Interview with Stephen Cary
Date: ca. 1998
Interviewers: Judy Ehrlich and Rick Tejada-Flores

Interview gathered as part of *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It: The Story of World War II Conscientious Objectors*. Produced by Paradigm Productions. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Paradigm Productions Collection.

Interview with Stephen Cary, conducted by Paradigm Productions ca. 1998 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—00:00:00:31:00

Interviewer #1:

Introduce yourself, just so we have it on tape.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Rolling.

Stephen Cary:

Who I am?

Interviewer #2:

Yes, tell us who you are. Go ahead.

Interviewer #1:

Go ahead.

Stephen Cary:

My name is Stephen Cary. I've been a lifelong Quaker. I worked many years for the American Friends Service Committee, but more recently I've been here at Haverford College, from which I retired in 1981.

00:00:32:00—00:01:22:00

Interviewer #1:

So go ahead and—

Interviewer #2:

Read us the—

Interviewer #1:

—read us—what—

Stephen Cary:

OK.

Interviewer #2:

—the statement of Quaker—

Interviewer #1:

Is it called formally—

Interviewer #2:

That's cool.

Interviewer #1:

—the Quaker peace testimony?

Stephen Cary:

Yeah. The Society of Friends has had a peace testimony since its very beginning. In fact, the first written expression of it was in a, a communication they sent to King Charles II of England, which I've always thought was one of the finest, the, statements of the peace testament in brief. I'd like to read it, if I could. It goes like this. It was sent to him in, in, I think, 1661. [reads] "We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for, for any," or oh, "for any end or any—"

Interviewer #1:

Start again—

Stephen Cary:

Start over again?

—there was something... and, and he needs to not crackle the papers, right?

[plane flying overhead]

Interviewer #1:

It's a plane?

Interviewer #2:

Are you getting the plane on there?

Stephen Cary:

I can, I'll hold it up better.

Interviewer #1:

It's OK—

Interviewer #2:

Hang on, hang on.

[cut]

00:01:23:00—00:01:27:00

Stephen Cary:

OK.

[plane flying overhead]

Interviewer #1:

Oh, there's that plane still there.

[cut]

00:01:28:00

Stephen Cary:

[reads] "We utterly deny all outward wars and strife—"

Interviewer #2:

No, no, hang on. I thought you were ready?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Well, I—

Interviewer #2:

Are you ready?

Camera Crew Member #1:

I, yeah, the plane—

Camera Crew Member #3:

I hear the plane, that's what I'm saying. If you want to shoot with it—

Stephen Cary:

OK.

Interviewer #1:

Wait a minute,

Interviewer #2:

No, no—

Interviewer #1:

—I just said—

Interviewer #2:

—you tell—

[cut]

00:01:39:00—00:02:22:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Rolling.

Stephen Cary:

OK.

Interviewer #2:

OK, whenever you're ready, Steve.

Stephen Cary:

OK. [reads] "We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or any pretense whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move us into it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the whole world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdoms [sic] of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world."

00:02:23:00—00:02:44:00

Interviewer #1:

Did you think about that when you were thinking about becoming a conscientious objector?

Stephen Cary:

I certainly was aware of it. It was one of the things that were subliminally in my thinking as I had to face the problem of what I was going to do. And I would say I knew about it at the time, yes.

00:02:45:00—00:04:15:00

Interviewer #1:

I, maybe we should, you know, something we've u-, we like the way you did it before, but what happene-—

Interviewer #2:

Maybe tell us the story again.

Interviewer #1:

—what, tell us the story of your father making the decision about quitting—

Interviewer #2:

And, and—

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—how that led you to your—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—your conscience.

Stephen Cary:

One of the things that had a profound influence upon me that surfaced about, the, with the—excuse me. One of the things that had a big old important influence on me at that time of decision-making was a call I had from my family to come down to Philadelphia, and my father had a message he wanted to share with us. And when we got there, and, we heard that, he told us that, he had always said that as long as his company continued to manufacture its same goods, if they were sold to the Army that was OK; but if they ever came to make weaponry, he would have a difficult time. And he said, last week my company accepted a contract to build part of the Norden bombsight, which was a, advanced in the bombing equipment. And he said, I'll have a very difficult time, but he said, if I quit, it'll make a whole difference in the way the family lives. And we, of course, told him, said, do what you think is right. Next day he quit. And I was really shaken. This man, his life was his company. He'd come up with it for thirty-five years, he was the executive vice president. He had poured his life into this company, and to quit cold on the basis of principle was something, said, I said to myself, Steve, he did what he thought was right at whatever cost. And where do you stand?

00:04:16:00—00:05:16:00

Interviewer #1:

Good, OK.

Stephen Cary:

Hmm.

Interviewer #2:

And was that, was that really the turning point for you? Was that what—

Stephen Cary:

That was one of them. It was one of them. The other was that, the sessions in the YMCA with the, with these three, two guys from Cornell and, and, and Joe Havens. That was the other—those three nights were very important. And, of course, it was also the coming back of my teachings as a, as, when I was a child. Yeah—

Interviewer #1:

Coming—

Stephen Cary:

It was, resurfaced, resurfacing. Things I'd learned as a child at home, and in my readings of the Bible, and so forth. I was saying, you know, how, it was so contrary to the teaching of Jesus. Did I believe in Him, or didn't I believe in Him, you know? And could I, how could I reconcile the two? I had to, and I thought I, well, I had to make a choice, you know, which way I'm gonna go. And I didn't, I didn't have any answers. I didn't have an answer for Hitler, and, and I don't think anybody else did then either, but, but I, I had to, I had the, I was forced to make a choice at that point.

