Interview with Sam Yoder
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Interviewer: Judy Ehrlich
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Interview with Sam Yoder, conducted by Paradigm Productions on December 7, 1999 for "The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It: The Story of World War II Conscientious Objectors." Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Paradigm Productions Collection.

Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in bold italics was used in the final version of "The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It: The Story of World War II Conscientious Objectors."

00:00:11:00-00:00:47:00

Interviewer:

[laughs] Oh thanks, I'm sorry—

Camera Crew Member #1:

[laughs]

Interviewer:

—I thought you said that already.

Sam Yoder:

By—

Interviewer:

Introducing yourself—

Sam Yoder:

—are we on, you said?

Interviewer:

Yeah, we're going, no—

Sam Yoder:

Oh, well, no, no—

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Sam Yoder:

—no, wait. Do it over again because—

Interviewer:

Yeah, it's alright.

Sam Yoder:

—but, what do you want? You want me to say, I'm so and so, from here?

Interviewer:

Yeah, I want you to say, I'm so and so. I want you to say, I'm Sam Yoder.

Sam Yoder:

OK.

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Sam Yoder:

OK.

Interviewer:

Not I'm so and so.

Sam Yoder:

Yeah, OK.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Anytime.

Interviewer:

Anytime.

Sam Yoder:

Alright. Well, I'm Sam Yoder from Goshen, Indiana and spent four years in Civilian Public Service during World War Two.

00:00:48:00-00:01:38:00

Interviewer:

Would you start by talking about the early years in your life and growing up in an Amish family and what that was—just give us a feeling for what it was like for being in an Amish family.

Sam Yoder:

Well, I was, I was born and raised in an Amish family and actually we lived in Kansas, we were wheat farmers and during the late '30s after so many dust storms we moved to Indiana, on a farm again, and I spent most of my early years on the farm. Later on, working with the, a construction gang, building houses and barns and so on, and in 1941 I was drafted into the service.

00:01:39:00-00:01:41:00

Interviewer:

Go back to the early years—

Camera Crew Member #2:

One, one second—

Interviewer:

—go ahead

Camera Crew Member #2:

—Judy, I'm sorry.

[cut]

00:01:42:00-00:04:02:00

Interviewer:

OK?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Yes, I'm rolling.

Interviewer:

So, how about describing just what was daily life like on an Amish farm?

Sam Yoder:

Well of course on an Amish farm you would be up and going by four-thirty, five o'clock in the morning and there were always a lot of chores. By that I mean ten, twelve, fifteen cows to milk and other livestock to feed, and get ready and then breakfast, usually a large breakfast on an Amish farm. [crow cawing] And immediately after that there was the day's work. All of the farming was done by horses and the, we, well, an Amish farm is very much sex-role oriented, boys do certain work and the girls did certain work.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

And you rarely crossed the path. That was the old traditional Amish farm, and so the, in the usual pattern you would get four, five, maybe six horses on a, on a gang plow or on a, on a disc or whatever you were going to be doing, and this was fairly routine. In the fall it was preparing the fields for wheat, and in the winter it was cutting wood for fuel, and in the spring it was again preparing some of the fields [crow cawing] for the spring crops, and then of course harvest was the busy time of the year with the, the kind of wheat harvest that we did. And on an Amish farm you, you never use the labor saving devices at all. We would cut the wheat and put it in shocks and then thresh it, and we'd blow the straw in a pile and later perhaps bale it or haul it away. This is how, this is how the father kept four or five boys busy [crow cawing] around the clock. And of course the, the evening chores came along again.

Interviewer:

Mm.

Sam Yoder:

We always had the, the [crow cawing] big meal at noon, we always ate a very big meal at noon and at evening we had a light supper [crow cawing] and by nine o'clock everything was rather quiet [crow cawing] and we were in bed [crow cawing].

Interviewer:

Mm.

00:04:03:00-00:04:05:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

You hear this?—

Interviewer:

That, that crow—

Camera Crew Member #1:

—crow—

Interviewer:

Do you want to try to change—

[cut]

00:04:06:00-00:04:28:00

Sam Yoder:

—and, you can keep the children busy, you have a lot of cows to milk. When they start working in factories, then you also get rid of this livestock and the kids don't know what to do. Now the families are notably smaller, now.

Interviewer:

Mm. Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

Five, six children is about average rather than eight or ten.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

And so, that's...

00:04:29:00-00:06:29:00

Interviewer:

In, in, besides the farming methods, what are some of the social differences of growing up in a Mennonite—I'm sorry, in an Amish family and in an Amish community?

Sam Yoder:

Well, the, there's an awful lot of, of going and coming, visiting. The Amish have not lost their, the scale of, of socializing, visiting each other, Sunday dinners, whatever. And the, the art of conversation is there as opposed to the more modern family where either TV or radio is on and you sit in silence a lot of the time. They don't have those—

Interviewer:

Mm.

Sam Yoder:

—and so they tend to, you know, to keep up this art of conversation, I don't know that it's always, what, that fruitful or whatever, but [laughs] they seem to maintain the, the skill—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—of conversation in that way. The young people have their social events, they do, they do the corn husking bees. Now that has probably run its course too, but we used to do that. And they have their Sunday evening "singings," they call them. You see, Amish have their church services in the home, they don't have a church building. And then generally, in the evening, the young people come back to the farm where church services were held in the morning and they have a couple hours of, of group singing there.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

And that's, that's where boy meets girl and that's where romances start and that's what keeps them going. Yeah.

00:06:30:00-00:07:25:00

Interviewer:

What, what is your, what are your fondest memories of growing up in an Amish family?

Sam Yoder:

Oh, that's hard to tell. Just the very, I think the social life, of course was important to me, particularly with the young people and so on. The part that probably made me think I don't want to continue as an Amish farmer was the getting up at four o'clock, four-thirty in the mornings and working all day long on the farm—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—farming with horses, it just did not appeal to me. And when the war came along and I had the opportunity, I say opportunity here, to go into CPS, this, I saw this as a, a way to move out into the world, so to speak, and to see what the big life is all about out there.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

00:07:27:00-00:08:46:00

Interviewer:

What did you find when you went out to see the big life out there?

Sam Yoder:

[laughs] Many things. Many things. Of, of course my main language was, was a, a German dialect, we spoke that at home. And so, and of course we had English, we spoke English in school. But the fact that, particularly in our religious services, in CPS, this was in English and a new vocabulary, and I'd say, new and better understanding of the scriptures because the Old German that we used in church, much of it was not understood. The v-, the old Luther bible that was used, had archaic German that even isn't used anymore, but it's in the scripture and, and by switching to the English language, this opened up a whole new, what? Sense of what, what we really believe—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—in, and particularly in, in the teachings of, of Jesus.

00:08:47:00-00:11:40:00

Interviewer:

Could you just briefly explain what the teachings are of the Amish Church, and then the teachings, how they differ from the teachings of the Mennonite Church?

Sam Yoder:

Well the Amish take several scriptures in the New Testament that they tend to focus on, and one of those would be in, ***in the New Testament you have in Romans, Chapter Twelve,*** particularly Verse Two where he talks about, ***it says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,"*** and so on. They take this very literally and this is the whole argument against being "worldly" so to speak. And therefore, being not conformed to the world is the background for all of the, the, the dress, the, the type of farming they do, the being otherworldly so to speak, this is what supports that. Other than that, they are very strong, literal biblicists—

Interviewer:

Mm.

Sam Yoder:

—in other words, they read “The Bible,” they, they follow the teachings of Jesus, and they are a very religious group—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—but they do take that, the tradition, the tradition that has been handed, see the Amish trace their history back about 300 years and of course they have always been a pacifist group, as have the Mennonites and we trace our history back to about 1525 when the Anabaptist movement started in Switzerland, and one of the tenets of the church at that time was to be a peace group, a peace church. The Mennonites are known as a, one of the historic peace churches. Now, the Amish split away from the Mennonites about 300 years ago, but they have kept, all the way through the centuries, they have kept the, the idea of not participating in war and to, to have the peace witness wherever they go and even to this, all Amish young men went to CPS who were drafted. If you went to the Army, you were simply excommunicated from the Amish and there was no real communication there until, there were very few of those, I'd say ninety-five, ninety-eight percent of all Amish young men went to CPS.

