK: [00:33:12] Exactly. They were still there, and I was, well, yeah, I'm a really nice guy, and I know I'm going to do great because everything I do turns out just fine, you know? Um. But, boy, they sure are smart compared to me. There was, there was some of that. There's no doubt about it.

KLEIN: [00:33:28] Then next phase of training?

BEVERWYCK: [00:33:30] Back to New York City on the bus, or busses, and to West End. What was the name of that hotel?

KLEIN: [00:33:39] Paris.

BEVERWYCK: [00:33:39] Paris Hotel. Yes, it was. It was the Paris Hotel, 96th and West End or something. You know, you know that place?

KLEIN: [00:33:48] My old neighborhood.

BEVERWYCK: [00:33:50] I love that place. I mean, maybe it's a little bit like home, you know, it was hoo boy. And that's where we all stayed. We had our little lectures there and our small group sessions and our.

KLEIN: [00:34:06] At the hotel?

BEVERWYCK: [00:34:07] At the hotel. Some of it was conducted at the hotel and the remainder up at Columbia Teachers College. So some number of blocks north of there.

KLEIN: [00:34:19] Yeah. Was Columbia Teachers College running the program?

BEVERWYCK: [00:34:22] Yeah, they were.

KLEIN: [00:34:23] You don't recall who was the director of the program?

BEVERWYCK: [00:34:27] Maybe Mary does. I know I don't. I don't. I remember a psychiatrist.

KLEIN: [00:34:35] You want to talk about that now?

BEVERWYCK: [00:34:36] The psychiatrist?

KLEIN: [00:34:37] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:34:37] Yeah. We had our sessions, and I think maybe they were once a week, and we would meet with the psychiatrist. There were, um, what were they called? Marathon sessions. And I think they were like 12 hours.

KLEIN: [00:34:55] Go ahead.

BEVERWYCK: [00:34:55] Twelve hour sessions. And you were divided into groups. And so each group had 12, 14 trainees. And you would, I think the effort by the coordinators, the moderators, whatever they were called, was to break down the emotional barriers of, of the trainees. I don't know why. Maybe in.

KLEIN: [00:35:27] Were you in the same group as Mary?

BEVERWYCK: [00:35:30] No, different groups.

KLEIN: [00:35:31] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:35:32] Which was also interesting at the time, because I was very curious about what was going on with her group, and she was very curious about what was going on with mine.

KLEIN: [00:35:39] But there was no specific agenda for the group other than?

BEVERWYCK: [00:35:43] Um, no, not that I recall. Just talk. There was a lot of emoting, a lot of sharing of experiences, life experiences, concerns, fears, frustrations. Um. A lot of it I could not relate to.

KLEIN: [00:35:58] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:36:00] And some in the group would go on and on and on about things, you know, emotional issues in their lives and their upbringings and all of this. And people would break down in tears and the facilitator would hug them and we'd all hug them and we had little trusting exercises and such. And I loved it. It was fun, but I didn't know what was going on. I really did not know what was going on because it was entirely new to me.

KLEIN: [00:36:29] Did you have any sense that someone was evaluating you?

BEVERWYCK: [00:36:32] Yeah. Oh yeah.

KLEIN: [00:36:34] And it was part of.

BEVERWYCK: [00:36:34] We all, we all sensed that. Yeah. And it was part of it. It was part of it. But they lasted so long, you know, if you had any idea for yourself that you were going to protect yourself over 12 hours from some kind of negative evaluation that might be a result? You can forget about that because, you know, 12 hours people get tired.

And, you know, I think a lot of the emotional stuff that transpired was a consequence of that exhaustion, trying to protect yourself.

KLEIN: [00:37:14] Let's go back to the, um, after language training. You've never taught and you're going into a teaching situation. What was the technical studies or professional studies like?

BEVERWYCK: [00:37:30] I don't remember.

KLEIN: [00:37:33] Teachers College.

BEVERWYCK: [00:37:34] Teachers College, Columbia Teachers College. You know, a very exclusive place.

KLEIN: [00:37:38] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:37:39] I've used their little resume over the years, you know, to get me into other programs.

KLEIN: [00:37:45] But you don't recall?

BEVERWYCK: [00:37:47] No, I honestly don't recall.

KLEIN: [00:37:48] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:37:49] I do remember that they did send us out to find. Oh, yeah, um. They sent us out on a community exploration.

KLEIN: [00:38:01] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [00:38:01] And it was literally sending out 120 people, most of whom were middle class, upper middle class Anglos, with exceptions in the group, into New York City and the other boroughs to have an experience. And come back and share. I ended up, um, I had no idea where I was going, what I was doing, but I ended up in this neighborhood. I took the subway somewhere, got off. Again, we're separated.

KLEIN: [00:38:44] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:38:44] My wife and I. And poked around and had some coffee with some people. And, uh. And there was a high school there. It was a big kind of inner-city high school that was exclusive for some reason. It was called Brooklyn something.

KLEIN: [00:39:08] Not Bronx High School of Science?

BEVERWYCK: [00:39:10] It was, it was a high school of science.

KLEIN: [00:39:14] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:39:15] And the school had been closed for a week or two because of the big strike in New York City. But there were students there, mostly Black kids. Incredibly smart kids. Said, hey, what's going on here? Well, we have some teachers who are, who are crossing the picket line and they're going to open the doors and they're going to go in. They're going to teach us. Yeah? Well, can I come along? Well, yeah, sure, but what do you know? Well, I know Swahili. You know Swahili? Yeah, I know a little bit of Swahili. Some smart-ass kid says, [speaks Swahili]. Yeah. So I immediately hit with these kids. It must have been about ten of them.

BEVERWYCK: [00:40:16] And so somebody showed up. We went into the school. There was a classroom. I stayed with these kids for hours. We laughed. We talked. I just, this nice experience. Really, really fun.

KLEIN: [00:40:28] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:40:30] These very, very bright children. And that was a turn on for me. This is what teaching is or can be.

KLEIN: [00:40:39] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:40:40] I liked it. Came back and shared that with all the other people and listened to all of their experiences. And Mary had gotten mugged on the subway and, oh God, there are all these stories. And then we were assigned to teach for a month, six weeks. I can't remember. After having been placed in a, um, with a family in New York City. That's part of the community experience thing. People who volunteered their services to, to put up trainees, Peace Corps volunteer trainees. And we taught at a place called Bishop Fort High School for that period of time. And I don't really remember much of that.

KLEIN: [00:41:27] Was there any agenda in living with the family? Did anyone try to direct the experience for you? It was just set up.

BEVERWYCK: [00:41:35] If they did, then I presume there was some kind of agenda to it. Um. I don't remember. And they didn't do a very good job of articulating it.

KLEIN: [00:41:48] Do you, do you remember at all? This is the student teaching situation. Initially going into the classroom and having to get up in front of the group and teach a lesson?

BEVERWYCK: [00:41:59] I don't. I really don't. And I had my lesson plans and I remember sitting in the teacher's lounge there at Bishop Ford High School and talking to the other teachers. And it's a Catholic school, so it was still open.

KLEIN: [00:42:12] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:42:14] Um. And I did it every day, but I don't remember much of it. So much more vividly recall that, that day with those kids at that Bronx high school. Or Brooklyn high school or whatever, wherever it was. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:42:33] And there was still more to go of training once you finished with the home stay and the practice teaching?

BEVERWYCK: [00:42:43] Yeah, there was a piece in there. There had, there were evaluative efforts going on it seems. There were interviews and, uh.

KLEIN: [00:42:53] Do you recall being interviewed separately by a psychiatrist?

BEVERWYCK: [00:42:59] No, I. Shoot.

KLEIN: [00:43:03] May not have happened.

BEVERWYCK: [00:43:03] You know, I think it was separate.

KLEIN: [00:43:06] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:43:06] And no. Yes, it was separate. And it was the final interview I had with a psychiatrist, I suppose a psychiatrist. He may have been a psychologist, but anyway, somebody who had looked over the paperwork, had looked over the, the evaluation reports that had, that had been done during the two and a half months plus of training.

KLEIN: [00:43:32] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:43:34] Because he had, he had the paperwork in front of him and we talked and. Uh. That was interesting because he wanted to know why a bright upper middle class kid who'd gone to an exclusive college would want to go to Africa. He had no idea who I was. None. I loved it.