00:05:17:00—00:05:44:00

Interviewer #1:

Let me ask you something that I think I haven't talked to you about before. Somewhere I've read that only ten percent of Quakers refused the draft, and—

Stephen Cary:

I don't know, I don't know what they, I'm not sure what the percentage of Quakers were who refused the draft, but it was a reasonably small percentage. I think that it was more than ten percent, and I think that in the subsequent years it's been considerably higher than that. But at the time of the, of that choice, it was certainly, I would guess, a, a minority of Quakers did, yes. Mm-hmm.

00:05:45:00—00:06:49:00

Interviewer #1:

And how can somebody be a Quaker and be willing to fight?

Stephen Cary:

Well, the Quakers have never insisted upon a, a position, a platform. What the Quakers insist on, that a person is, is seeking new insights, and as long as the people are trying to find what the truth is for them, we have to come, we, we accept that. Used to be very black and white. If you didn't do it, you're out, you know, but—if you didn't marry a Quaker, you were finished. I mean, they would threw him out for not marrying a Quaker. If you danced, you were gonna be in trouble, or if you lost money, my gosh, if you went, if you went broke, you know, or unprudent, imprudent in your investments, they'd throw you out of the Meeting. All these ridiculous rules. But in terms of the current Quakerism, if you felt that your conscience led you, that you had to, had to accept military service, it was fine. The, the Society of Friends, as an organization, as an, as a, as a faith, has never in 300 years violated its peace testimony, but individual members have.

00:06:50:00—00:07:02:00

Interviewer #2:

Steve—

Interviewer #1:

Just—

Interviewer #2:

—the other issue that's come up sometimes is, not with the Quakers, but, but when you look at—

[phone rings]

Interviewer #2:

—the pattern of how Mennonites responded to the war—

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm.

[phone beeps]

—in, in this country—

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm.

[phone beeps]

Interviewer #2:

—there was a group of Mennonites who said, I cannot fight—

[cut]

00:07:03:00—00:08:21:00

Stephen Cary:

I don't buy that I think that...

Interviewer #2:

Oh. Are we on yet?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Go ahead.

[phone beeps]

Stephen Cary:

I think that many a, a religious community has found ways to rationalize the situation, and [stutters] my friend Milton Mayer, for example, talked about the Episcopalians, said, well the, they haven't been out of uniform since the Norman invasion, but [laughs] the Methodists, meeting hard by the boardwalk, decided that God had a stake in this war. Other words, that, depending upon the [stutters] history and the evolution of a church, how central things like the peace testimony were depended upon how it had, how, where it had come. And I think that since the Second World War there's been a lot more interest in the peace testimony and Quakerism. And here, in the Mennonite church it was kind of given that you didn't go to war w-, here in America. I mean, the, many, some of the Mennonites had n-, very little

understanding of pacifism, but the church had told them they weren't gonna go to war if they were gonna be Mennonite, so a lot of them in a Mennonite, in a Mennonite camp were rather, lacking in understanding of the testimony.

00:08:22:00—00:08:49:00

Interviewer #2:

But just the, the bigger question. Do you think, do you think it's easier to be, to stay with pacifist nonviolent principles if you're removed?

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah, oh sure. I mean, I've never known how far I would go, you know. I mean, I've gotta be very humble about that. If I were really tested, how far would I go? I don't know. But if I, I, my argument would be that if I, if I abandon it, it would be of my lack of, of ability, and not the failure of the witness.

00:08:50:00—00:09:09:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm. Actually, you remind me, there's a wonderful quote. I don't know if you know this, of Ammon Hen-, Hennacy, saying, it's easy, it's, being a, being a pacifist between wars is like being a vegetarian between meals, which [laughs]—

Stephen Cary:

Oh, ye- [laughs]. That's...

Interviewer #1:

Isn't that a good one?

Stephen Cary:

Absolutely lovely.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah one of my favorites.

Stephen Cary:

Absolutely lovely. That's, that's terrific. I might remember that, yeah.

00:09:10:00—00:10:41:00

Interviewer #2:

Can we move on to one of those reminiscences of the camps, and, and see if you can give it to us in a—

Stephen Cary:

In a brief—

Interviewer #2:

—condensed version?

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

But the Christmas story, the fire fighting, and the, the—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—long day, and what the comment was on the...

Stephen Cary:

Yeah. At one time in my CPS career I was in Luray, Virginia, with the Mennonites, and we had one day off, Christmas Day, in, in, over the months. And we had planned the day off. And, course, what happened but a huge forest fire. And we were sent out. All day we fought this fire in a rock-, in a mountainous area, and it was slippery, and it was miserable cold and wet. Finally, about, about six or seven in the evening, this, began to sleet, and it put the fire out. And we were exhausted. Hadn't a bite to eat or even a cup of coffee in ten hours, and we came down. And we were just disgruntled. We were just furious—never get another day off, and, you know, it was, here we had to fight this fire, and it was absolutely outrageous, and, and they didn't even have a cup of coffee for us, and they don't even come get us, and it's—and one kid was sitting over in the side of the thing, you know, and he was, he, he was a guy we'd been teaching English to, teaching how to read. The guy didn't know how to read. He should never have been drafted. He didn't say a word. And fi-, I was one of the principal bitches, I was one of the worst. And he looked, and he said, Steve, I don't know what you

guys are complaining about. I, this is the greatest Christmas I ever had in my life. What are you talking about? He said, when else in my entire life will I have a chance to give a hillside back to God? You know, I know how to read, but boy, that attitude shook me up, I tell ya.

00:10:42:00—00:11:02:00

Interviewer #2:

What did, what—

Interviewer #1:

Ten something.