00:11:41:00-00:11:56:00

Interviewer:

And what percentage of Mennonite men went there?

Sam Yoder:

Well, Mennonites, the percentage was somewhat less, I would sort of guess on this, but between fifty and sixty percent.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

But still, that's much higher than—

Camera Crew Member:

[unintelligible]

Interviewer:

OK, go ahead. Just—

Camera Crew Member:

—or some tape—

Interviewer:

I was surprised—

[cut]

00:11:57:00-00:13:12:00

—piece of tape on his glasses. [pause] OK.

Camera Crew Member:

Not that much. It's OK.

Sam Yoder:

Hmm?

Camera Crew Member:

Don't look down that much.

Interviewer:

Did you finish that? Maybe, I, I, The scripture, you don't want to read the whole thing, you don't have at your t-, fingertips, but the, your father, and what happened in World War One-, I, no, I want you to go back first and talk about the Amish and uniforms, why they couldn't go in the military, because of the uniforms.

Sam Yoder:

Well, the—

Interviewer:

You know what, I need to do one more thing, I'm sorry. I didn't tell you at the beginning and I need to, you won't hear my question.

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

So you need to, rather than just straight off answer the question, kind of incorporate my question into your answer—

Sam Yoder:

You—

Interviewer:

—so it stands alone.

Sam Yoder:

—you, we won't hear your question?

Interviewer:

You won't hear my question. So if you just say, "yes" we won't know what you're responding to.

Sam Yoder:

Oh.

Interviewer:

It would have to be "yes, they didn't wear uniforms because..."

Sam Yoder:

OK.

Interviewer:

—you know, the Amish couldn't be in the military because of, what, so, it needs to stand alone.

Sam Yoder:

Well this was, this would be true for Mennonites too.

Interviewer:

Oh. OK.

Sam Yoder:

Oh yeah, very much so.

Interviewer:

OK, fine.

Sam Yoder:

Well, the, are we on? [laughs]

Camera Crew Member:

Yeah. Go ahead. Any time.

Sam Yoder:

But you'll cut some of this out, won't you?

Interviewer:

Oh yeah, yes.

Sam Yoder:

[laughs]

Camera Crew Member:

For time.

00:13:15:00-00:15:23:00

Sam Yoder:

You see, Amish and Mennonites come from a long history of pacifism, in fact 400 years or more. And this was a part of the, the principles that they had set up ; separation of church and state, to be baptized as believers, and one of the other main ones was to not participate in the military. And so this followed them, in fact they ***came to America mainly to escape military***

service and they came on the invitation of William Penn, to come to Pennsylvania to settle Pennsylvania in fact at that time. Now in World War One, my father was a CO and he was on the farm and I think his, at that time, they finally decided that they didn't know how to handle COs in World War One, those that were drafted were handled very poorly and my father was not really inducted at all because he was on a farm, they decided, better to stay on the farm than to be inducted and simply create a lot of problems. Well in fact, when World War Two came along, the Army remembered some of the problems they had with COs in World War One, and so Congress did pass a law that provided for those who declared they were conscientious objectors, and that meant to set up the camps [car passes] that later came about. Almost all of the camps were abandoned CCC camps. These were often in rural settings—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—or they were situated in areas where they, there was forestry work and so these were the camps that, this was the beginning of CPS for World War Two.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

00:15:24:00-00:18:00:00

Sam Yoder:

And [clears throat] I was, ***I was inducted two days after Pearl Harbor. There were five of us that left our community on the same day. All of us were Amish***. We reported to Camp Henry, and this, this was a, a camp along the Illinois River, south of Chicago. Our work there was in soil conservation, and in general we were working for some of the farmers in the area, building some fences, drainage problems, things of that sort. Often we felt the work was not really of national importance, which was part of the Congressional act that was passed, that we were to be doing work of national importance. And so, when the call came, I was there six months, but when the call came to go to California to fight forest fires, that appealed to me, and thirty of us volunteered and went to California and for one season we were actually engaged in fighting forest fires. About that time, the state mental hospitals across the country were in dire need for help. Many of the people who had worked there were either shifted to defense plants, or they, a few of them, younger ones, might have been inducted into the Army. And they were left with a, a skeleton crew, and, to take care of the mentally ill, and so the idea came along, why not put some of the COs out there? And so, after one fire season in California, I transferred, and with a group of about twenty of us actually, to Provo, Utah. And there we moved in and my own work was primarily with insulin and electric shock for some of the patients. Back in those days we were still using those kinds of therapies. And, I was there several years, actually. Enjoyed that a great deal, I thought I was doing work of greater

importance than, although firefighting was important, but we had two large fires in about, what, in about six months—

00:18:01:00-00:19:23:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—and the rest of the time you didn't feel like you were doing much of anything that important.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

Well, I decided to go into a unit where we were preparing for overseas relief work. The Selective Service did not allow us to go overseas during the war, [car passes] but right after the war we were allowed to then go. Well, I transferred to Rhode Island, actually, to get into one of these relief training units. We studied languages, we studied various cultures, at that time you had to more or less decide what part of the world you're going into. Some went to China, some went to Europe. I decided on Europe, and studied quite a bit of German, and later on we were transferred to Poughkeepsie, New York to continue the study there, so that it, it was a more concentrated study at Poughkeepsie.

Interviewer:

Poughkeepsie was after the war?

Sam Yoder:

No, no, no. This—

Interviewer:

Oh, so you were studying to go overseas still during the war—

Sam Yoder:

Yes.

Interviewer:

—or that was all after?

00:19:24:00-00:22:01:00

Sam Yoder:

No, that was during the war, that was during the war. It was in addition to a day's work on the, on the ward in, at the hospital. And [clears throat] after the war, well of course I came, I was discharged four years, almost to the day after being inducted, and I got on the train in, in New York at Grand Central Station, took ***one of those overnight trains*** back to Goshen. It ***gave me a lot of time to reflect on*** what CPS meant to me, ***what I had learned***. ***I arrived in Goshen mid-morning*** and, as I said in one of my journals, ***I stepped off the train and I looked out and there was no band there to welcome me back, there*** was no, the mayor hadn't planned for a parade, we didn't have any yellow ribbons around those old maple trees. But there were my parents—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—to meet me, and it was nice to be back home aft-, the war was now over. And as I reviewed my journal, I noticed where I said it something like this, I got up the next morning to help with the chores, something that I had done four years earlier, or six, eight years earlier, and decided to milk one of the old favorite cows that I had milked before, picked up one of these one-legged milk stools and a pail and buried my head in her warm flank and got ahold of those hind teets, you know, I [pause] I'd forgotten how big those things were. And she must've recognized the touch, because she swung her head around and just let out a soft moo, but I knew what she meant. She said, hey kid, you're ha-, you're back. You're home, the war must be over. Well, I, I just noticed that I had written some of that in, in, in a journal, and that is sort of the personal touch that I had in my homecoming.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

Yeah.

00:22:02:00-00:22:10:00

Interviewer:

Do you have that journal?

Sam Yoder:

Well, it's in the—

Camera Crew Member:

[clears throat]

Sam Yoder:

—it's in the little book.

Interviewer:

Oh, you know, would you just read it to me again? Do that, do that—

[cut]

00:22:11:00-00:23:55:00

Camera Crew Member:

Any time.

Sam Yoder:

[clears throat] [reads] "I was discharged from CPS, almost to the day, four years after being inducted, went down to New York City, and caught the train at Grand Central Station, and took the overnight train to Goshen, Indiana. And I stopped, stepped off the train, and there was no band there to welcome me home, there was no parade, there weren't even any yellow ribbons around the old maple trees, but there was the horse and buggy and there were my parents to meet me. [pause] It was nice to be back and in my own bed for the first time for several years. The next morning I decided to get up and help with the chores, grabbed a one-legged milk stool, nestled up to an old favorite cow, buried my head in her warm flank and reached for those hind teets. Gee, I had forgotten how big those things were. She must've felt a familiar touch, because she turned her head for a better look and let out a soft moo, but I knew what she meant. She said, hey kid, you're back. You're home. The war must be over."