KLEIN: [00:44:06] That's great.

BEVERWYCK: [00:44:08] Man. I mean, was I putting on some kind of show? Did I, did I pull the wool over people's eyes? I mean, why was he thinking this thing? I didn't think I'd done such a thing. You know, you can be a poor boy and be smart too. Partly in my head, you know? Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:44:30] Do you recall final selection?

BEVERWYCK: [00:44:35] Um, only. No, I don't. I don't recall having been informed that we'd been selected.

KLEIN: [00:44:41] Do you recall people being deselected?

BEVERWYCK: [00:44:43] Yes. That is what I remember from the process.

KLEIN: [00:44:46] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:44:49] There had been a number of our new friends. And at that age, and with that kind of intense experience, um, you consider them real friends, who had been deselected from the training program. And it was, it was, uh, it was all very sad.

KLEIN: [00:45:14] Was anyone inclined to protest or were you afraid that it might go against you if you did?

BEVERWYCK: [00:45:22] That's a good question, Bob. In my, in my recollection, there was no movement certainly to protest.

KLEIN: [00:45:37] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:45:38] And that may very well have been, and I speak for myself, concern about my own position.

KLEIN: [00:45:48] Yeah. One other thing about training. Was there any point in training where you and Mary, there was sessions speaking specifically to married couples?

BEVERWYCK: [00:46:06] I don't think there were.

KLEIN: [00:46:07] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:46:10] I don't remember any.

KLEIN: [00:46:15] And I gather both you and Mary, neither of you felt that there was a risk of being deselected?

BEVERWYCK: [00:46:22] No. Uh, no, there wasn't. Well, I don't think there was for Mary, and I know there wasn't for me.

KLEIN: [00:46:31] Okay. It could have been ripping, I mean, for a couple if they were deselected. Well, whose fault is it really, you know?

BEVERWYCK: [00:46:39] We wondered, we wondered about that. Because some of those, some of those folks that we were concerned about were married couples.

KLEIN: [00:46:49] When training was over, did you have a chance to go home before you went overseas or?

BEVERWYCK: [00:46:58] God, I suppose so. Yeah. We went home and. I think we went home, man.

KLEIN: [00:47:15] Would the word Christmas mean anything?

BEVERWYCK: [00:47:17] Not a hell of a lot.

KLEIN: [00:47:19] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:47:21] It never did in my family. So, you know.

KLEIN: [00:47:24] You went back for Christmas.

BEVERWYCK: [00:47:25] I think so.

KLEIN: [00:47:26] Before the training was over.

BEVERWYCK: [00:47:27] Yeah. Okay.

KLEIN: [00:47:28] I cheated.

BEVERWYCK: [00:47:29] Good. Thanks. Thanks. We went back, and it's a fog to me, and I know why. Because my life had moved away from, in a

very short period of time, from where I'd grown up. And I wasn't interested. I wanted this thing to happen, and I was really, really myopic about it.

KLEIN: [00:47:51] So now, you know, training's over. It's clear you're both going. Did you have any doubts? I mean, you're going, you're not a teacher and you've never been to Africa. How did you feel or how did you look at what was coming up?

BEVERWYCK: [00:48:09] With exultation.

KLEIN: [00:48:13] Uh huh.

BEVERWYCK: [00:48:13] With, with happy expectation.

KLEIN: [00:48:17] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:48:18] I mean it. Yeah. I was just so ready. I was so excited. At that time it was the best thing that had ever happened to us, to me.

KLEIN: [00:48:30] Did you have a sense that, uh, you know, in your motivation to go you've talked a lot about where it fit in your life of wanting to help or wanting to be of service to people.

BEVERWYCK: [00:48:45] Oh yeah.

KLEIN: [00:48:46] That was part of the mix?

BEVERWYCK: [00:48:47] Definitely. Definitely a very big part of the mix. You know, Peace Corps. It meant something to me. It meant, you know, I bought into all of what I was hearing, what I was being told, that, that this was an effort to be helpful, to be a good person to other good people. And I bought it hook, line, and sinker.

KLEIN: [00:49:17] Do you think maybe some of that ethic emerged out of your activism from being in Washington?

BEVERWYCK: [00:49:23] Absolutely. Yeah, no question.

KLEIN: [00:49:26] And it wasn't, you know, answering Kennedy's call because that was almost historic at that point.

BEVERWYCK: [00:49:32] No, it wasn't answering Kennedy's call. It was not answering Kennedy's call at all, really.

KLEIN: [00:49:40] Okay. Now we have to get you to.

BEVERWYCK: [00:49:42] It was far more immediate than that. Yeah. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:49:48] Were there area studies at the same time? There must have been as part of training.

BEVERWYCK: [00:49:52] There were. Yeah, there were area studies. And those were the courses we took at Columbia Teachers College. Cross cultural studies, um, African history, East African history. Some really good stuff. In fact, I still have the textbooks, they're wonderful. Yeah, really.

KLEIN: [00:50:15] Did you begin to have a sense of you weren't just going any place, you were going someplace?

BEVERWYCK: [00:50:20] Absolutely.

KLEIN: [00:50:20] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:50:21] Yeah. The rest of the world just kind of started fading away for me. And I was, I was wanting to know what Kenya was.

KLEIN: [00:50:32] Did you have an idea of where you'd like to be? You had learned something about Kenya and its educational system and what was going on even before you went. Had you formed any opinions?

BEVERWYCK: [00:50:46] Yeah. Wanted to be in the bush. Did not, didn't want to be in town.

KLEIN: [00:50:52] How would you define the bush?

BEVERWYCK: [00:50:54] Well, I probably would not have called it the bush at the time. Um, I did not want to be. And we had talked about this, Mary and I, in a town or a city. We wanted to be in the countryside where we, perhaps through our studies, perhaps through our conversations with trainers, Kenyan trainers and others, felt we would be most comfortable and most content doing our work. So that was the most important consideration, that we'd be placed in the countryside.

KLEIN: [00:51:32] Before you left, had you been surveyed about your preferences for assignment?

BEVERWYCK: [00:51:40] I don't think so.

KLEIN: [00:51:42] And during the whole period of training, do you recall meeting any Peace Corps Washington or Peace Corps Kenya staff people?

BEVERWYCK: [00:51:56] I don't remember.

KLEIN: [00:51:57] Okay. No one tried to come out and sort of put a Peace Corps imprint on you?

BEVERWYCK: [00:52:02] Before we went to Kenya?

KLEIN: [00:52:03] Right.

BEVERWYCK: [00:52:05] I think, yes, there had been someone, I believe, who had been in touch with Mary about a position they wanted to fill at the Nairobi hospital, the Nairobi Hospital or a hospital in Nairobi, in the laboratory. And it was something she really had to think very, very hard about.

KLEIN: [00:52:41] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:52:41] Very, very hard about. And, uh, although my degree of sensitivity and tolerance and, uh, chauvinism was less than what it could have been or should have been, I think I wanted for her to be happy with what we were going to be doing. And boy, I don't remember for sure, but I'd like to believe that, that looking back on it, that I would have, you know, wanted for her to make that decision for herself. And I think we did. And she, she wanted to be in the countryside too.

KLEIN: [00:53:31] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:53:32] But I remember that being hard for her.

KLEIN: [00:53:36] Mm hmm. Well, she had just completed the internship.

BEVERWYCK: [00:53:39] Oh, yes. And her four years of intense training in her chosen profession. And here she had this wonderful opportunity.

KLEIN: [00:53:47] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:53:49] But I guess, you know, it was more important for her that we play together and she probably knew, she's very insightful with me, knew that that I didn't want to be in the city. I really wanted to know what Africa was out in the country.

KLEIN: [00:54:08] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [00:54:09] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:54:11] Do you recall the flight over particularly?

BEVERWYCK: [00:54:14] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:54:16] Sort of the sober moments.

BEVERWYCK: [00:54:19] Well, no, I don't remember the sober moments. There weren't any.

KLEIN: [00:54:24] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:54:26] Um, O.J. Simpson was running for a touchdown for USC in the Rose Bowl at the airport. There was his last, that was his senior year.