Interviewer #2:

—did that represent?

Stephen Cary:

Well, it represented [laughs] the fact that, that, that you can find, if you look, something that's fine and beautiful even in a bad situation.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Stephen Cary:

I was ashamed of myself. We all were ashamed of ourselves.

00:11:03:00—00:11:49:00

Interviewer #2:

[stutters] Is that a, is that a metaphor for the entire CPS experience, that you can find something good in it, or...

Stephen Cary:

Well, for me, no, because, [stutters] the metaphor, the experience in the CPS was, for me, positive, 'cause I had some extraordinarily challenging jobs. For many people, it would be a good metaphor. The trouble with CPS was that for those who were able to adapt to the restrictions, and accept and profit from the diversity and had challenging assignments, it was an enormously important growing experience. For those who didn't have that adaptability, or who never had more difficult jobs, didn't have any money, and they were broke, it could be a

very embittering experience. I don't think permanently so, but there were people were scarred by it, yes. Mm-hmm.

00:11:50:00—00:12:22:00

Interviewer #1:

It's interesting, because we've just seen two recent films that depict the, or one that wasn't fi-—

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm—

Interviewer #1:

—finished—

Stephen Cary:

—mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewer #1:

—and one that was, it really depicted the CPS experience as a very negative experience—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—and very, sort of—

Stephen Cary:

Well, for some it was. For some it was. But for others, it was a trem-, for me it was a tremendous exp-, I learned more about how to get along with the reasonable and the unreasonable, and how to deal with very difficult people, than I ever knew in my life. So it was a very rich experience for me. But I realize it wasn't... you know.

00:12:23:00—00:13:34:00

Interviewer #1:

Just, I want you to talk about that, the, I, CPS as the, the, the opportunity for—

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—pacifist training, as you've talked about.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah. In some ways, CPS was, was, was wrong. It was wrong for the churches, they were compromising in ways that they shouldn't compromise in dealing with Selective Service, putting men at risk in going to prison who wouldn't work. But for others, it was a, for, in other ways it was an enormous, huge success in that it proved to be a training ground for pacifists, which staffed, the graduates of CPS staffed the peace movement for fifty years. The, the church staffed, of thems-, in the HH agency, the, the service bodies of these churches, of these churches were just enriched, and led by, dominated by graduates of Civilian Public Service. ***If you're in a, something for four years, you haven't got any money, you can't do anything, all you could do was argue. And we would discuss every possible angle*** in CP-, and discuss it, ***and out of that crucible came people who really knew why they were pacifists***, and were committed to that for their lives.

00:13:35:00—00:13:57:00

Interviewer #1:

Describe some of those arguments.

Stephen Cary:

Well, we would, we would argue when it was, when food would disappear from the ice box, you know, what do you do, put a lock on the door? Oh, that's un-, can't do that. Well, we don't have—***what do you do when somebody's gonna rape your grandmother, you know? These, these kinds of questions come up all the time.*** Can't think of, off hand of any other, but they were—

00:13:58:00—00:14:45:00

Interviewer #1:

You talked about green mashed potatoes on St. Patrick's Day, right? I can't remember, I'm trying to think of some of the examples you gave—

Interviewer #2:

Well, but the central question is—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—what should be done about the war?

Stephen Cary:

Oh, of course. We used to argue that all the time, abou- as to what were the responsibilities of citizenship in wartime, and how much relevance did we have in, in being objectors to it? And what kind of alternatives should we envisage when we got out? You know, we talked all those questions over. How, what should be our reaction to the restrictions of Selective Service? We had to realize that the guys down there were human beings, and we used to f-, foam at the mouth about 'em, but that wasn't right. All the, you know, which, everything, everything came up, there'd be something new.

00:14:46:00—00:15:49:00

Interviewer #1:

Because of that some people left camp. Some—

Stephen Cary:

Yep, yep.

Interviewer #1:

—people—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

—couldn't survive—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—in CPS, didn't while other people—

Stephen Cary:

Mm, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Well, what about people whose, who were—

Interviewer #1:

—went to the Army—

Interviewer #2:

—who were in, the Army ones first. I mean, part of what made that such a rich crucible was—

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—that—

Stephen Cary:

The, the—

Interviewer #2:

—everyone came—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—from all these different points of view.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, I think one of the things that made all these discussions rich was the fact that, that, that

the, the clientele, the assignees, made the place an absolute zoo. I mean, we had, ***we had PhD's, we had winners of Fulbright Prizes, we had guys who had a third grade education; we had stock brokers, we had ballet dancers, we had atheists, we had fundamentalists***, we had—***every possible kind of human being was there.*** And it was absolutely, as I say, a zoo, and that made it a fascinating place to be. Drove you crazy sometimes. To argue with a, with a, with a born-again Christian is a tough job, because not much give. But there was every kind of person there.

00:15:50:00—00:17:56:00

Interviewer #1:

Talk about that story of Christmas, actually, when you describe that, the groups, all the different kinds of people that you saw. Not Christmas, I'm sorry. Of, the, when you s-, had that, you used the analogy of saying, appealing that you had seen Christ appear.

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer #1:

Yes, with the...