00:23:56:00-00:24:59:00

Interviewer:

If you could just say, I wro-, I wrote this in my journal. And when I—

Sam Yoder:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

—came back, I, I remember, I wrote this in my journal. Or some-, something like that, so we introduce the jour-, idea of the journal, with you holding it.

Sam Yoder:

Yeah. [pause] Now, you mean? OK.

Interviewer:

We can cut it—

Sam Yoder:

This—

Interviewer:

—together.

Sam Yoder:

Yeah, mm-hmm. This is something that I got from my journal of fifty-eight years ago. No, that's not right. [laughs]

Interviewer:

Mmm. [unintelligible]

Sam Yoder:

Fifty-eight years ago is when I was inducted.

Interviewer:

Oh yeah, so fifty-four years ago.

Sam Yoder:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Go ahead. Do it again.

Sam Yoder:

Well. This is something that I had written in my journal fifty-four years ago. [pause]

Interviewer:

You don't have to do it again, that's OK. I just wanted you to do that so we just established that—

Sam Yoder:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

We don't need to do it again right? We got it two, those are both fine.

Sam Yoder:

You can piece them together somehow?

Interviewer:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We'll—that's what we do all the time. [laughs]

Sam Yoder:

[laughs]

00:25:00:00-00:26:11:00

Interviewer:

We just take little bits and pieces of things. What is the teaching, the Amish teaching on violence? The Amish and the Mennonite teaching on violence, what's that rooted in?

Sam Yoder:

Well of course the teachings of Jesus are filled with that.

Interviewer:

This is where you need to say, "are filled with teachings on, against violence."

Sam Yoder:

Yes.

Interviewer:

'Cause you won't hear my question.

Sam Yoder:

Oh.

Interviewer:

You know what I mean?

Sam Yoder:

The, the nonresistance teaching that takes place in the Mennonite and Amish churches, and in their homes, of course is rooted in the teachings of Jesus. The Gospels are filled with the types of che-, teachings that Jesus gave, about violence, love your enemies. In one place he said, you've heard it said of old that a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye and a too—Let me do that over. You have heard it said of old, a, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a t- for a tooth, but I say unto you, love your enemies, persecute them that, p,- oh, I'm getting it all mixed up, yeah.

00:26:12:00-00:27:43:00

Interviewer:

Start again, that's fine. We've got lots of tape [laughs].

Sam Yoder:

[laughs] In the Gospels, in Jesus' words, at one point he says, "You have heard it said of old that an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to those that persecute you." This particular teaching, plus a number of others, the Book of James is filled with the, the idea of living a peaceful life, be at peace with all men, and throughout the New Testament one can find this, the idea of, of being at peace, and we often talk about the Prince of Peace when we talk about Jesus, actually. [car passes] So that this is basically where this comes from and in general the fact that war is, is a cruel destructive act in the histor-, in the, in history, and, so that the New Testament actually is the basis for the, the peace position as, is found in here. [car passes] Mm-hmm.

00:27:44:00-00:29:58:00

Interviewer:

Could you talk about what's the effect of—

Camera Crew Member #2:

[clears throat]

—a small group standing up to a mainstream—

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—national—

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—effort to—

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—go to war—

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—does it make a difference?

Sam Yoder:

I'm sure it does, in our community, Amish and Mennonite boys were almost automatically classified as 4E, which is the, the conscientious objector classification. There was very little opposition to that. In fact, I never even saw my draft board. I filled out some questionnaires, and without question—

Camera Crew Member #2:

[clears throat]

Sam Yoder:

—they me classified as 4E. Now, I think the fact that my family was in full support, but all of our neighbors and our church and a 400 year history, back of you, that is also conscientiously opposed to war, this indeed was, it's an excellent support system, and, the person who actually went into the military out of that community was the, was the, what? the, [car passes] that was the exception to the rule—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—and so there was no ill-feeling in the community where I came from. And, it was just the thing to do. In fact, so much so, that it was after I was in CPS that I learned a deeper understanding of the peace position and what it means to be a CO. I think I learned most of that after I was in camp and interacting with other, other COs there, mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Would you descr—

Camera Crew Member #1:

Let's change tapes.

Interviewer:

OK

[cut]

00:29:59:00-00:32:53:00

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—you had to make, versus someone who wasn't in a peace church might have to face the decision of the draft.

Sam Yoder:

Well, of course there was tremendous advantage in growing up in a community—

Camera Crew Member #1:

You want to sit, sit—

Sam Yoder:

Oh! Back?

Camera Crew Member #2:

Yeah, don't, 'cause you get out of the axis of the mike and—

Sam Yoder:

I see.

Camera Crew Member #1:

You're good. You're OK.

Sam Yoder:

It was a tremendous advantage to live in a community that was almost totally supportive of the decision you made as far as being a CO and the fact that there was a three, four-hundred year history of that, meant that you felt comfortable in that. You had support, you had a lot of support in that, the church, the family, the neighbors and so on. And in some ways it might have been almost too easy to get into, what, into CPS in that situation because we were not really tested and you must also remember then, as we went into CPS, that program was new and experimental and we were eager that it, it would succeed—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—and the churches were fully in support of it. So when you get this large support group, it makes it much easier than if you come out of a, of a community where you're the lone CO and most everybody is down on you because of that—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—so there's a tremendous difference, and we had some fellows, often non-Mennonites, who came to our CPS camps from such communities where they were the only one that decided to, to go to CPS—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—and it was much more difficult for them and their relationship to their home church for instance.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

Some churches, our churches for instance, Amish and Mennonite churches, were totally supportive, in fact paid for the expenses that we incurred in CPS—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—and often the person that came from one lone church out here some distance, this would be a non-Mennonite person, they either had to pay for their own expenses, or if this was not impossible [sic], the churches would absorb this and, but, but, the, the fact that this support group from home I think is a real key—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—to the success of what we saw in CPS—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—you know?

00:32:54:00-00:35:50:00

Interviewer:

Could you describe what you originally, how CPS worked at the beginning? What your expectations were, what, how it felt going into CPS? And kind of how the system ended up being—

Sam Yoder:

Well—

Interviewer:

—hard on people.

Sam Yoder:

At the very beginning this was in 19—I guess 1941, I'm not sure when the first camps opened.

Interviewer:

1940.

Sam Yoder:

1940, and—

Interviewer:

No, I'm sorry, I'm wrong, no, no, no, '41

Sam Yoder:

I think early '41.

Interviewer:

'41, yeah, you're right, I'm sorry.

Sam Yoder:

The first camps opened and as I said, they were experimental. And we tried to make them succeed, so everybody tried very hard to make this a successful operation. The churches were financing all of this except for the project. The project aspect was governmental, governmentally supported. But food and, and other maintenance factors were absorbed by the churches. And [clears throat] we had to feel our way through there, particularly that first year. Feeling ran pretty high, this was right after Pearl Harbor and feelings were running quite high throughout the country and we were not looked upon very kindly in most of these camps by the neighboring community, but we kept to ourselves, very rarely that we would leave the camp. We felt safe at the camp and we often stayed there, except for the, the trucks that would take us out to the various projects. It was only after the first year that we finally began to reach out and move into special projects, one of those being mental, state mental hospitals. [car passes] There were other special projects that came along and the fellows could volunteer for that. In those cases, those projects would also absorb the cost, mental hospitals would house the, the fellows, feed them, and in fact we wore their uniforms. And we always got fifteen dollars a month, for spending money. And so it was a tremendous relief on the part of our churches, financially. And eventually, I'd say the majority of the 12,000 COs that were in camp in World War Two, eventually, most of them were in these special projects—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—where they were actually maintained, that is the, the cost was, was much less.