KLEIN: [00:54:34] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:54:36] And we got on the plane. And we flew across the ocean and, whoo, we drank like fish on that, on that flight.

KLEIN: [00:54:46] It wasn't a charter flight, was it?

BEVERWYCK: [00:54:48] Yeah, it was.

KLEIN: [00:54:49] Oh, okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:54:49] It was a charter flight to London.

KLEIN: [00:54:52] Because it was a big group still.

BEVERWYCK: [00:54:54] It was a very big group. Took the whole plane. And they wined and dined us. And we're all miserable from London to Rome I guess it was, just hung over. And it was, it was really fun. And we, oh yeah, we flew from Rome to Beirut. And that was, that was sobering figuratively and literally, I think.

KLEIN: [00:55:20] In what way?

BEVERWYCK: [00:55:22] There had been within days or a week an attack on Lebanon, on Beirut, by Israelis. And there were burning planes on the, the margins of the runway and armed, lots of armed soldiers. This was very close to the beginning of their civil war, maybe just a few years before the civil war began. But it was, you know, Lebanon was in terrible turmoil.

KLEIN: [00:55:53] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:55:54] And there was a Jewish guy in our program who was busily taking photographs outside the window. Said what the fuck are you doing?

KLEIN: [00:56:04] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:56:05] I mean, right away it was like, don't be dumb here. You know, you, we're in a different place and we can't be dumb, you know? And we had to get off the plane for a little while and get back on. We saw these smoking airplanes burning. It's a different world, you know. And then to Entebbe, Uganda, where we touched down in Africa for the first time, and it was dark and, uh, and got down and we smelled Africa. All of us were so excited.

KLEIN: [00:56:39] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:56:41] And then to Nairobi.

KLEIN: [00:56:42] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:56:45] Yeah. It's good. The flight over was really fun.

KLEIN: [00:56:49] Do you recall your first few days, what you were doing, how you were received, who received you?

BEVERWYCK: [00:56:58] We stayed in a little hotel that I don't think is any longer there. The Rose Garden, I think it was called. It's one of the colonial hotels. Had a little fan in the room and no air conditioning or anything. But it was, it was really, for us it was exotic. The bougainvillea were everywhere. And oh, it was just a joy to be in this hotel. And there were a number of small hotels around the central part of the city where our program was placed until they ironed everything out. And we'd meet over there at the Peace Corps headquarters, which was a set of Quonset huts I think.

KLEIN: [00:57:44] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:57:45] And talk about assignments. We actually, Mary and I actually went out to that hospital. They still touched base with her about that thing. They really wanted her to do it.

KLEIN: [00:57:57] Right.

BEVERWYCK: [00:57:57] And we took that little tour and they asked her to think about it and she decided against it.

KLEIN: [00:58:06] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [00:58:06] And we just kind of hung out, ran into our buddies in town, you know, our fellow trainees, as we were moving around. And finally got our assignment.

KLEIN: [00:58:17] Do you recall in your first few days trying to use your Swahili?

BEVERWYCK: [00:58:22] Yeah, we did. We used it with each other. We used it with our fellow trainees, RPC, RPCVs now. And some Africans we met. Yeah, we played with it a little bit. We wanted to know if we could do it.

KLEIN: [00:58:40] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [00:58:40] That test wouldn't come until later.

KLEIN: [00:58:42] Yeah. So now you finally get your assignment.

BEVERWYCK: [00:58:51] Is that, is that where we are? Just where we got the assignment? Whew. Man.

KLEIN: [00:58:57] We can.

BEVERWYCK: [00:59:00] I just can't believe we're just there. Yeah, we got our assignment. We're really excited. Others have already gone to theirs. Um.

KLEIN: [00:59:12] What was your understanding of where you were being assigned? And what kind of school was it?

BEVERWYCK: [00:59:21] Harambee School. Um, I think we had been informed that one or two of the forms in the secondary school had been taken over by the government. Um, that it was a long way away from Nairobi, that we were being picked up by missionaries who were connected with the school, whose mission was located at the school. That's pretty much what we knew. Um. What would we be doing there? We would be teaching there. And that was basically it.

KLEIN: [01:00:03] Now, this was early January, right?

BEVERWYCK: [01:00:05] This was early January.

KLEIN: [01:00:06] And the school years in Kenya begin in January?

BEVERWYCK: [01:00:11] Yeah, that's right. That's right. So we got there before that term began, the second term of that year.

KLEIN: [01:00:24] Right.

BEVERWYCK: [01:00:25] That would have been the 60, academic year '68-'69.

KLEIN: [01:00:29] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:00:33] Um. Yeah. So we were picked up by the missionaries and took the long drive back to Taranganya.

KLEIN: [01:00:46] Had you done a whole bunch of shopping in Nairobi before you left? Do you recall particularly, I mean, mosquito nets and stuff?

BEVERWYCK: [01:00:54] Yeah. We must have. We must have done some shopping. We did have mosquito nets by the time we arrived at Taranganya. We may have done the shopping in Kisii.

KLEIN: [01:01:08] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:01:08] Um, Kisii must be 250, close to 300 miles from Nairobi.

KLEIN: [01:01:16] Had anyone from Peace Corps been out to visit the school site before you went?

BEVERWYCK: [01:01:22] Not that I know of.

KLEIN: [01:01:25] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:01:25] I don't think anyone had ever been there from Peace Corps. But I think we did do some shopping in Kisii because I remember walking up and down the aisles in this Indian grocery kind of general store, um, Champi's was the name of it, with the missionary guy. And we were picking up some canned goods.

KLEIN: [01:01:54] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:01:55] And then off to Taranganya.

KLEIN: [01:01:57] Now, who was the missionary? I mean, where was he from?

BEVERWYCK: [01:02:00] The mission was sponsored by the Elam, E-L-A-M, Mission Society of Long Island, New York. And or Detroit, Michigan.

KLEIN: [01:02:16] Uh huh.

BEVERWYCK: [01:02:17] Evangelical Christian group, who had been there some number of years and had been instrumental, if not solely responsible, for establishing a school in Kuria District. The name of the tribe were

the Kuria, is the Kuria. A large tribe in Tanzania, but very small in Kenya, in the western part of Kenya.

KLEIN: [01:02:50] And the missionary himself was an American?

BEVERWYCK: [01:02:53] These were American missionaries, all of them. [tape break] I think Scandinavian Swedish young couple, evangelicals also. But there was little if any contact in my recollection between that nearby mission and the American mission where our school was located. Another mission at Isebania, which was 35 miles away. And we had very, very close friends, a young married couple, Peace Corps volunteers, at that Catholic high school.

KLEIN: [01:03:25] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:03:26] And they were Maryknolls and two priests who became good friends of ours, one in particular. But anyway, it was a mission influenced secondary school there at Taranganya. Taranganya is really not a village. Um, the nearest village was Kehancha, four miles plus down the road, where there were five or six *dukas* and a little saloon. And you could buy some things there, not very much. Yeah, Kehancha. I don't even think it had a refrigerator. The beer you could buy was warm. Yeah. So, Taranganya, I don't know where the name came from. It's on the map, but it's not a village. It's just a place. You know, this mission and the school and then the countryside. Uh.

KLEIN: [01:04:20] It's a boarding? Can you describe the school briefly?

BEVERWYCK: [01:04:22] Yeah, a boarding school. Um. A single wing of four rooms. Two empty buildings at 90 degree angles to it on both ends, but separated. Buildings constructed and financed by USAID and some other program. The symbol was a Black hand and a white hand shaking. And that was the symbol on these two buildings. It had been a project of USAID, I guess.

KLEIN: [01:05:02] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:05:05] Empty. And then east would have. Anyway. So away from the school compound proper, on one side were, was a dormitory, an adobe structure with a tin roof like the school itself, but considerably in less good state, for the 120, 140 boys, a boys school, and small. One end of it was the place where they ate, you would call it a cafeteria, but I don't want to call it that.

KLEIN: [01:05:50] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:05:52] And then a small building, thatched roofed, adjacent to that, which was the kitchen, where two or three people made food for the students. Then on the other side of the compound, the opposite direction, were what were to become staff quarters. There was one, two, three houses for staff. The mission staff, the missionaries who taught at the school, lived on the mission compound, as did we for the first 3 to 5 months of our time that first year. Yeah. Uh, acreage. Let's see. I'd say the whole thing was like 40 acres.