Stephen Cary:

Well, I, of course, I was very fortunate in CPS in that I had interesting, challenging assignments, and I came to appreciate the huge diversity. And I got to feel that these fellas were really my family. And I remember one time at Petersham, when I was, they were digging water-holes, and it was muddy and cold and miserable, and I, we, everybody had their little maple tree, and we used to go out and tap the maple tree and have it, you know, drinks cold, just a touch of, of, of syrup in it. And I was sitting up there watching it and I saw the guys, you know, two guys were, had Bibles out and they were having a discussion, a Biblical exegesis; two other guys were furiously working, from, the farm boys, were trying to get at a rock; and a couple of guys were having a break, smoking break, which they had all the time. And, and others were, there was a little group of highly educated peo-, talking about English literature in the eighteenth century; there was this great mix of people. And you know, I was just overwhelmed with the sense of, boy, these people were, were just my buddies, you know? I was, I couldn't think of a place I'd rather be than right there with those guys. And you know, I looked over and there was another figure there, and you know, it was obviously a, just a vis-, a fantasy, but I saw the figure of Jesus Christ standing there, looking with the most delightful kind of smile at these lunatics who were all around him, you see. And he was leaning on his shovel.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Stephen Cary:

And I say, it was just a minute, but you know, I never forgot it. It was one of those, every now and then you have, something like this happens. I have no judgment that it was [laughs] happening, but it meant something to me, you know. I saw this, and had, it made me feel, boy, I got a responsibility, I got to do something about all this.

00:17:57:00—00:18:01:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm. Do something about all what?

Camera Crew Member #1:

We should change this.

Interviewer #2:

OK, stop.

Interviewer #1:

Oh, sorry. We just did the other—

Interviewer #2:

No, that sounds like a—

[cut]

[end of tape]

00:18:02:00—00:20:42:00

Interviewer #2:

—that moment—

Stephen Cary:

Uh-huh, OK.

Interviewer #2:

—in 1947 when you're in Europe—

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm, OK.

Interviewer #2:

—doing the relief work—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—and things are going badly.

Stephen Cary:

Well, after I got out of CPS, I really felt I owed myself and my country something to be constructive, and I was given a fabulous job. I was put, given oversight of Quaker Relief on the continent of Europe. I was about thirty-two. Another young man and I had this role. And for two years I wandered over the face of Europe seeing the agony of war. And anyway, after, we used to have a system of, every few months we'd bring in maybe fifteen, twenty, twenty-five of our workers, maybe somebody from Lapland, Poland, somebody from some unit in Hungary, Italy, Germany. We'd bring them in. They were, to give them a sense that they weren't alone. They were all isolated, stressed, hard-pressed, and we talked for three or four days with this group about problems, how they dealt with 'em. We'd learn from each other about how to deal with problems. ***And there was a particular meeting in Amsterdam in the fall of 1947, which*** was, of all the meetings we went, it was about the gloomiest that, we had a terrible time. There were, our supplies were lost in the malfunctioning railroads of Europe, our trucks were inoperative because we couldn't get spare parts or we had too many flat tires; morale was low in the given unit, because people were so stressed working seven days a week at fourteen hours a day. Others were, had difficulty, couldn't get along with each other. All these problems welled up. It ***just seemed like it was a catalogue of disaster in the face of overwhelming, we just weren't cutting it. And at, the last afternoon we were a pretty gloomy lot. And*** into that scene ***a Dutch Quaker came in holding aloft a, a newspaper, and it said, "Quakers win Nobel Peace Prize, honored for relief services."*** Well, you know, I've never been so stunned in my life. And the, everybody fell just absolutely silent. People had, began to cry. It was just that kind of tension in the air. And I remember just being overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude for, to be with these people. I had a glamorous job, I was traveling all over Europe seeing all this stuff, but they were down in the trenches. They were, they were having a rough time. And I just felt, my god, I'm glad to be associated with these people. And nobody said anything, it was just dead silent, it was a kind of a Quaker

meeting for worship. ***And after maybe ten minutes or so, this one young woman got up. Only thing that was said in the meeting at all was this was woman. She got up and said, all I can say is a little love goes a long way. Boy, I remembered that for fifty years.***

00:20:43:00—00:23:54:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm. That's really a lovely story. Let's go back to CPS—

Stephen Cary:

Oh, yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—and talk—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—a little about, first, the conflicting goals of the, the parties administering CPS—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah—

Interviewer #1:

—the churches—

Stephen Cary:

—yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—and the Selective Service. Start, maybe—

Interviewer #2:

What the built-in tension was.

Interviewer #1:

I think there's two levels to it. One is the assumptions they went into, and then their goals once—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah—

Interviewer #1:

—they were running it—

Stephen Cary:

—yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—and if you could talk about—

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm, yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—both those—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—things.

Stephen Cary:

—yeah. Well, there was, from the very beginning it was an ill conc-, CPS was an ill-conceived project. It was an unlikely marriage between the three peace churches that were trying to provide opportunities for young men of conscience, and Selective Service, which was trying to keep it all out of sight, make it as unpleasant as possible so that people wouldn't want to join it. And they struck a bargain. And you have to remember that that bargain was originally on terms of a one-year period of a draft. It later became three, four years, but that time it was, have to look at it in this context. And so, the, the three leaders of, of the three

churches met with, in Washington with Clarence Dykstra, the first secretary, the first head of Selective Service. And they accepted the fact that there'd be no pay, for example. They assumed that all the young men coming to CPS would be like their faith communities. Boy, was that one off the track. And, so, in the, in, from the very beginning there were assumptions which didn't prove out. And also, they thought they'd be dealing with Clarence Dykstra, who was a very broad-minded individual, understood the peace churches' position and was interested in giving opportunities for the, for the men. He was replaced by General Hershey, who was a [sic] amiable, rather nice gentleman, but very limited; whose view, who was, was scared of public reaction, trying to keep the fellows out of sight; was of limited understanding of the position. And under him, CPS, I mean [stutters] Selective Service, became a rather bureaucratic, narrow administration. That was the first problem. The second problem was that because of factors like no pay, half the men wanted to show that you couldn't make slaves work, and they did as little as they could. Other half of the guys wanted to work like the dickens in order to persuade the government we were serious and good fellows, and we'd, wanted to get better jobs, and we'd get 'em if we worked hard. So it was like, you know, Penelope in the, [stutters] where she knitted all day and unraveled all night. So you had half the guys working one half, the other. And the poor director of the camp was right in the middle of that fight, and who, depending on which side he came down on, he was either praised or re—, reviled. So that, the system was a, was a very bad thing. Now the, the other, a paradox was that the, as I indicated, that the churches were hoping to broaden the opportunities, and Selective Service was hoping to damp them down, so that, you know, there was a, just a, a struggle all the way between these two conflicting points of view. Made it very tough.