00:35:51:00-00:37:03:00

Now the [clears throat] one of the other factors in some of these, set-ups, the hospitals did pay into the U.S. Treasury, a certain amount for the hours that we put in there, and that, we often referred to that as the "peace fund." And we were hopi—it amounted to several million dollars by the end of the war, we were hoping that that could be used for some peace effort, some peace project. However, once that money gets into the treasury, nobody knows where it is anymore. We have tried for fifty years to do something with it and have had no success

with that, and even today, I think those who were most concerned about it and were trying to use the funds for some special project, have given up, as far as I know, so—

Interviewer:

The interest on that would be substantial.

Sam Yoder:

Well, yes, I suppose so, but...

Interviewer:

I mean fifty years, on two-million dollars would be, you could do something serious with that.

Sam Yoder:

Yes, that's right, yes.

00:37:04:00-00:37:57:00

Interviewer:

How, why was it OK to wear the uniforms in the mental hospital and not OK to wear a military uniform?

Sam Yoder:

The military uniform, there's a difference that these men would make between wearing a military uniform and wearing a hospital uniform. The idea was not so much against wearing a uniform, but the military uniform was objected to.

Interviewer:

By the Mennonites, but the Amish would have objected to either uniform, is that correct? Or...

Sam Yoder:

Yes, although some Amish that went to mental hospitals to work did, did don the, the hospital uniforms.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

This was a shady area—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—and like myself, many of them left the Amish and actually joined the Mennonites during those years, which is what I did, also.

00:37:58:00-00:39:29:00

Interviewer:

Can you talk about that, how your thinking changed as a result of your exposure to other people.

Sam Yoder:

Well, after I was in CPS I felt that the Mennonite young men simply were much more versed in what they believed and I saw less importance of a strict conformity to the Amish and, and felt that I wasn't dressed as an Amishman anymore and I finally simply switched over, it was a fairly easy thing to do. There's very little difference between Amish and Mennonite theologically, so that it wasn't a matter of do you believe in this over here with this group and this way? That wasn't really the problem. The, the home community was not very thrilled with the idea of making that switch, but I think my parents thought it would be best for me to do that, I could live with that much easer than to, to be Amish and to not really be dressed Amish and so on, so that my parents accepted it quite readily and I have never regretted that.

00:39:30:00-00:40:23:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. So the change for you was in changing your dress? Cha— what were the changes to becoming Mennonite and leaving behind your Amish? Did it mean you had to leave the community? Was there—

Sam Yoder:

No.

Interviewer:

No, it didn't? So you could live with your family—

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—and be Mennonite?

Sam Yoder:

Yes, yes.

Interviewer:

Oh. I thought, I thought, when, were you shunned, is that a term?

Sam Yoder:

For a short period of time. 'Course, I was only, I was, I was home for about two weeks in the middle of my service, in, during the war and during that time I switched over to the Mennonites. But I left for Rhode Island and when you're away from the community and away from home it doesn't really matter whether you're shunned or not because you're far away at, there's no, the effect is not there.

00:40:24:00-00:41:43:00

Interviewer:

What does it mean to be shunned?

Sam Yoder:

To, what it means to be shunned, when you leave the Amish church and to be shunned simply means they are not to, to have any interaction with you, socially, financially, and this happens in the community until the person actually requests to be reunited and reconciled with the group, than that of course is lifted. And it's simply a ploy that you use to try to get the person to come back into the, into the fold, so to speak.

Camera Crew Member #2:

[coughs]

Sam Yoder:

In my own case, I returned back from camp [clears throat] at the end of the war and I had a nice talk with the old Amish Bishop and I explained what I was doing, where I was attending church, and immediately the, the ban, the shunning was lifted. That was the end of it. Yeah.

00:41:44:00-00:42:50:00

Interviewer:

So, so you were able to live with your family—

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—even though they were in simple dress and you weren't—

Sam Yoder:

Yes. Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—and become, and still be part of the community, but you attended church in the Mennonite church rather than in the Amish church?

Sam Yoder:

Yes, yes, mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Could you say that?

Sam Yoder:

[laughs]

Interviewer:

[laughs] I just want to get all those variations on this straight out.

Sam Yoder:

Well, after the war, and I had become a Mennonite, I lived at home for a short period of time until I went to Europe for relief work. But yes, we lived together, there was no problem at all. If, if one does this in good faith and if you're in good standing with the new group you're with, in this case the Mennonites, the Amish respect that and the, the shunning is, is lifted and there's no problem there at all in that.

00:42:51:00-00:43:11:00

Interviewer:

Could you describe what the elements of Amish dress are?

Sam Yoder:

Oh.

Interviewer:

What do Amish wear that's different from what most people wear?

Sam Yoder:

Well, they wear mainly home-made clothing and it needs to be plain and simple, solid colors. And that's about it. Mm-hmm.

00:43:12:00-00:45:01:00

Interviewer:

OK. Let's go on to camp, you were talking about, [pause] you know, you, you touched on this and you said what you said about Sam Yoder and Pearl Harbor. What was it like being a member of a peace church the day of Pearl Harbor.

Sam Yoder:

Pearl Harbor was on a Sunday, and that Sunday evening, the young people were together in one of these singings. And we had no radio, we had not heard about it, but I heard about it at that singing. And I had already known that on Tuesday, two days later, I was to be climbing on a bus at La Grange and going to camp. So the feeling was rather shocking in a way, Pearl Harbor and all the, the news that was coming out on that. I don't remember just anything special about that except that all of us were a bit shocked with hearing the news. We, I guess, assumed that the whole feeling in the country would be, you just sort of elevate that a notch, about their feeling toward COs, for instance. But again, being in a large community where everybody is CO, you, you don't get the kind of feeling that you would if you were out in Peoria or somewhere else—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—so, I don't remember it as being all that traumatic at the time. Yeah.

00:45:02:00-00:45:26:00

Interviewer:

So, it didn't make you feel more threatened, it just, you were kind of detached from the whole thing more.

Sam Yoder:

Pretty much so.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

OK.

Sam Yoder:

And there was no threat in my immediate environment, the group I was with, the family I was with, the church I was in. So, it was quite minimal as far as that's concerned.

00:45:27:00-00:45:56:00

Interviewer:

Was there ever a time, especially at camp or during the war where you questioned your position because of the kind of war World War Two was, or did you always, were you always clear in your position?

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm. Well, I, I don't know that I would say I was always clear in it, it's the type of thing that you grow in as [background sound begins] you move along. World War Two was, some, some people call World War Two—

Interviewer:

Hold on one second, there's— Is that your DAT rewinding?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Yeah.

[cut]

00:45:57:00-00:47:08:00

[audio tone]

Interviewer:

OK, say that again. Just say that—oh, I'm sorry, you're not rolling yet. Say when.

Camera Crew Member #2:

OK.

Interviewer:

OK.

Sam Yoder:

Well, when I left home, my mother had made several shirts, several pairs of trousers. And she thought that would last couple years, you know? These were Amish clothes. [clears throat] And that when these wore out I should let her know and she will send some more clothes. Well, I went to California and then back to Provo, Utah and these Amish clothes wore out pretty fast, and I found that I could buy some real nice clothes at the Sears-Roebuck, and did so. And, so that she always wondered how those clothes wore so long, but she was not aware that I was wearing regular trousers. And, and at the hospital of course, we wore the uniforms. Yes.

00:47:09:00-00:48:22:00

Interviewer:

So you came home with those clothes. You came back with those clothes and they weren't

worn out, as much as your mother expected.

Sam Yoder:

No, no, I came home with, just like this.

Interviewer:

Oh you did? Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Sam Yoder:

Yes, and one of the first things I explained is that I'm planning to, to, switch to the Mennonites, and so all arguments were off.

Interviewer:

They didn't argue with you about it?

Sam Yoder:

No, no, not really.

Interviewer:

You described to Laurie that you left wearing, how was it? You left in Amish clothes and came back in a uniform. In a, in a, not in a uniform, but in a, I thought—

Camera Crew Member #2:

Civilian clothes.