KLEIN: [01:06:54] Did it have a playing field?

BEVERWYCK: [01:06:56] It had a playing field. Um, well, it was a field that kids played in.

KLEIN: [01:07:04] Okay. Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:07:05] Yeah. And football was big. You know, I introduced track and field, well, certain events in track and field, to the kids and introduced basketball to the kids. That part was fun because the kids, you know, the boys just loved to jump and run and throw. They really did. But football was the, was it. I mean, soccer was the game.

KLEIN: [01:07:38] Let's go to the teaching side of things and then we'll talk about living conditions. Uh. What was the staff of school? It was you and Mary.

BEVERWYCK: [01:07:50] Headmaster. African. Our best friend, Jerry Mugove, African science teacher.

KLEIN: [01:08:00] What was his academic background?

BEVERWYCK: [01:08:03] Um, I think two years, but possibly more, in Nairobi at one of the teaching institutes.

KLEIN: [01:08:12] Advanced teacher training?

BEVERWYCK: [01:08:14] Definitely post-secondary, teachers training college.

KLEIN: [01:08:17] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:08:17] A very bright guy. Beautiful man. Um. Paul Moheri, a Kuria, the only Kuria in the entire time we were there, who was an instructor.

KLEIN: [01:08:35] Kuria?

BEVERWYCK: [01:08:36] Kuria tribe.

KLEIN: [01:08:37] Oh, okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:08:37] A local tribe.

KLEIN: [01:08:38] Got it. Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:08:39] Jerry was a Maragoli and the headmaster was a Luo. Um. And this just comes off my tongue because of the reality of tribalism in Kenya. It just does. I mean, today it's like, it just rolls right off because you become part of this milieu where tribalism is a very real component of where you are, and it played out.

KLEIN: [01:09:08] And people use it as an identifier?

BEVERWYCK: [01:09:10] People use it as an identifier, and it played out in curious ways over those, those years we were there. Um. Let's see. So that's Mr. Mugove, Jerry Mugove, Mr. Obiero, Paul Moheri, Mary, me. And

then, um. That was it the first year. No, no, no. That was, that was it when we arrived.

KLEIN: [01:09:40] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:09:42] I think that was it when we arrived. Then the excitement was all about the new missionaries who were arriving, who were trained to teach.

KLEIN: [01:09:55] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:09:57] And they came, they were recent graduates of a university in Oklahoma, a very highly regarded university in Oklahoma. And all the students knew about it. And the missionaries who had picked us up in Nairobi and drove us out knew about it. That Oral Roberts University was really something.

KLEIN: [01:10:26] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:10:26] And so. Um, the Floyds were going to arrive. This is within a week of us arriving, and we're excited as hell.

KLEIN: [01:10:39] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:10:41] Young couple recently out of college, just like us. Yeah. And this school needs a lot. I mean, look at all these kids. You know, we've talked with the headmaster. We've met the African teachers. Wait a minute. There are 120 to 140 kids here. What are we going to do? We've got these four little rooms. You gotta be kidding me. What are we, how are we going to teach? Who's going to teach what?

KLEIN: [01:11:05] Right.

BEVERWYCK: [01:11:06] Where? So we got two new teachers coming.

KLEIN: [01:11:11] But, but the, uh. There were four, four forms in the school?

BEVERWYCK: [01:11:16] Four forms.

KLEIN: [01:11:17] And the student stayed in the class?

BEVERWYCK: [01:11:19] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:11:20] And the teachers came to them?

BEVERWYCK: [01:11:22] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:11:23] So then on any given period, the only four of you could be teaching.

BEVERWYCK: [01:11:26] That's right.

KLEIN: [01:11:27] Okay. Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:11:28] That's right.

KLEIN: [01:11:29] Do you recall how, what, what your teaching program was?

BEVERWYCK: [01:11:36] English. Let's see. The first year it was English 2 and English 3. Second form, third form. Next year, English 3 and English 4. And I taught African history 2, 3, and 4. And I taught world history 2, 3, and 4. I don't think I ever had a form 1 class. So I had history, world history, African history, English, and literature.

KLEIN: [01:12:19] So English was both composition and literature?

BEVERWYCK: [01:12:22] Yeah. And I don't think I taught math. I'm pretty sure I didn't teach math.

KLEIN: [01:12:26] Did you have any guidance in what you were supposed to be teaching to any given class?

BEVERWYCK: [01:12:33] Yep. Sure did. The syllabi.

KLEIN: [01:12:41] Which was?

BEVERWYCK: [01:12:42] The syllabi outlined very clearly in depth what it was these children had to know, forms one and two, to pass the Kenya Junior Secondary Examination, the KJSE, and then for all forms, through form 4, the passage successfully of the Cambridge examination. And that is what it was all about. You had to teach to that syllabi.

KLEIN: [01:13:26] Did you have books and did the students have books that matched up to this?

BEVERWYCK: [01:13:31] No. [to other person] Hi. How are you doing? No, we didn't. We had to do a lot of scrounging. Much of what we were able to use had to be procured from innumerable boxes crammed with books from the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia, and maybe some from China, I don't know. But they're packed away in this tiny storage room in the middle of the school compound. You had form 4, form 3, then this weird little space where teachers met, then had this little storage space, and then form 2, form 1.

KLEIN: [01:14:27] Right.

BEVERWYCK: [01:14:29] So the texts did not match the syllabi. You did in the classroom with what you could find that was somehow relevant.

KLEIN: [01:14:43] Do you recall your initial teaching? You know, actually now you're getting up in front of a class. You're in Kenya, I mean, it's not just practice or training, it's the real thing.

BEVERWYCK: [01:14:59] It was the real thing. And, well, there was the necessity of being politic, of being responsive to the authority of the school, the headmaster, uh, and to figure all of that out. To figure out what was the daily routine of a secondary school in Kenya.

KLEIN: [01:15:41] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:15:41] And that meant arriving at a certain time and forming a semicircle around the Kenyan flag in a very well prepared little garden with a flagpole and a selected student would raise that flag and we would sing the national anthem and we would do the stuff and. And trying to put all of that in place and recognizing the authoritative and probably authoritarian aspects of that kind of institution in the third world where they learn what they know from the English, and where am I going to fit in here, and how can I do whatever it is I feel has to be done in the classroom to make a difference, with all of the things that have to be done outside of my control, that are outside of my control.

KLEIN: [01:16:42] Did you prepare lessons initially or did you say, I'm going to go in and just sort of feel my way and see?

BEVERWYCK: [01:16:48] I didn't prepare lessons.

KLEIN: [01:16:53] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:16:53] Ever.

KLEIN: [01:17:01] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:17:01] I always relied on my store and I'd never been tested in regard to what my store, what was in the store. And, uh, as I began spending time in the classroom, it became fairly clear to me that I had a good store and, uh, I had a way of passing that store along to the children. Um, how did I feel about it walking in there, those early days? I felt incredibly responsible. I think I grew up.

KLEIN: [01:17:58] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:17:58] And, well, you were a teacher yourself there. And all those children. There were so many. And the way they would sit there behind those funky desks, and they were too big for the desks and all that, and they would look at you. God. I mean, the responsibility really was overwhelming.

KLEIN: [01:18:22] Do you recall initial language problems? I mean, they're speaking English a little differently.

BEVERWYCK: [01:18:27] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:18:28] So were you.

BEVERWYCK: [01:18:30] Uh huh. Yeah. There was adjustment there that, real necessity for adjustment. It took some time. It took weeks to, to really be comfortable with their kind of English, English based, English mixed with their native dialect, you know, the accent. And American English, yeah, which is so different.

KLEIN: [01:18:59] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:19:00] It took a little while.

KLEIN: [01:19:01] How did you work through the conflict that a lot of teachers had, Peace Corps teachers had, of being an American teacher who wants to teach to creative thinking and as against the system that sort of rewards rote learning and that's the expectation on the part of the students?

BEVERWYCK: [01:19:26] I didn't have a conflict because I refused. I refused to have that be a matter of contention between me and my students because I knew that what I wanted for them to learn was to think.