00:23:55:00—00:26:27:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Stephen Cary:

Mm.

Interviewer #2:

And then on the ground, in terms of the points of view of the participants, things, things in the camps, as the war went on, as people weren't released—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah—

Interviewer #2:

—got worse—

Stephen Cary:

—yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—and worse, too, didn't they?

Stephen Cary:

Oh yes, they did. And of course, I got, I should've pointed out that it was the, it was the pay issue which was often central in the divisions within the camps. Also there were those who felt that it was absolutely wrong for the churches to be doing this, and some of them would walk out. And the, and then there, another problem. I can understand many of the positions of Selective Service. I understand why they wanted to keep us out of sight. The one thing I never could understand was the, was their discharge policy, which was, which was cruel, harsh, and wholly, wholly unnecessary. We, we had terrible time getting men released who were, who were unable to, either they were, physically should never have been drafted in the first place, 'cause they were, had physical disabilities; or they were mentally unable to adapt to, to the rather limited opportunities there were in that setting. And these guys couldn't work. We sometimes had to put suicide watches on 'em. We would prepare discharge petitions with the backing of psychiatrists and, and medical doctors, and they'd be turned down all over the place. So every camp had these, these permanent SQs, as they were called—Sick Quarters—on the charts, who just lay around, and cou-, and would drag the morale down of everybody, incl-, and themselves. And it was really a, a, a, one of the most unfortunate features of the whole thing was the treatment of the mentally and physically dis-, disadvantaged. And I solved the problem in one camp by having a, a good relationship with the psychiatrist, and I, and he would send me his draft reports. I would rephrase them in ways that I knew the vocabulary would, would satisfy Selective Service, and I would send them back to him, and say, look, if I've in any way violated your professional diagnosis, change it, but this is what'll get 'em out. And they would, then the, he'd send 'em back to me, and I would send 'em to Washington, and we got guys out all over the place, because it was a matter of semantics, nothing to do with, with changes in the physical condition of the people. And, so that we [laughs], we got around the system in some, once in a while. But it was a very bad part of the whole operation.

00:26:28:00—00:30:49:00

Interviewer #1:

Could you describe what the operation was? What did a CPS camp look like, typically, and what, what was the goal of most CPS camps for the people who—

Stephen Cary:

CPS camps were basically a, often in, in ve— far-away places. They weren't, they were old CCC camps. The Ce—, the Civilian Conservation Corps of Franklin Roosevelt, where young men had volunteered. He got them off the streets. It was a, really a wonderful Depression operation. These camps were abandoned, and they were re-opened, and used as the Civilian Public Service camps, where the civilian personnel of Selective Service were the administrators during work hours. During non-work hours, the churches were responsible. That's where I was involved, in the non-, I was a director of the camps during those off-hours. But of course, I had to deal every day with the, with the government people, too, so that there was, this was the setup. There were open barracks, there was no privacy; the men would go out on, on project every day at the, at, like six-thirty or seven, I think, we started to work. And the work projects were varied, between the, the maid work, the grimy, dirty work, and, it was, it was, there was not much glamour about it. I mean, one camp, for example, was draining a swamp, and they stood in mud up to their knees for day after day. Another camp was in a endless, endless set of pulling weeds in middle, flower, in, in, in little garden plots. Week after week we had to, nothing but pulling weeds. Another camp was really the worst, was, was where we, assign-, where the project was creating vistas in the, in the skyline drive of Virginia, so that people could see vistas which had been, been, been, created by the CCC's, in order to make people able to see. Well, of course, people couldn't, couldn't get up their anyway, 'cause there was no gas, we didn't have any gas to get anywhere. And we were supposed to open up these vistas for, the trees had been planted by the CC-, open up these vistas for the, but nobody, purpose, nobody could see anything. And we even were told to paint little black stumps so that they wouldn't be seen. I mean, there was maybe an inch-long tree and you had to paint them black, and stuff. It was crazy. Absolutely crazy. There's nothing, purpose to it at all. That was about the worst. Some projects were, there were a few good ones. Smokejumping. Gosh, that was very popular, jumping into forest fires in parachutes. And, I think there was only about twenty-five or thirty in that unit, but there were six hundred people applied for it. And then, of course, as the war wore on, there were other opportunities. The great contribution of the CPS men during the war was in mental health. Service in mental hospitals was unpleasant enough, invisible enough, that Selective Service was glad to make units do—and there was a tremendous need. Mental healthcare in public institutions was an absolute disgrace, there, people were, who were doing the, the care for the, the sick were sometimes sadistic, often quite ill-trained. It was kind of a last-ditch kind of work, and the people they got were not good. And here they came in to, hundreds of young men, who, with, idealistic and concerned, nonviolent—

[zipper sound]

Stephen Cary:

—and they made a huge contribution to mental care, which is to this day. Organizations were founded which, to this day, undergird the me-, care of the mentally ill, and that was a CPS contribution. There were, there were, it, me-, me-, me-, guinea pig experiments. Men—starvation; experimentation in, in survival; various kinds of malaria and ill-, illness. These were very useful kinds of experiments, that were carried on them. The CPS men did that. So there were some useful things done by CPS men other than being a, stuck out in the woods.