Interviewer:

No, no, I thought maybe the mental hospital uniform, but you wouldn't have come home in that.

Sam Yoder:

Well, no, those were white, you saw the—

Interviewer:

Yeah, I saw that picture, yeah.

Sam Yoder:

—no, those would not be, I had those with me because I took them to the next hospital with me.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

But I wore, you know. Well, in one of the pictures—

Interviewer:

Oh, well that's good, we can, we just—

Sam Yoder:

What?

Interviewer:

—if you describe it, I can, we can show it in the picture.

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

So you left wearing simple dress—

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—Amish clothes, and when you come back—

Camera Crew Member #2:

I'm sorry, we have to do this again.

Interviewer:

That's OK.

Camera Crew Member #2:

I've got a tone running through it.

[cut]

00:48:23:00-00:50:00:00

Sam Yoder:

Are we ready now?

Interviewer:

Yeah, we have to do that again.

Sam Yoder:

When I left— [clears throat] When I left home for CPS camp, my mother had sent with me several homemade Amish shirts and trousers, and informed me that when these wear out, 'cause we were there for the duration of the war, 'course we didn't know how long that would be when I left for camp, but she said when I needed more clothing to let her know and she'd send more. But in my way, as I moved on to California and then back to Provo, Utah, when I needed more clothing I simply went down to Penney's and bought myself, the tailor-made clothes that I wore. And so that by the time I came home after two years on a furlough, I was wearing regular clothing, non-Amish clothing, and I had also immediately informed my parents that I was planning to switch to the Mennonite church. And there was no arguing about that, my parents were very understanding and I think, I think they knew by my letters earlier that I probably will be a better person if I'd make the switch because I was no longer really committed to the Amish way of life. Mm-hmm.

00:50:01:00-00:51:54:00

Interviewer:

How did the, how did the World War Two experience change the Amish Church and change the Mennonite Church?

Sam Yoder:

World War Two changed a lot of the Amish in the sense that they became exposed to that larger world out there. Now one of the possibly sad things about this whole thing is that there was somewhat of a "brain drain" I sometimes call it, among the Amish. A lot of their brightest and best young men came back and did not stay Amish. I think I mentioned that the

five men who reported with me, only one stayed Amish

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

That's not the proportion that you'll find among all the Amish, but in my little group that was the case. And particularly those that went on into special projects, hospital work, whatever, a large portion of those young men actually left the Amish Church and became, usually became Mennonites, often married the nurses or other people working at the hospital, this was not unusual. And so, for the Amish, they have never really looked that approvingly on CPS. It was a, it was a necessary thing, they appreciated the fact that there were camps set up for their young men to serve their, the time, but it hurt them as far as keeping some of their potential leaders in the church, and for a whole generation, I think that, that's sort of been the, been the case for that.

00:51:55:00-00:52:06:00

Interviewer:

How 'bout the Mennonites?

Sam Yoder:

Well, no Mennonites, I'd say most all of the Mennonites came back as Mennonites.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

Yeah, yeah.

00:52:07:00-00:52:44:00

Interviewer:

My understanding is the Mennonites adapted to CBS, C-P—

Sam Yoder:

CPS, yeah.

Interviewer:

CPS [laughs]. Better than some of the other groups, because they were more, less, maybe less confrontational or less of the—

Sam Yoder:

Yes, mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Could you describe, kind of, that array?

Sam Yoder:

Well, I would say a large proportion of the Mennonite CPS men came from the rural areas and from farms and so on and they had no, they were committed to doing this, they said the government was kind enough to set up a, a system where we can serve, we can serve in our own way, we can do some work of national importance. And so they cooperated for the most part. They were not the type that were going to, to, what? create some difficulty, to object to—

Camera Crew Member #2:

[clears throat]

Sam Yoder:

—they, many of them served four years in CPS and did whatever work was prescribed for them. And they did not go to camp, you know, all that reluctantly, although there were some who cre-, there was a lot of hardship created, some were, some were married, some had very close connections to the home, and some of them sta-, I always say basically there were two kinds of CPS men in our Mennonite camps. One was the person who was married or had some close connections at home and went as little distance as possible from home to the camp and, and sort of hung on there. There were others, and I guess I would be one of those, who saw this as an adventure and when the call came to go to California, I was one of the first ones to sign up to go—

Camera Crew Member #2:

[clears throat]

Sam Yoder:

—when, when the call came to go to mental hospital work I was one of the first ones, when the invitation came to prepare to go overseas in relief work, I was one of the first ones to sign

up for that. And so you have basically, two, two groups.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

Ones that did what they needed to do but lets stay as close to home as possible, and others, the world was the, was the limit, you see, you could go anywhere. Mm-hmm.

00:54:45:00-00:57:00:00

Interviewer:

Was there, but there was a lot—

Camera Crew Member #2:

[coughs]

Interviewer:

—in the Quaker camps, who were a lot of, recalcitrants—

Sam Yoder:

Yes.

Interviewer:

—a lot of people who refused. You didn't see much of that in the Mennonite camp, though?

Sam Yoder:

Very little—

Interviewer:

Could you say—

Sam Yoder:

—and the few cases that I'm aware of were non-Mennonites.

Interviewer:

Could you say that as a whole sentence, the few cases of, of—

Sam Yoder:

Well, the few cases of, of CPS men who were not very cooperative and were always sort of resisting everything were generally non-Mennonites and I might just say they were often from California. [laughs] I was in North Fork, California, for a while and we had, we had a handful of CPS men there, not Mennonites, who pretty much objected, some of them even slept in and wouldn't go to work at times. And they were not very cooperative and pretty much a problem but Selective Service assigned them there, it was one way to get them off of their hands [car passes], and then it was up to the director and the camp to, to deal with them in the camp. And they did it in a nice way, I think, but we had some that were there reluctantly, in fact, just simply, we had several people that wouldn't go out on the fires, to fight forest fires.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Sam Yoder:

—for no apparent reason. Mainly, they, they disliked the idea that they were obeying the government, or in this case the forestry service in that case. And it was not a religious objection at all, it was just simply, you can't push me around like this, kind of thing.

Interviewer:

Opposed to the draft, to the idea—

Sam Yoder:

Yes.

Interviewer:

—of involuntary servitude.

Sam Yoder:

Yes. They were opposed to the draft, but they didn't draw the line at, at refusing to register and therefore going to prison. They came onto camp, but after they got there. And it was a very small group, very small minority.

00:57:01:00-00:58:56:00

Interviewer:

Did, wh-, did, you have experience yourself or have, know of any experience of, of hostility toward the COs who were in camp? Did you say something about one of the, one of the camps, was it the one in Illinois, was there hostility in the surrounding community?

Sam Yoder:

I think, most of the, most of the hostility occurred the first year when we had mainly the base camps. These were often in rural settings, often at the edge of a little town. And if you were in town, everybody knew who you were and the trucks would go through town to go out to work and were often yelled at, [car passes] sometimes things thrown at trucks, bottles, what have you. When we got into hospital work and we worked much closer with the outside world, so to speak, and they got to know us very well, and, I, I sensed very little opposition to us at that point. But in the first year, everybody was unsure what these COs are like. At Provo, Utah, we heard later, after we were there for a while that when the superintendent of the hospital announced that he was bringing twenty COs in to help with the work, the hospital employees thought when we were walking down to the hospital they would see twenty guys there with long beards and I forget the description they gave us any-, anymore, but they thought we were gonna be a bunch of, how did they say it now, not, not really hippies, but at least that what, that's what they meant, and were surprised when we walked in there in, in coats, suit, ties, kind of thing. [laughs]

00:58:57:00-00:59:58:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. Could you say that again, for a minute about what they [loud beep] said, what they were expecting and say that again?

Sam Yoder:

Well, they had no idea what COs looked like, you see, and they had envisioned we were a bunch of, maybe backwoodsmen or somebody, coming in here with long beards, they said. And actually, I think they, they thought we were gonna be a bunch of oddballs or whatever and were so surprised when we got, they picked us up at the station by the hospital bus and brought us out and a lot of the employees were looking out the windows, what are these guys gonna look like, and they were so surprised when we walked in there in, in suit, coat and tie and well-groomed, and they said, My gosh they just look like anybody else. [laughs]

Interviewer:

They thought-, how—

Camera Crew Member #1:

Let's change this.