KLEIN: [01:19:54] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:19:56] That once you learned how to think, once you learned critical thinking, you could learn it all. And you weren't going to get that by what it was you expected for me to do.

KLEIN: [01:20:12] But that doesn't match up against them having to sit these exams.

BEVERWYCK: [01:20:17] Yeah, it does.

KLEIN: [01:20:21] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:20:21] It certainly did. Um. And there were numerous occasions where, oh God, I battled with them. They wanted me to fill that chalkboard. I mean, a really funky chalkboard, which you could hardly write on it. They wanted me to fill it with outline of whatever particular content area we had.

KLEIN: [01:20:49] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:20:50] And I wouldn't do it. And there were some kids. There were some kids who were pretty aggressive about informing me that that's the way it had to be done because they had to pass this KJSE. They had to pass the Cambridge examination if they were going down to form 5 and 6.

KLEIN: [01:21:10] Right.

BEVERWYCK: [01:21:11] They had to have this information. You guys are going to get the information, but you've got to trust me.

KLEIN: [01:21:17] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:21:19] And we did go around.

KLEIN: [01:21:22] Did the headmaster ever get involved in that?

BEVERWYCK: [01:21:26] No. I had my problems with the headmaster, but he did not, in my recollection, interfere with what I was trying to do.

KLEIN: [01:21:36] And none of the students went to him to complain.

BEVERWYCK: [01:21:38] Not that I know of. And one reason there is that most of the students were Kuria, that tribal thing, and they wouldn't go to the headmaster for anything. And none of the Luo students that I know of

went to him, because I had good relationships with the Luo students. Only recently one of our former students, who we told you about him yesterday, he's a very successful person. He had, I think it was Chacha who told us, that there was a time he remembered when he was form 2, when there were some students who were going to, um, go on strike. Because of me. That I wasn't giving them the syllabus in the classroom. I said, you've got to be kidding me.

BEVERWYCK: [01:22:31] He said, no, no, I remember sitting in the dormitory at night with a light and talking with some of the other kids, and they were saying, you know, he's not writing on the blackboard. He's just talking to us and making us answer questions. And what does that have to do with, you know, scene six, act four of Romeo and Juliet, you know? Wow. I mean, when he told me that, like God, it was like that heavy, huh? I don't remember it being.

KLEIN: [01:23:01] Okay. Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:23:02] I really don't. It was, it was. Well, um, you know, I, I think maybe I forced my will upon them. I stood there before those 40 kids every day, and I would just, you will. You know, my will will make you do this. Um. And I think it worked, you know? I mean, I felt comfortable the entire time. But that's a very good question, and it's a very provocative one, um, because I really personally could not go to that place of rote memorization and I couldn't do it for myself. And first and foremost, I couldn't do it for myself and I couldn't do it to them.

KLEIN: [01:23:53] Can you picture yourself after maybe three or four months of being there, had the teaching fallen into a routine and you were comfortable in the classroom?

BEVERWYCK: [01:24:04] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:24:06] Did you have a sense that the students were responding to your approach?

BEVERWYCK: [01:24:09] Oh, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:24:10] Yeah. Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:24:12] Part of that had to do with having been, well, I'd volunteered to set up the library. One of those two USAID buildings was, I guess we decided as a group to be a library. And we went through all those books and we would take trips to Nairobi and, you know, fill the trunks of vehicles and bring out more books from Peace Corps. And we filled this library.

KLEIN: [01:24:41] Uh huh.

BEVERWYCK: [01:24:41] And I had kids who worked for me and, uh, we cataloged and we had a little checkout desk and, oh God, it was such a joy. I mean, they had all these books.

KLEIN: [01:24:55] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:24:56] The kids wanted books. They wanted books so badly. We had books at home, our little house. And our students were always welcome. They were more than welcome. They were encouraged to be with us after school in our home to read. And on numerous occasions we lent out books. Sometimes we'd get them back, sometimes we wouldn't.

KLEIN: [01:25:25] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:25:26] It never made any difference.

KLEIN: [01:25:28] How long did you live on the mission?

BEVERWYCK: [01:25:30] We lived on the mission two or three months, I think.

KLEIN: [01:25:35] Do you remember the shift to the?

BEVERWYCK: [01:25:37] Oh, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:25:37] And how it changed? Did it represent any kind of change in your life or relations to the students?

BEVERWYCK: [01:25:42] Oh, yeah. It was a change in our life because we were uncomfortable and had become contra, as they say, up here in northern New Mexico, contra contra, we'd become kind of rebellious about living on the mission compound. We were uncomfortable there. Um. There were unspoken expectations of our behavior on the mission compound by the missionaries, like drinking a beer on a Sunday. Things like that. We've got to get out of here. And so for ourselves, personal expectations, yeah, it was a great thing to move from, from the beat up old house there on the mission to the really kind of strange little concrete block house on the school compound. But we had more physical proximity to the students where they lived in the dormitory, and they were more willing to come.

KLEIN: [01:26:54] And there were no school rules about students coming to master's houses?

BEVERWYCK: [01:26:58] No. Well, if there were, I didn't know about it. And the kids knew that they could always come. And they came. They came a lot. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:27:08] Did you have any dorm responsibilities, like being a housemaster?

BEVERWYCK: [01:27:15] I don't think so.

KLEIN: [01:27:16] Okay. They may not have even had them.

BEVERWYCK: [01:27:17] No, no. There was a night watch person.

KLEIN: [01:27:21] But you didn't supervise at the dorms at all?

BEVERWYCK: [01:27:23] No.

KLEIN: [01:27:24] Night studies?

BEVERWYCK: [01:27:26] Night studies were held in the rooms.

KLEIN: [01:27:29] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:27:32] Um, it was absolutely necessary because the paraffin lights they had, I think there may have been one or two petrol max lights, the pump ones that use white gas, which give a good light. But most of the lights were the paraffin, which give very little light. They wouldn't work in the dormitory.

KLEIN: [01:27:56] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:27:57] So we had study in the evening in, in the rooms. And I would go to the rooms, Mary would go to the rooms, and we'd spend time with the students at night. Yeah. All the time.

KLEIN: [01:28:09] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:28:09] We'd be at night in the rooms. So that the light was more diffuse and so kids could cram around their desks and study. And study they did. It was unbelievable how they studied.

KLEIN: [01:28:23] Do you want to talk? I'm not sure when the problems with the headmaster came in. Was it during the first year?

BEVERWYCK: [01:28:33] Was that during the first year? I think it was. It was during the end of the first year. Um. Milton Obiero, the headmaster, and I got along fine. I've had this problem in my life, a lot of trust, and trusted him. And, and, you know, I'd go to him and make requests of him, and he would make requests of me to take on these responsibilities and that responsibilities. And there were a lot of responsibilities in the little place like that. One of them was to do the cross country team, track team as a combination thing, and you would take trips with the students and that was fun. I really loved it.

KLEIN: [01:29:25] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:29:25] On one occasion, I took a group of students on a bus to a village some distance away. Must have been 70 miles away. Awingo, I think it was called. We had a track meet and it was a Luo area and a number of the Luo students at our school were from that area, from that village maybe. We had the track meet. You know, I met with the teachers from that school. We had our little tea session afterwards and all that. Got to the bus in town and one of the students hadn't arrived. We waited and we waited. We waited a couple hours for this kid. And when he showed up, I was pissed. No, really pissed. God damn, you know. Who do you think you are? You're holding up this whole bus the entire time. We've got to get back to school. And just berated him for unconscionable behavior. Well, the headmaster came down.

KLEIN: [01:30:33] Did he have an explanation?

BEVERWYCK: [01:30:36] Yeah, he did. He was visiting his family.

KLEIN: [01:30:38] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:30:39] Yeah. And that meant nothing to me, because you had other responsibilities. I mean, I just, you know.

KLEIN: [01:30:50] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:30:50] And I had to get these kids back, you know, the whole thing. So the headmaster was very upset with me. Very upset. You know, you were abusive of an African student. Who do you think you are, you *wazungu*? You know, blah, blah, blah.

KLEIN: [01:31:08] Did he actually call you into his office?

BEVERWYCK: [01:31:11] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:31:11] It was a one on one?