00:30:50:00—00:31:43:00

Interviewer #2:

So, Steve, when, when people volunteered for smokejumping, or to be medical guinea pigs, these were pretty high-risk assignments. They—

Stephen Cary:

Mm.

Interviewer #2:

—were dangerous. So—

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

—do you think they did it just because they were bored, or do you think they did it because they wanted to prove that they wanted to do something hard—

Stephen Cary:

I think a lot of the motivation was, a) it was something useful, needed, a clear—

Interviewer #2:

Start over again, and say, I think a lot of motivation—

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—for volunteering—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah. OK.

Interviewer #2:

—for these dangerous—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah. I think a lot of motivation for volunteering for things like medical experiments and smokejumping came from a, the feeling that these were useful things. They were needed things. And also they were dangerous things, and the, the men were awfully eager to show that they weren't there because they were afraid to go to war. They had other reasons for, for feeling they couldn't fight. And so they were happy to do things which involved risk. And that's why they were so popular.

00:31:44:00—00:32:23:00

Interviewer #2:

And, and the other side of the coin is that, at, they were doing, they were eager to do that because the public perception was that it was, quote, cowardly.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah. Yeah, it was, it came out of the, we were, CPS men were interested in this kind of exp-, risk programs because of a popular perception that we really were cowards, you know. In, in the First World War, people had their house painted yellow, you know. Quakers, all of, had them painted yellow. And that kind of thing was a, a, an idea people had. And it was, it was because this was false, and the fellas were eager to prove it.

00:32:24:00—00:32:38:00

Interviewer #1:

Actually, would you explain that? What do you mean, their houses were painted yellow? The Quakers painted their own houses—

Interviewer #2:

No—

Stephen Cary:

No, not—people—

Interviewer #1:

Or other people came—

Stephen Cary:

—because—

Interviewer #1:

—threw yellow paint—

Stephen Cary:

—because they were COs and refusing to, that was more a phenomenon of the First World War. They would splash yellow paint over their houses, and so forth.

00:32:39:00—00:33:17:00

Interviewer #1:

Talk about the—I'm sorry. Talk about the kind of hostility you faced in, and, and—

Interviewer #2:

And who it came from.

Stephen Cary:

In—oh, yeah. In CPS, in the Second World War, by and large there wasn't much hostility. We were regarded by the general public as curiosities. We were regarded by the military as a [laughs], a bit off the wall. But basically, with some exceptions, we, we were not heavily]—

[plane passing overhead]

Interviewer #2:

Let's stop for a second, we've got a plane—

Interviewer #1:

There's another plane.

Interviewer #2:

This one's a real—

Interviewer #1:

Luckily not—

[cut]

00:33:18:00—00:35:20:00

Stephen Cary:

As far as the reaction of the, of the public to, to the Civilian Public Service men, basically we were perceived as a bit odd by the general population. The military guys saw us as curiosities. The first camp, for example, was right near Fort Meade, in, in, in Maryland. And the, the recruits where they were, would come over, look at, at these conchies, see who they were. And I remember, there was one guy who would, played football for the University of Pennsylvania—boy, he was, he was built, you know. He had muscles that rippled, and it was a warm day, he was stripped to the waist. He was bronze. And these soldiers came walking over, saying, there's one, there's one, right there, look at that guy. And the other guy says, oh my god, he said, I'd hate to have him hit me with a fistful of love. And [laughs] so they were, they were, we had a good time. We had no trouble with them, with the—the people we had trouble with, basically, were the veterans of the First War. And of course, not all them, but there were posts of veterans of foreign wars and legionnaires, who really saw themselves as the guardians of security, and these people were to be watched. And, if anybody were, you see a young woman coming into the camp, maybe a wife just, just, just to see her husband for dinner or something, it would be a house of, you know, nothing but a big den of, of prostitution in there. And they would put that in the newspaper, and it, they would stir up this kind of trouble. And it was very unpleasant. And so that we had to deal with that kind of a problem. Sometimes the wives in a work, in a nearby community, for example, would be fired when it was found out they were the wives of Civilian Public Service men. But there was always people in the community as, some of the ministers who would, who would reach out to them, so that I would say, I couldn't say that we were harshly dealt with by the public.

00:35:21:00—00:36:38:00

Interviewer #1:

Describe a little bit more about how people, what restrictions there were. People could have their wives come and live next, nearby—

Stephen Cary:

I—

Interviewer #1:

—they got leaves...

Stephen Cary:

Yeah—

Interviewer #1:

How, how did it work?

Stephen Cary:

Well, the terms under which Civilian Public Service people operated were pretty much patterned after what was possible, say, in a, in a, in a military training program. We had, we had furloughs, we had the same kind of, of leave arrangements that, we'd get a weekend pass—if you had any money to go anywhere, which a lot of the guys didn't. But our, our, our arrangements were quite similar. We had the same scarcity of holidays. I mean, we got Christmas and July Fourth and then you'd go off, so that, it, basically, it was, we were, we were in these camps, w-, do—you couldn't have your, your, your wife with you, couldn't have that. The director of the camp often could ha-, they needed a, somebody to be hostess, and he often, if he had a wife, which I didn't, you could have a wife there. But sometimes the wives would come and get jobs in the nearby town, and that was, that was acceptable. So that, that's the way it worked. I think it wasn't too different in the work, worked in the military.