Interviewer:

OK.

[cut]

00:59:59:00-01:00:07:00

Interviewer:

Your beliefs on pacifism, is there anything about—

[car passes]

Camera Crew Member #1:

We're rolling.

Sam Yoder:

Well let me turn it around, we've taken some hymns out of our hymnal, like "Onward, Christian Soldiers" doesn't appear in the Mennonite hymnal. Someone said it's not a very good hymn for us to sing, it's an old hymn you know. There are a few others that we've taken out of the hymnal.

Interviewer:

Have you adapted any? Is there a pacifist version of "Onward, Christian Soldiers?"

Sam Yoder:

Not a version of that one. I don't think we would sing that one even if it was in the hymnal just because that's not our type of hymn that we sing in our church here. We have the chorales and, and some of the finer hymns that we think were written for—

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm, which—

Sam Yoder:

—more peace and justice kind of hymns.

01:00:08:00-01:01:25:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. What's, what's a hymn that you think is sort of a typical hymn of the peace witness?

Sam Yoder:

Oh, gee. [pause] Do you think of one, Lilian?

Camera Crew Member #2:

[coughs]

Sam Yoder:

There would be some that actually, there are a lot of peace hymns in the, but I, nothing comes to my mind.

Interviewer:

Think a bit, maybe at the end—

[cut]

01:01:26:00-01:01:43:00

Sam Yoder:

[plays "You are My Sunshine" on harmonica]

Interviewer:

How 'bout a hymn, do you do hymns on harmonica?

Sam Yoder:

Sure.

Interviewer:

Any, anything—

[cut]

01:01:44:00-01:02:34:00

Sam Yoder:

[plays harmonica]

Interviewer:

Start again.

Sam Yoder:

[plays harmonica]

Camera Crew Member #1:

You're just practicing, or are you ready?

Sam Yoder:

What?

Camera Crew Member #1:

You ready?

Sam Yoder:

Oh no, I'm never ready.

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Sam Yoder:

[pause] I'm still thinking, what I should play. What's a good hymn, Lilian?

Lilian:

[unintelligible]

Sam Yoder:

Well, any old hymn.

Camera Crew Member #2:

"Closer my Lord to Thee."

Interviewer:

[unintelligible]

Sam Yoder:

[plays "Closer my Lord to Thee"] No, that's too hard to play. [plays harmonica]

[cut]

01:02:35:00-01:03:12:00

Sam Yoder:

[plays "How Many Miles does a Man Have to Walk?" on harmonica]

"How Many Miles does a Many Have to Walk?"

Camera Crew Member #2:

"Down by the River."

Interviewer:

There you go. Ooh, how 'bout—

Camera Crew Member #2:

"Oh them Golden Slippers."

Interviewer:

How about, "The River—"

[cut]

01:03:13:00-01:04:23:00

Sam Yoder:

Well, they have all sorts of—[plays harmonica]

Lilian:

"Praise God from Whom our Blessings Flow." [laughs]

Sam Yoder:

No, I can't do that one. [plays harmonica]

Lilian:

That's too fast.

Sam Yoder:

[plays "He Walks with Me and Talks with Me" on harmonica]

[stops playing] [pants]

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Sam Yoder:

My. "He Walks with Me and—

Interviewer:

Yeah, that's good.

Sam Yoder:

—Talks with Me?"

[cut]

01:04:24:00-01:04:45:00

Sam Yoder:

[plays harmonica] That's the wrong key, that's a—

Camera Crew Member:

Oh, we hadn't noticed it.

[cut]

01:04:46:00-01:06:25:00

Sam Yoder:

[plays harmonica] That's not the right key either. I don't have a, see, I can't see. I, I have them here, B, B-flat on through to G.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Well, try them out, that's OK.

Sam Yoder:

[plays harmonica] No, that's not right, there's that one flat that doesn't come through there. [pause] Well, I'll go with a G and whatever comes. [plays harmonica] [clears throat] It helps to clear my throat maybe. [plays harmonica] What are some of the hymns we do in our, when we play for hymns?

Lilian:

[unintelligible]

Sam Yoder:

Oh, I, I know what I'll do. I'll do, Beethoven's "Ode To Joy."

Lilian:

[unintelligible]

Interviewer:

Ooh, that's a good one. [laughs] It's not a Mennonite hymn, though, is it?

Sam Yoder:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Is it?

Sam Yoder:

Well, it, we have it set to music, but we—

Camera Crew Member #2:

[coughs]

Sam Yoder:

—we modify it a little bit.

Interviewer:

Oh, great.

Sam Yoder:

What are the words to that?

Camera Crew Member #2:

[coughs]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Oh, you can't sing and play harmonica.

Sam Yoder:

No, but I have to know the words to start it.

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Sam Yoder:

I have to know the words to start it, here. [pause] You know, that was sung around the world on 19—

[cut]

01:06:26:00-01:07:04:00

Sam Yoder:

[plays "Ode To Joy" on harmonica]

Interviewer:

Did we miss the beginning?

Sam Yoder:

[laughs]

Interviewer:

We didn't miss the beginning of that?

Camera Crew Member #2:

I don't know.

[cut]

01:07:05:00-01:07:47:00

Camera Crew Member:

OK.

Sam Yoder:

[plays "Ode To Joy" on harmonica]

Interviewer:

Good.

Sam Yoder:

[laughs]

Interviewer:

Is that something you would sing in a Mennonite service?

Sam Yoder:

Oh yes, oh yes.

Interviewer:

You would? OK.

[cut]

01:07:48:00-01:09:17:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Are we rolling here now?

Sam Yoder:

Our main purpose is not to aggravate—

Camera Crew Member #2:

[clears throat]

Sam Yoder:

—not to challenge, not to provoke, but to, well, we were peacemakers. We had some angry people. The, I drove the bus part of the time at Provo, to pick up employees just down Main Street and back. And the guy that was in charge of that lost a son, and, in the war, and he let off a [pause] couple lines one time when I was driving the bus, and I sympathized with him, told him I had a lot of feeling for people, for parents who lose sons in the war. We talked for a little while, but he was very angry. Here you guys are, you know, no harm, out of harm's way, no danger out here at all. Now the patients liked us, they responded very positively to kind words, but also to kindness otherwise. Whether you were trimming their toenails or whether you were—well I worked mainly with insulin electric shock people, patients. But they, they were, they were sorry, they were sad when we left.

01:09:18:00-01:11:34:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. Could you talk about the conditions in the hospital when you got there? Did they—I mean, we've heard some really terrible stories and some of the—

Sam Yoder:

I sort of, I've been sort of avoiding that, myself. I know they were bad, but I also know the conditions that, I know the help they had and the skeletal crews that they had. And we didn't solve all the problems, for that matter. We did have some rather, [pause] several cases in Poughkeepsie, New York where the main attendants were brutalizing some of the patients. But I don't think, personally, I don't think it adds a lot to the total story, we were not out to get anybody. But there were several employees dismissed at Poughkeepsie because they

began to be very angry that they were reported and the superintendent just fired [snaps fingers] them like that and the local newspaper carried it, they were part of a union there. And—but it healed, it's funny how quickly those things heal over. I remember when it happened, the woman on the ward I worked, she mentioned it, that the employees had a meeting, they talked about the COs and what they're doing to some of the employees but she said, you know, we can't be that cruel to those people. They were beating 'em up, you know. Poor, they were not violent patients. They were just having fun, more or less, actually. And so it was interesting how quickly a lot of the employees said, well hey, we don't need people working here who are going to brutally—and the details came out in the paper, and the hearings [sniffs] and in fact, these, there were two fellows, they were lucky that they weren't actually jailed, spent some jail time. You can't beat up mentally ill patients like that.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

01:11:35:00-01:13:06:00

Sam Yoder:

But I've been sort of, that's, that's, you know it's not part of our story. We tried to show that there is a good way, that we don't have to have half of the patients in straightjackets or otherwise, in isolation cells. If, if we, if we treat them right, they respect that. And I think that's one of the big things that happened, that's really what happened after we came home from the war and we had these, the Mennonite Church became aware of the mental health issues and some of our returning CPS men became leaders in the church and almost immediately we began planning for and then building the what? Kings [pause] Kings View, Kings View south of Fresno was I believe one of the first ones to go up in California. I guess people are craziest in California, is that right?