BEVERWYCK: [01:31:12] He did. It was one on one. At least it was that. None of it was public. And I, you know, ultimately respected him for that. But, man, I was really, I was devastated. And I'd been there about a year.

KLEIN: [01:31:29] And now you were devastated by his criticism of you.

BEVERWYCK: [01:31:32] Because I had been so supportive and mostly I had been supportive of him vis a vis the mission.

KLEIN: [01:31:42] Uh huh.

BEVERWYCK: [01:31:42] That was the big one. He'd been having lots of problems with the mission and the mission teachers wanting to do an evangelical thing at school, to teach the Bible. Bible was an academic subject.

KLEIN: [01:31:56] Right.

BEVERWYCK: [01:31:58] And they just wanted to do the New Testament with the evangelical component, nothing else. Um, and, you know, I was very supportive of him that entire year. Um. But, you know, I'd obviously crossed a line with him.

KLEIN: [01:32:18] How did your differences get resolved?

BEVERWYCK: [01:32:21] They got resolved through the assistance of the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [01:32:24] Oh.

BEVERWYCK: [01:32:26] I was so upset.

KLEIN: [01:32:27] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:32:28] I said, look, I told my wife and I told my colleagues I'm not coming back until this is resolved. I was really disturbed, and so was the headmaster, as it turned out.

KLEIN: [01:32:43] Did you take off and go to Nairobi?

BEVERWYCK: [01:32:46] I don't know how we contacted Nairobi. I think we must have gone to Kisii or hitched a ride somewhere.

KLEIN: [01:32:53] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:32:54] To a telephone. There may have been a, there was a shortwave radio somewhere. Maybe I used the shortwave radio. Shortwave something.

KLEIN: [01:33:03] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:33:07] And I arranged for Bob Siegel, who was I think the deputy director. I said, look man, you know, I'm really bummed. I was pretty depressed I think. I think I may have been feeling depressed. I'd made this commitment and I felt betrayed, blah, blah, blah. You know, all of that. And I was young.

KLEIN: [01:33:30] To that point, you had had virtually no contact with the Peace Corps office, right?

BEVERWYCK: [01:33:35] That's right.

KLEIN: [01:33:35] You were out there and they knew nothing. You didn't report back to them at all?

BEVERWYCK: [01:33:40] Not at all. There had been no, no official contact for sure. I think there may have been two trips into Nairobi to pick up books. And then we did our outbound safari thing on Mount Kilimanjaro.

KLEIN: [01:33:57] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:33:58] I don't know if that was the first year or the second, but we had one of those big projects the first year. So there was contact with Peace Corps, but never, hey look, you know, I need some help. And Bob Siegel goes out in his Toyota Land Rover and his cutoff, you know, his, his British shorts and his safari jacket. And I was like, Bob. He was a good guy. And, uh, he listened well. He did. He listened well. And I found myself, um, when I think back on that experience, venting. And he was taking it for me. And then in a very mature way, far more mature than I could have pulled off, he arranged for a meeting with the headmaster. He talked to the headmaster, arranged for a meeting with the two of us. We came together and we talked. And I think I may have missed two or three days of school.

KLEIN: [01:35:10] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:35:13] I looked at him in a new way, and I'm sure he looked at me in a new way. But we continued working together effectively for another year, year plus. But it was a painful experience. One of the, one of the most painful I've ever had, because I had so much invested I felt, you know?

KLEIN: [01:35:33] Uh huh.

BEVERWYCK: [01:35:34] And there was this nastiness. Where did that come from? Well.

KLEIN: [01:35:40] But there was, there was no feedback loop saying that you're doing a good job built into the school structure? I'm not suggesting that.

BEVERWYCK: [01:35:53] No, there was not.

KLEIN: [01:35:57] In effect, you were left alone to do all these things and you were asked to do a lot of things. But they weren't regular sessions where the headmaster would say, well, you've done this well and?

BEVERWYCK: [01:36:08] No. And he wasn't that kind of person, you know.

KLEIN: [01:36:12] No, and I, yeah, that.

BEVERWYCK: [01:36:13] A reticent and, uh, fearful little man who was, who was, you know, um, to be honest, out of his element professionally and mostly emotionally, because he was out of his tribal area. He was in, he was in enemy territory. And that was tough for him. It was tough for him. It was tough for his wife. It was tough for his, you know, his family.

KLEIN: [01:36:52] No, I was just suggesting that in the absence of that kind of, you know, ongoing relationship, it was at a distance to have certainly such a heavy critical.

BEVERWYCK: [01:37:05] It was, I mean, totally caught me by surprise.

KLEIN: [01:37:08] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:37:09] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:37:09] And you must have felt that you were doing an incredibly good job.

BEVERWYCK: [01:37:13] I probably did.

KLEIN: [01:37:16] You were 22 at the time.

BEVERWYCK: [01:37:17] That's exactly right. You know, I'm, I'm sure I thought I was doing one hell of a good job, even though surely there was lots, lots of room for criticism and the constructive criticism wasn't there. And so, you know, over those long months, you could convince yourself that you were doing a hell of a job and that everybody loved you. And maybe they didn't, and surely they didn't.

KLEIN: [01:37:45] Yeah. We jumped toward the end of the first year. You did have some vacations during that first year?

BEVERWYCK: [01:37:54] Yeah, we did.

KLEIN: [01:37:56] One was you went on a safari?

BEVERWYCK: [01:37:59] Yeah, we went on safari. Let's see. What's the first thing we did? What was the first thing we did? I can't do that, huh? All right. Sorry. March. Oh, yeah, I think. Yeah, I know. First vacation from school, that month long break.

KLEIN: [01:38:23] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:38:25] We joined up with a couple in our program to go on a medical safari to the NFD, the Northern Frontier District, along what was then called Lake Turkana. And, uh, that's a wonderful adventure. The four of us. It was an inoculation project, inoculation against smallpox and TB. And we had a big Land Rover given to us by the government or Peace Corps, probably a Peace Corps, I can't remember. Big green thing. And a Turkana interpreter. So we had been trained for a few days in Nairobi by the doctor and some other medical personnel. And then were just thrown off into the NFD, and we met in Lodwar. I think we had a little bit more time there for training and then we were gone.

KLEIN: [01:39:30] You had never done any kind of medical work?

BEVERWYCK: [01:39:33] Nothing.

KLEIN: [01:39:34] And now you would learn to give inoculations.

BEVERWYCK: [01:39:37] Give inoculation, I think we did it here. And then we did smallpox thing.

KLEIN: [01:39:42] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:39:43] The little vials. And we had to keep things as cool as we could and blah, blah, whatever. And, uh. Trackless. No roads, nothing. I mean, many of those days in that month we were just going

over sand dunes, but this kind of guy seemed to kind of know where we were going. And we did this. We inoculated more than 5,000 people. Families were encouraged to bring their, bring everybody in, especially the children, their babies. And we would do that every day in an elementary school, you know, a thatched roof place, sometimes right out in the open under a tree. And we just did it all day long with these Turkana tribespeople. Fabulous experience. It was, it was really, really wonderful.

KLEIN: [01:40:43] Then you had other vacations. Was there a major break between the first and the second year? Like more than a month?

BEVERWYCK: [01:40:51] No.

KLEIN: [01:40:51] It was always just a month?

BEVERWYCK: [01:40:52] Always just a month.

KLEIN: [01:40:52] That's right, three, three months, one month off. Yeah. What other travel did you do?

BEVERWYCK: [01:41:00] Let's see. Um. I think I may have told you briefly about Paula Hirschhoff in Washington, D.C., this person we had reacquainted with last summer. We took a wonderful safari with, let's see, there was Paula, Mike Robinson, who was doing a year teaching in Kenya, who's at Harvard, was one of the early Black students at Harvard.

KLEIN: [01:41:25] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:41:29] Um. Kerry and, Kerry Ahearn and his wife. And Mary and me in that beat up old Volkswagen. We did that for a whole month. We left Nairobi. We went to Kampala, we went to Queen Elizabeth. We went to the Rwenzoris. We climbed in the Rwenzoris where what's her name was working on the gorillas. We went to Rwanda. We spent the week in Rwanda. We went to Burundi, we went to Tanzania. We just made this giant loop and we had a busted

windshield. And it was just a great, great time with friends and, uh, had one fight the whole, the whole time. Kerry Ahearn and I, he's at Oregon State University now. He and I had a battle in the bitching about something and but that was it. I mean, God, the food ran out. I mean, just all this stuff. Just a great safari.