00:36:39:00—00:36:42:00

Interviewer #1:

So they would see their wives on the weekends?

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #1:

But not—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, mm-hmm, yeah, hmm.

00:36:43:00—00:37:57:00

Interviewer #2:

So Steve, talk a little bit about, you know, when this dissatisfaction in the camps boil over? I know a lot of, lot of men left the camps, just walked out, and they knew they were gonna go to prison.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

Was that part of what you discussed there in those endless discussions about...

Stephen Cary:

Yeah. People would, weren't, would, would wonder whether they could make the compromise that was involved in accepting Alternative Service, and it was wrong for the churches to be doing this, and I shouldn't be here. So that sometimes they would walk out for that reason. Sometimes they would be willing to go to a government sponsored camp, and they would go and, and that was perfectly legal to do that. If you walked out, you were subject to going to jail. Sometimes people went the other way, that they felt this was kind of a futile gesture, and they would go into the military, maybe in the Medical Corps, something of that kind. So that you had guys walking out for, for becoming more absolute, and other guys walking out because they had felt they didn't want to sustain a 1-O position. So that, it wasn't a large number that did this, but there was always some, some movement in and out on that basis.

00:37:58:00—00:40:02:00

Interviewer #2:

And—

Interviewer #1:

The—

Interviewer #2:

—um—

Interviewer #1:

Go ahead.

Interviewer #2:

—then towards, towards the end of the war and the end of the CPS experience, talk a little bit about that kind of situation like you were faced in, in Elkton where you, where, it's just not working, it's not a viable option, the whole camp doesn't work. What does that mean? You had to go out and, and make some pep talks—

Stephen Cary:

Well, towards the end of the war, I was sent out from Big Flats to be the director at a camp at Elkton, Oregon, which had been the, the darling, had been the finest camp in the unit. But because it was fine, everybody sent them their problems, and by the time war was over [laughs], it, it was a camp where there was, the people who were willing to work were all out at this side camp at Bear Creek, which, a marvelous, marvelous wild, lovely place, and they were working. But everybody who was in the camp was either made up of people who were willing to work for the Quakers, but not the government—they'd be, cook in the kitchen. Or they were people who were refusing to work, and they were listed as RTW on the records, and were, they were subject to going to jail. Or they were these people who were these sick, sick quarters people. So that the base camp was made up of people who were on these very special categories. And of course, it was a very difficult, unpleasant kind of situation. And that's the thing I would never do again. I put down people RTW, and I was putting those people in jeopardy for jail, you see, and I would never do that again. That's one of the things that was wrong about the situation. So that, yes, the thing began to deteriorate rather badly. I used to be lectured by the government official at the, at Big Flats, telling me I didn't know how to handle men, you know. The way to deal with this problem when you, line the men up three feet across, right across the camp, and, and tell 'em to, you know, police the place, I mean, in, in half a night, all the trash out of the place. Because you can't do that with these guys. They won't do that. So I was amused as anyone, the Quakers got out of administration, to know that Milton Johnson had taken over, and in three days he had a strike.

00:40:03:00—00:40:42:00

Interviewer #2:

Hmm. So, I mean, the model in CPS is you can't just give an order, you have to have a discussion.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah. Ye- [laughs]. Things weren't done by fiat in CPS, I could tell you. That's right, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Um—

Interviewer #1:

Let me ask something.

Interviewer #2:

OK.

Interviewer #1:

In, in your writing, you said you've—

Camera Crew Member #2:

Say that.

Interviewer #1:

Hmm?

Interviewer #2:

Yes.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Do you want Steve to say that?

Interviewer #2:

Yes.

Interviewer #1:

Oh.

Interviewer #2:

Could you say that, that you couldn't just give an order, you had to...

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah. In, in, in Civilian Public Service, you, things weren't done by fiat. I was the camp director, but the last thing on earth I could do was to tell the guys exactly what to do. You had to figure out how you're gonna present it [laughs], be prepared to discuss it until the

cows came home, and maybe you'd get somewhere.

00:40:43:00—00:44:26:00

Interviewer #1:

Do you want to actually, oh, OK. I, this, what I was thinking—

Interviewer #2:

I...

Interviewer #1:

—it's a little...

Interviewer #2:

I have a postwar question, but go ahead.

Interviewer #1:

Well, actually, this may be both.

Interviewer #2:

All right.

Interviewer #1:

In the, in your writing you'd said you found some answers to the conflict between pacifism and fascism after CPS, and after your time in, in Europe after the war and after forty years—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—of Quaker service. What are some of those answers?

Interviewer #2:

The benefits of wisdom.

Interviewer #1:

Yes. [laughs]

Stephen Cary:

Well, I think that, one of the things I felt was, while I did not have an answer in 1939, I didn't think anybody else did, either, unless one thought that forty-million dead and the continent in ruins was an answer. But I thought that, the Friends had had an answer, and that if I took my picture of history in 1920 and not 19—

Interviewer #1:

We need to stop for a second.

Camera Crew Member #2:

What was that?

Interviewer #1:

I don't know, it's just something—

Interviewer #2:

It was, just crank the tables back there.

Interviewer #1:

We just—

Interviewer #2:

Go ahead, start, start over again.

Interviewer #1:

Start that again.

Interviewer #2:

In 1939, no one had an answer.