Interviewer:

Lots of 'em.

Sam Yoder:

Oh now. I just had to throw that in.

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Sam Yoder:

And then we put one up in the, the Prairie View is in Newton, Kansas and we have Oaklawn here in Indiana and we have Philhaven and, what's the other one in Pennsylvania? So we

have five. And I think—

01:13:07:00-01:14:20:00

Interviewer:

What, start that again, you have five what?

Sam Yoder:

Five mental health clinics or hospitals. And around here, that's the best facility in Indiana as far as people are—not just, it's not just Mennonites, it's run by Mennonites. But these were hospitals that were built to show a different way, we have the staff, the psychiatrists, the psychiatric nurses, and excellent care, but also fairly expensive, but it was merely a response to those years in mental hospitals where we saw patients lying on the floors and almost no treatment, they were just warehoused there for the rest of their life, for that matter. And here we felt we had an obligation to show that there is a better way to work with mentally ill people. And these five hospitals have been in the forefront of mental health care. Yeah, yeah.

01:14:21:00-01:15:46:00

Interviewer:

I think we've got it in one piece, but can you just in one sentence, sort of say, the, the legacy of the Mennonites in CPS mental health was to build these five hospitals. Just put it all in one sentence, it got kind of broken up there.

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm. Are we on? Yeah. OK. One of the legacies of CPS, and par-, this is particularly true for the Mennonite CPS camps and the hospital work, was that as men were discharged and returned home, they felt that somehow the church ought to, to organize and provide better facilities for mentally ill people. And as time went on, they finally established five such institutions, from California to Pennsylvania. And today, those five institutions are some of the finest facilities for mental health treatment and I feel that it has definitely been an outgrowth of this hospital experience that we as CPS men had during World War Two.

01:15:47:00-01:18:12:00

Interviewer:

OK. Women, in the camps, in the hospitals, could you talk a little bit about that. About Eleanor Roosevelt, I think you said that off camera about Roosevelt, but maybe a little about the role of women, COGs, and wives.

Sam Yoder:

Well, [clears throat] women in CPS, there were probably two, two categories. When the married men, particularly, went into hospital work, provisions were made, hospitals were ready to welcome the wives to come and also work at the hospital and they would provide apartments for a married couple and therefore they would have the wife come and work and she would be, as a regular employee, and be paid full wages for that. That was one category, the other one was summer units and these were mostly college girls who decided to sign up, and this was an organized group, in a group, they would spend several months during the summer at a mental hospital as volunteers. I have tried to check to see whether they were paid full wages or not, and I have not been able to get that confirmed. But, a number of mental hospitals had anywhere from thirty to forty to fifty COGS, we call them, CO girls, that came and worked for several months at the hospital. It was a tremendous boost to mental hospitals at that time. One thing, some of the regular employees could take their vacation time at that time, so it was a natural for the girls. And secondly, if you have a lot of young Mennonite boys, it's sort of nice to have a lot of young Mennonite girls there too, you see. So there was a sort of a symbiotic relationship for that matter. And this was a very successful part of, of CPS, it was a morale builder and it, it was seen as a very positive, positive thing in the whole program.

01:18:13-01:21:11:00

Interviewer:

And was that true of the public perception of it too, and could you talk about how Eleanor Roosevelt came to speak with you all?

Sam Yoder:

Well, the, I think the public, the hospital employees saw it as a positive thing, I think many of them didn't see the girls as COs. The men were drafted, they were COs. The girls were girls, you know. They didn't necessarily attach the, the conscientious objection to war to the girls, although they knew that they were part of the whole group. And, the, [clears throat] I have no information of any kind of, of objection on the part of the public. Mental hospitals are sort of isolated in any community and the public doesn't often know what goes on there anyway, so it was not a, you were not on Main Street in town anyway, so. Well, at Poughkeepsie, New York we were about ten miles from Hyde Park, and Eleanor Roosevelt of course resided there, and we, our leader was in touch with her several times. By the way, every unit has a unit leader and we're organized in this sort of thing, a unit leader. He had been in touch with, with her secretary and suggested she might want to come down and talk to us. And in the summer, when we did have the COGs there, when we had the girls there. So we had a group there of about sixty people actually. And Eleanor Roosevelt agreed to come down and speak to us. She and her secretary drove in on an old 1936 touring Ford, top down and everything. They wheeled in there and we had a nice tea and then she spoke to us about world hunger and actually affirmed us. See, we were a relief training unit and we sort of highlighted that aspect of it, even to her, that we are all preparing to go overseas and work with hunger and suffering and refugee work and so on. And she spoke to us about that in a meeting. And the, I

think possibly one of the local paper's supporters [sic] slipped in somehow, at least the next morning we noticed in the Poughkeepsie daily paper, at the top one of the headl-, big bold headlines it said "Eleanor Coddles COS." And we got a g-, we got a real kick out of that, actually, that they picked that up, but she was very compassionate with us there, talked to—I don't know, you mentioned she had a column earlier about COs that of course she was not a CO for that matter.

01:21:12:00-01:21:49:00

Interviewer:

No, and not sympathetic early either.

Sam Yoder:

Well, she certainly was when she visited us. She, she couldn't have been any kinder, more open, she had tea with us there, spoke to us. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Oh, that's good. You know, there was a rumor that one of her sons, I believe it's—not Franklin Junior—Elliot, was—

Sam Yoder:

Mm.

Interviewer:

—had contemplated being a CO.

Sam Yoder:

Oh.

Interviewer:

And that her, his parents put pressure on him not to do—it just wouldn't have been done at the time for him to be—

Sam Yoder:

Not with Dad being the Commander in Chief, huh? [laughs]

Interviewer:

Yeah, it was kind of touchy, yeah. So I think she was, had been worried about that and by this time maybe wasn't so worried about that.

Sam Yoder:

Uh-huh. I see. Yeah, yeah.

01:21:50:00-01:24:19:00

Interviewer:

I think we're getting more, I'm getting close to the end here. You come home, [background production discussion begins] you go, you come home, you go to Poughkeepsie, you go to—I guess the maybe, and this may be the final question. What, looking back on, oh and, no, but Lilian brought up the thing about CPS camp and is that why you went on and got more education and broadened, broadened your—

Sam Yoder:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—horizons in life was because of your experience in CPS and maybe—are we rolling again?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

OK, go ahead.

Sam Yoder:

I was discharged in December, 1945 and came home for several months and was in preparation to go overseas and in fact we followed the occupation forces right into Germany in refugee work and all these years I had been yearning to go back to school, get more education and so on. And after two-and-a-half years working, particularly with refugees, in Germany and most of these were resettled in South America in Paraguay and Uruguay and and so on, Canada also in some cases, I came home and I started working in a, one of our mobile home factories here, to earn a little bit of money, 'cause I wasn't earning for six-and-a-half years, I was not earning any money, you see. And I thought, gee, is this all there is? And I decided to check out the college, Goshen College, and they agreed to have me come in and try a college course, which I did, and finished that. And then I taught for nine years in public school and I finished a Master's Degree in Guidance Counseling and was doing some

work in that, and the college invited me to join the faculty here and I went on to Indiana University to finish more degrees. Then I taught for twenty-eight years at Goshen College. And...

01:24:20:00-01:25:05:00

Interviewer:

That's a Mennonite college right?

Sam Yoder:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Could you say that? Maybe say—

Sam Yoder:

Goshen College, yes, Goshen, Goshen College is a Mennonite college, one of about six or seven Mennonite colleges in the U.S.