BEVERWYCK: [01:42:30] We did another project. We, uh. Mary was pregnant and we were pregnant, and we went to Mount Kilimanjaro to teach at the Outward Bound school. And I think Mary was unofficial capacity because she couldn't be an instructor. She was a number of months pregnant. And I was an instructor and I had a group of kids and we trained and did all that. And we climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. And, you know, I had these teenage boys from all over East Africa. One of them was Milton Obote's son. And it was wonderful. I mean, it was just this great month long experience on the slopes of Kilimanjaro teaching kids.

KLEIN: [01:43:19] So now you're going back into the second year.

BEVERWYCK: [01:43:22] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:43:24] Mary's pregnant.

BEVERWYCK: [01:43:26] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:43:27] And what choices were you faced with? I mean, was it?

BEVERWYCK: [01:43:34] Well.

KLEIN: [01:43:34] Did, was Peace Corps willing to accept the fact that she?

BEVERWYCK: [01:43:37] Tamar was born in October, so we were pregnant in, what, February does that make it? January? Somewhere around there.

KLEIN: [01:43:44] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:43:46] Um. Peace Corps. We informed them of our pregnancy. And they were, I think, yeah, they were, uh, with reticence, displeased.

KLEIN: [01:44:03] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:44:03] Because it was something, and we both felt that that they felt they had to deal with that was avoidable. Right. Avoidable. Number one, we didn't try to avoid it. Number two, we really wanted to do this thing. And so we were informed that, you know, if you aren't going to come to Nairobi, which we had told them we would not do, then we had to find a hospital that was to their liking. And to their liking meant that it had to have an incubator. And maybe something else. I can't remember. We did our own shopping around and we did find a place on Lake Victoria and, uh, we told them that that's where we were going to have the baby. We weren't asking for their approval.

BEVERWYCK: [01:44:58] I actually remember joking with Mary at night at home. What are they going to do, come and get us? Force us into one of their green Land Rovers and throw us in the airplane? What? What are we going to do? They're going to come out here and get us? I don't think so. You know, they've come here once in over a year.

KLEIN: [01:45:18] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:45:22] So that worked out. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:45:25] And you were comfortable because Mary was comfortable?

BEVERWYCK: [01:45:27] I was comfortable because Mary was comfortable. And we got this cool little book. Today it would be called Lamaze, but it was not called Lamaze. And it's a little book by some British doctor. It's really totally outdated. But it was our little Bible, and we practiced. I was as prepared as I felt anybody could be to deliver a baby and. It's just a really beautiful experience.

KLEIN: [01:45:56] How did the students react to?

BEVERWYCK: [01:45:59] They loved Mary for it. Yeah. I mean, they talked about her being pregnant a lot. Just kept getting bigger and bigger. They were intimate with her about this. Just, uh, we can't wait. Having a baby is such a good thing. Yeah. My mother had some. All that.

KLEIN: [01:46:25] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:46:26] And our, our relationship with the surrounding community became closer as a consequence of the pregnancy, and then dramatically more so after the birth of the baby.

KLEIN: [01:46:40] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:46:40] Yeah. It was just a really beautiful time.

KLEIN: [01:46:43] And the birth went okay and?

BEVERWYCK: [01:46:46] Well, um, I don't know if Mary told you this, but, you know, the baby was supposed to be born on a certain date. I think it was October 15th or something like that. We found that out when we went on one of our two trips to this place, Kendu Bay, to have a checkup. We had two checkups. And we borrowed a friend's vehicle. It was a *piki piki* thing. It had a canvas top and it was one of the ag volunteer's. Four little wheels. It was like a golf cart. We drove that thing 100 miles to Kendu Bay. He lent it to us. You know, don't tell Peace Corps, okay? Yeah, don't worry, we won't.

KLEIN: [01:47:30] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:47:31] And so somehow maybe he took us there or something, but we got, we had the, we had the examination. The doctor told us two more weeks. We went back to Kisii. We spent the night with friends in Kisii and we took the country bus back and it was very bouncy.

KLEIN: [01:47:51] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:47:52] Got back home in the evening and she went into labor that same night. You've got to be kidding me. What are we going to do? It's 100 miles back there. We just came home.

KLEIN: [01:48:04] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:48:04] I think the baby's coming. So, um, we. We wanted for our friends up the road, volunteers, to take us because we really loved them. And they had a they had a Volkswagen bus. And the only way I could get up there was to talk to the missionaries. And the missionaries, oh, we'll take, we'll take you to the hospital. And Mary had told me, if they offered to take us to the hospital, you've got to tell them I won't go. You know, she was totally serious. She says, I'll just have the baby right here.

KLEIN: [01:48:46] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:48:47] Before I'd go with those people. She really didn't like them.

KLEIN: [01:48:50] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:48:51] That's okay. So I made up some kind of lie about, you know, Rick was a medical person or whatever. And so seven miles up the road, seven miles back. Took about an hour and a half. And then we screwed around with Rick and Maggie drinking tea and laughing and. And then to the hospital, all the way out there. Fortunately, the Israelis had finished a section of highway between Kisii and, uh, Kisumu that made it a little bit faster. They had just finished that section of highway. So we got there about an hour and a half before the baby was born.

KLEIN: [01:49:34] Did you have visions of your delivering a baby inside the VW bus?

BEVERWYCK: [01:49:38] Absolutely, man.

KLEIN: [01:49:40] Yeah. And you were ready?

BEVERWYCK: [01:49:42] I was totally ready.

KLEIN: [01:49:44] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:49:44] I was totally ready. It was going to be perfectly fine. Nothing was going to go wrong. Nothing could go wrong. I knew it. And it didn't.

KLEIN: [01:49:53] This was fairly near the end of your service. You had about two or three months left.

BEVERWYCK: [01:49:58] We had three months to go.

KLEIN: [01:49:59] Yeah. Anything about the second year of teaching that was different and?

BEVERWYCK: [01:50:08] More relaxed. I got out more into the, myself into the, you know, the surrounding community. Well, surrounding community. It's hard to describe it as a community. It's just compounds all over. No village, just compounds all over.

KLEIN: [01:50:30] Did students say they wanted to take your home to show you where they were from?

BEVERWYCK: [01:50:36] Yeah. And I did that locally a number of times with the Kuria, but I accepted an invitation to visit friends along Lake Victoria. My excuse was that the father of one of these students, David Otieno's father, very traditional man, very, very beautiful, beautiful scars. He had about 50 scars on his face, geometric designs. Beautiful guy. He'd come to the school to talk with us, me in particular, about David and school. David wasn't doing well in school. And he wanted to know about that. And, uh, it was very difficult.

BEVERWYCK: [01:51:31] David was an older student, maybe 28, 29. And he'd been going to school on and off for years. You know, he'd leave for two years and collect enough fees from his relatives and working, come back for a semester, and then disappear again. And he was, you know, he was dumb as a rock.

KLEIN: [01:51:53] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:51:55] He's a nice guy. He was older than I was. So I was in this really strange situation, you know, talking about this student in little khaki shorts who's dumb as a rock and older than me.

KLEIN: [01:52:11] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:52:12] And, uh, I talked honestly with Dad. You know, look, you know, I don't think David should be a student because I know what the cost is to you. You'd run down the whole thing, how difficult it was for the family. And should this be happening? I think David was mentally retarded.

KLEIN: [01:52:31] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:52:36] So that happened. And then David subsequently invited me to spend time with him and his family at Lake Victoria. And so there were other of my students who lived near that Homa Bay, like Kendu Bay area. And, uh, they wanted me to visit too. So, yeah. So I planned this trip and I caught the country bus, showed up at this place, and the kids were at the road. You know, they'd been waiting there 6 or 7 hours, who knows? And I got off the bus and into the bush we go. And they were, they called each other brothers. They were three of them, but they're actually *primos*. They're cousins.