Interviewer:

OK.

Sam Yoder:

And that was a wonderful experience, in fact that's where I've spent most of my life, but coming from the Amish and then moving into Mennonite circles and going on for additional education, ending up teaching at the, at the college for the last twenty-eight years of my... years. Then I retired and moved to Greencroft.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Judy—

[cut]

01:25:06:00-

Camera Crew Member #1:

So, any time.

Sam Yoder:

[laughs] OK.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Go ahead,

Sam Yoder:

Well, after two-and-a-half years in Europe, particularly in Germany, working with refugees I returned home and worked in a mobile home factory. And after a few months, I decided, is this, is this all there is to life? and decided to go back to college, I wanted to get more education. So I enrolled at Goshen College, a Mennonite school and later then taught for a number of years in one of the local public schools, finished a Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling and then was invited to teach at Goshen College, went on to complete more degrees at Indiana University and taught for twenty-eight years in my home college, so to speak, and that brought me up to my retirement actually.

01:26:17:00-01:27:38:00

Interviewer:

Did CPS change the course of your life?

Sam Yoder:

Oh definitely.

Interviewer:

Could you say that?

Sam Yoder:

Well, off camera, I'll say it this way, I tell Lillian, when we drive to Shipshewana and we see a man, Amish man and an Amish woman, and six, eight children all single file, I say, "If it hadn't been for Hitler, that's probably where I'd be." Now don't put that on the camera, though. [laughs]

Interviewer:

That's good, that's good.

Sam Yoder:

You thought I was gonna say, but for the grace of God, didn't you?

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Camera Crew Member #1:

[laughs]

Sam Yoder:

Yeah, but I said, "If it hadn't been for Hitler, that's probably where I would be." Hitler, or World War Two took me off the farm, took me out of the Amish community, into the Mennonite community, into higher education, into twenty-eight years of teaching, into a, a good retirement program, into working with a group here trying to put together a, a documentary on CPS. [laughs]

Camera Crew Member #2:

Would you say you're generally kind of for a war then? [laughs]

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Sam Yoder:

[laughs] There you go.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Just something to think about.

Interviewer:

I think we're really close here. I think we may be done.

[cut]

01:27:39:00-01:29:46:00

Interviewer:

—in relation to pacifism and the war and, and the good war. What, what do you think of when somebody s-, calls it "the good war"?

Sam Yoder:

Well, I understand what they're saying. ***People say, what would happen if everybody would do what you did? Well, I said, if everybody would do that, we'd, there'd be no problem***. It is a, World War Two is a, is a problem war for us COs. ***Hitler was running wild in Europe, and Pearl Harbor came along, what do you do? Well, in this community, and with my background, and when you bring 400 years of pacifism do you throw it overboard*** when—and, as I think I mentioned earlier, when I was drafted, I was, I decided that's the way to go, but after you're in camp and you interact with others and you study more, that's when you develop and are finally, what? convinced that you made the right choice. And I don't have an answer to some of that. I don't, I don't feel, I, I, I have coffee with guys all the time here, a lot of them were in the service. I find I probably did more in the service than they did. One guy that I drink coffee with, all he did was played in the band, well that didn't win any wars, did it? I don't know if it did or not. But, I, I don't, I don't apologize for what I did, but I also don't condemn someone else who took another route. And what would've happened if four million or so Americans would've become COs? This almost happened in the Vietnamese [sic] war, you know. But ***World War Two was a hard war to be a CO in. Yeah***.

[cut]

[end of camera roll]

01:29:47:00-01:30:31:00

Sam Yoder:

So, the early camps were pure so to speak, Quakers-Quakers, Church of the Brethren, Mennonites. But we had a lot of Methodists, we had a lot of Catholics, we had a lot of Presbyterian we had, we had some Russian Molok? Mulok? Mulokans?

Interviewer:

Molokans. Yeah.

Sam Yoder:

We had some of those in California, they were trouble makers. They, they were not cooperative with us. [car passes] They were nice guys, you could talk to 'em, but if they didn't feel very good, they'd say, I'm not going to go out there on the mountain today to cut wood, or to brush. You know, there was always some work to be done in the forestry work.

01:30:32:00-01:32:11:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. Did you have mu-, Jehovah's Witness?

Sam Yoder:

We had a couple, but not many. I, I didn't have any personal interaction with Jehovah's Witnesses.

Interviewer:

Would you, would you s-, agree with Steve Carey that it was a good training ground—

Sam Yoder:

Oh yes—

Interviewer:

for pacifism—

Sam Yoder:

—very much.

Interviewer:

and could you talk about that?

Sam Yoder:

Yeah, are we on?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Yeah.

Sam Yoder:

CPS camps did indeed provide a good training ground for COs. ***We entered these camps not knowing clearly what, you know, lay in the future, but in such a camp where you have some time to study and you have some interaction with others, your horizons broaden and your convictions deepen***. And yes, when I came out of CPS four years after entering I was much more of a pacifist than when I entered. It was just simply a place where, where you developed. You, you simply, you could simply thrive, so to speak, by interacting with others who had similar convictions, actually. Yeah.

01:32:12:00-01:33:43:00

Interviewer:

Is that why, do you think, that, that your generation of Mennonites have been, have been so active in the peace movement, and is a lot of that because of your experience in CPS? I mean is that have you, I know it's true of the Quakers, and is it true of the Mennonites, that ongoing—

Sam Yoder:

One of the things that has happened since World War Two is today when you talk about peace, you almost always say "peace and justice." In World War Two we didn't use the word justice very much. Now, and we have a seniors for peace group here on this campus and they meet every month, and have different presenters in for that. They are much concerned about justice factors. Peace and justice has become a very important term today. I see that as a step forward, as a step beyond. We were more just nonparticipants. The peace and justice idea is that you not only resist war, but you're active out there in creating justice for some of the underprivileged, for some of the suffering countries, and maybe in that way you can also prevent war from even happening. But that's a very definite direction that we've come in the last several decades. Mm-hmm.

01:33:44:00-01:35:34:00

Interviewer:

That's [unintelligible]. That was nice. You made me think of one more thing, and now I'm forgetting it and we're gonna wrap up here. Peace and justice, Mennonites versus other, [pause] OK, you're more cooperative, blah blah blah. Oh, I know what I was gonna say, do you think that the government—what w-, the ov-, what was your overall feeling of the experience of CPS for everyone involved, why didn't they do it again during the Vietnam War? Was it obvious to you—

Sam Yoder:

Well they did.

Interviewer:

They did?

Sam Yoder:

Oh yes. You see, after World War Two then the Korean War came along and we had, the boys were classified as 1-W. And they had, you see we had laid a lot of groundwork and they were directly assigned to hospitals or other public works projects and there were not as many of them, but all over the country. And then the Vietnamese War came along, and they were

the Pax groups. Pax, Latin for peace. And they, they then went overseas for some of their work. My brother was in one of those groups. But you see, the names changed, even in the Korean War it was the 1-W boys, see that'd be a different story now. They never had the base camps and they didn't have the, the large groups that we had in the base camps. They were assigned individually to a hospital in Denver, or in Philadelphia or whatever and they'd have small units of five to ten people there. But in the, in the Vietnamese War it was the Pax boys, the Pax boys, and you see up until this time, the g-, the women have not been drafted. Yeah.

01:35:35:00-01:36:21:00

Interviewer:

And those, so the Mennonite alternative service during Vietnam, people were in units, so they did—

Sam Yoder:

Oh yes, yes. Yeah.

Interviewer:

—get to know each other. Oh, I didn't know about that.

Sam Yoder:

Our own two sons had to register—

Camera Crew Member #2:

[clears throat]

Sam Yoder:

—and they both registered as COs. Our oldest son was killed about twelve, thirteen years ago.

Interviewer:

Oh, I'm sorry.

Sam Yoder:

Our youngest son lives in nearby Elkhart. But they both gradu—they both attended Goshen College. And they both registered indicating their position, so the song goes on [car passes] and on and on. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Perfect ending. We're done.

[end of interview]