KLEIN: [01:53:24] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:53:25] And, uh, the compound. Wonderful compound. And you know, they set a little place aside in the special little place inside this thatched roof thing. I sat there in a wooden chair and people from the

village came. And this is my mother. I remember. I remember. What was the boy's name? Francis. I think this is my mother. And then a little while later, there were six or seven people. This is my mother. Then there was this girl, about 14, and Francis about 18. This is my mother. Oh, my God. How many, how many mothers do you have? I have six mothers, you know. It was wonderful. I mean, we just had the best time. And then they made fresh eggs, egg omelet. I remember that. And I couldn't spend the night because I had to get to this other place. I had a beautiful time.

BEVERWYCK: [01:54:21] Then took the bus again closer to Lake Victoria and very, very dusty and very, very hot and got off at this place. And here's David and his brothers or whomever said, okay, we're going to go to my house now. So we started walking. Oh, man. It is only just over this hill. Yeah, it is just over this hill. And I could occasionally catch glimpses of the big lake. And we're in the middle of nowhere. I thought our school was in the middle of nowhere. This place was, we walked for 3 hours. Came over this rise, a bunch of little kids down there, they saw me, they scream. They're running like hell. What's the problem with those kids? They've never seen a white man. It's like we're really in the middle of nowhere.

BEVERWYCK: [01:55:18] We finally got to this place. There was a compound, Bob, that sat on the top of a cliff, a field on the top of a cliff.

KLEIN: [01:55:29] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:55:29] That went straight down about 200 feet to Lake Victoria. And the lake is like an ocean and it is lapping up on this cliff and it was spectacular. And there's this compound, this African compound right there.

KLEIN: [01:55:45] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:55:45] Wow. God. And we had dinner and we talked. All the children of the village and the teenagers that came, we visited. It was beautiful. Next morning, got up before dawn. It was dark and these

teenage boys came and it's time to go. And we worked our way down this really steep path to the lake. And there's this dugout canoe down there all painted, all sides. And we all climbed inside this dugout canoe. Just a solid dugout canoe.

KLEIN: [01:56:21] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:56:22] It must have been eight or nine kids and they started. And we're rowing up the lake and the sunrise coming up and they're singing. I loved it, man.

KLEIN: [01:56:42] And where, where did you finally go?

BEVERWYCK: [01:56:44] To the same spot.

KLEIN: [01:56:46] Oh.

BEVERWYCK: [01:56:46] The same spot where, where they'd let me off on the boat.

KLEIN: [01:56:49] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [01:56:51] We stopped and I walked, we went up another path, up the cliff face and walked over. And there was the bus, you know, an hour later and back to Taranganya we went.

KLEIN: [01:57:00] Yeah. Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:57:03] Yeah. So I spent time with the kids in their homes and.

KLEIN: [01:57:06] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:57:07] And all of it was, uh, extraordinary.

KLEIN: [01:57:10] Well, as you came to, came to the end of the second year, what was your sense of what you had accomplished, what it was all about?

BEVERWYCK: [01:57:23] Well, it had become home.

KLEIN: [01:57:27] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:57:27] That little house and that place had become home. It had become our first home. And it would certainly become my first home because I had this very difficult upbringing.

KLEIN: [01:57:40] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:57:41] But it had become our first home together. Um. You know, we did the intellectual debate about what we're really doing teaching academic content areas to young men who had very little opportunity for gainful employment in Kenya. So what really are we doing? You know, we had the students who grew their fingernails long. I think it was their pinkie on both hands, real, real long to show that they weren't farmers. They were students. They were going to be professionals.

KLEIN: [01:58:21] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [01:58:22] And of course, they. We knew that many would end up in Nairobi in the ghettos, joining the other hundreds of thousands of unemployed young men. We had that intellectual conversation a lot, and it was pretty attuned by the time we had been there two years and we believed it. I still believe it today, um, but maybe that's not what the experience was truly all about for us and for them.

KLEIN: [01:59:03] Mm hmm.

BEVERWYCK: [01:59:05] Yeah, you have to be given a job to do. And we did that, uh, as conscientiously as we could.

KLEIN: [01:59:16] You must have felt satisfied.

BEVERWYCK: [01:59:18] Felt satisfied.

KLEIN: [01:59:19] I mean, you'd been in a difficult situation and.

BEVERWYCK: [01:59:22] And worked hard.

KLEIN: [01:59:23] It had become home and you had.

BEVERWYCK: [01:59:24] That's right. Um, yeah. And so, you know, that, that, that part of your job was bittersweet, but the ultimate experience was not bitter in any way. Um. The ultimate experience was beautiful. Beautiful. And we did have to leave. And the reason we had to leave was because we had the baby, the man said so.

KLEIN: [02:00:00] So you didn't really seriously think of doing a third year?

BEVERWYCK: [02:00:03] No. No. It was, you know, I mean, our clinic in Kehancha, four, four miles plus down the road gave malaria pills for a machete wound in the shoulder, you know, a panga wound.

KLEIN: [02:00:15] Yeah. What, did you have any plans leaving, I mean?

BEVERWYCK: [02:00:23] No.

KLEIN: [02:00:25] Okay.

BEVERWYCK: [02:00:25] We hadn't grown up yet, you know.

KLEIN: [02:00:28] Well, I'm curious. Where did you go back to when you came back to the U.S.?

BEVERWYCK: [02:00:36] Bangor, Maine, is where we landed. [to someone else] Who was that? Okay. [tape break] Bangor, Maine. And it was winter.

KLEIN: [02:00:49] Why Bangor, Maine?

BEVERWYCK: [02:00:51] It's where the plane stopped.

KLEIN: [02:00:52] Oh.

BEVERWYCK: [02:00:53] I don't know why the plane stopped there, but it did. And then we flew from there to Detroit.

KLEIN: [02:00:57] So you went back to Michigan?

BEVERWYCK: [02:00:59] Yeah, back to Michigan.

KLEIN: [02:01:00] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [02:01:01] Detroit? No. Grand Rapids.

KLEIN: [02:01:03] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [02:01:06] And we stayed with Mary's parents for three months.

KLEIN: [02:01:12] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [02:01:13] Out of their great generosity. We had a brand-new baby and no prospects.

KLEIN: [02:01:21] Was, was, do you recall the shock of coming back?

BEVERWYCK: [02:01:24] Absolutely.

KLEIN: [02:01:25] Yeah. It was disorienting?

BEVERWYCK: [02:01:27] Most.

KLEIN: [02:01:30] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [02:01:30] Yes, I've said on many occasions it was the most, the closest I've ever come to depression was during that time, if in fact I was not depressed.

KLEIN: [02:01:40] How did you work your way through it?

BEVERWYCK: [02:01:43] Uh, necessity. And, and, you know, upbringing. It's like, well, if I don't do anything, what's going to happen to me? You know, there's nobody picked me up. Nobody ever picks anybody up the way I grew up, you know? So I'd better, you know, shit or get off the pot. And so we had, I went to Washington, D.C., with a Peace Corps sponsored two week reorientation thing.

KLEIN: [02:02:13] Yeah.

BEVERWYCK: [02:02:14] And it was pretty much bullshit, but it was interesting. And I was with other returned Peace Corps volunteers who are in a similar situation, who also felt, as I did, they felt disoriented and out of touch and deeply longing for their time of where they had been, independence or whatever it was where they'd been. No job, no real job opportunities. I applied for a job in New York City. I had a good chance at that. And, uh, Mary had a good shot at a job in the hospital in Grand Rapids. In fact, she'd been offered a job, but we couldn't face living in Grand Rapids, just couldn't. Then we had the opportunity to come out west. There was a job opportunity in Los Alamos, New Mexico, and we followed up on it.

KLEIN: [02:03:10] And that was?

BEVERWYCK: [02:03:11] So we drove out here with the baby in the back seat and interviewed for the job, drove back to Michigan. A week or two later, they called and said, you got the job.

KLEIN: [02:03:23] Yeah. Yeah. Anything else?

BEVERWYCK: [02:03:27] The rest is.

KLEIN: [02:03:28] Well, of course it's history.

BEVERWYCK: [02:03:30] History.

KLEIN: [02:03:30] It's good history.

BEVERWYCK: [02:03:31] Of course.

[END OF INTERVIEW]