Stephen Cary:

I said no one had an answer in '39. I think that if I took, and it, for, to, for me, to be asked in 1939 what I should do, is a question that I feel is, is, is a, is an unfair question. Let me put the

scenario a different way. The Friends, in 1920, urged a compassionate peace. They, they were terribly against the vindictive peace of, of Versailles. And Friends throughout the Twenties were trying to minister to help the German people recover from the war. But the policy let them stew in their own juice. And out of that, that resentment, that, that soil of, Hitler emerged. And it's our view that if we had had a different approach to the, Germany after the, after the war, Hitler would never would never arisen. As in fact there was a generous peace given to the Germans in 1945, and look what happened. A rapprochement between France and Germany. My god, who would have thought that could happen? With any event, here was, so that when a person comes to me in 1939 and says, OK, you Quakers, what are you gonna do with Hitler? It would, let me give the scenario differently. Suppose the Quakers had had their way in 1920, and in 1939, or '38, Hitler had come up despite, and everybody was, was disarmed and so forth. I go to General Eisenhower, and I say, General, save us. He'd say, you made your bed, you Quakers, you've gotta lie in it. It would be as unfair to me to go to him in 1939, had I been running things, and tell him to solve the problem, as it was for him to come to me in 1939, when they had been operating it their way, and say, solve the problem. So that, I have a, a sense that there is an answer, but it has to be giv-, given and practiced before there's a chance that it can succeed. So that's the rationale I have. I could take no credit in '39 for efforts to prevent the war, but the Society of Friends could take credit. And I felt that as part of that tradition, and me with an obligation to carry that tradition forward, that I was justified in saying, no, I won't fight. But in doing that, I felt I had an lifelong obligation to justify my having been given that privilege, and it was a privilege. I didn't have to shoot, and I wasn't getting shot at, and I felt that if I accepted that, there was an obligation that went with it.

00:44:27:00—00:44:56:00

Interviewer #2:

Have, have you always felt that you had to prove something since then, or... I mean—

Stephen Cary:

I, it—

Interviewer #2:

—to yourself—

Stephen Cary:

It hasn't been the sense that I had to prove something. It was something that I wanted to do, that I found great delight and pleasure in doing. I've never felt that this was a lugubrious kind of burden. Nobody could've had a happier time than I've had. I mean, it's been a wonderful opportunity, so that I would say that I was extremely lucky to have been able to have that kind of life, yep.

00:44:57:00—00:46:25:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

Hmm.

Go ahead.

Interviewer #2:

I'm curious about something right in the, the war ended in—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Nineteen forty-five. The camps stayed open for quite a bit of time after the war, people stayed in prison after the war. At a certain point, the Friends and other churches pulled out—

Stephen Cary:

Oh, they pulled out.

Interviewer #2:

They felt it was un-appropriate.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Talk about being put in that position. The war's open, but you're still supposed to keep guys in camp.

Stephen Cary:

[burps] Well, the discharge policy for Civilian Public Service was modeled after the discharge policy for the military. You got certain points for how long you'd been in, and they

discharged people in, in proper sequence. So a lot of guys who went in to the war, in 1943 and '44, were held in longer than the guys who went in 1941 and '42. So there were a lot of men who were, continued to be in camps that that time, by that time they were administered by the government. They weren't administered by the churches, of—churches—

Interviewer #2:

Why did—

Stephen Cary:

—pulled out.

Interviewer #2:

Why did the churches pull out?

Stephen Cary:

Well, the churches pulled out as soon as the war was over. They felt that they weren't gonna be part of it anymore, they just said this, we've had it now, we, the divorce is gonna be final. We're gonna get out. And all three of the peace churches pulled out. And it was a, a residual period. I mean, the men were being discharged, but there was a period of some months when there were, guys were still there, yeah. But—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Stephen Cary:

—it was—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Stephen Cary:

—it was the same system as the military were using, it wasn't anything discriminatory.

00:46:26:00—00:48:34:00

Interviewer #1:

There's a couple little pick-up things. One is—

Interviewer #2:

OK.

Interviewer #1:

—about Bayard Rustin.

Interviewer #2:

Oh, there's a bunch of—

Interviewer #1:

OK.

Interviewer #2:

—different people. Let's do Bayard—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—and Max and—

Interviewer #1:

There's a few people, yeah. Can you, you told us about him, I, you told me about him before.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

If you could tell—

Stephen Cary:

Well, I, I had a, Bayard Rustin was not a person that I knew before the war much. He was gonna, with the, with the Friend-, with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. And it was after my period in Europe, I came home and didn't want to go back to business. I wanted to continue

working with the Friends Service Committee. And very soon I encountered Bayard, because we used Bayard in a lot of our programs. He was a superb orator. His, his platform, he was a genius, and he could get, kids were eating out of his hand. Wonderful, wonderful guy. Where I really got to know Bayard was when we were working together for ten days here at Haverford College, where he was a member of a group that was writing a pamphlet called *Speak Truth to Power*. The birth of that phrase, by the way, which now is kind of commonly used, speak truth to power, is now kind of in the language. That, that pamphlet found that title, and it was the first time it was, it was ever used. Anyway, he was drafting with, this pamphlet, with us, and we had about ten, twelve very able people, and Bayard was the one who could be a bridge between the contending forces. The biggest, how you gonna deal with the Soviet Union in this pamphlet, it was the, discussing the relevance of pacifism in the modern day. That was the pamphlet. And Bayard was the, was the one in the group that was the reconciler, and, and brilliant enough to deal with these, these flights of fancy. And he left, had to leave a day early. And he said to us, I want my name off the pamphlet. He said, as you know, I'm gay, and in those days when you were gay you were subject to prison, it was, it was a, you were, you were, you were persecuted. And he'd been in jail. And he said, my name will hurt it, and this is an important pam—

[cut]

[end of tape]

00:48:35:00—00:50:10:00

Interviewer #1:

Good enough, yeah?

Stephen Cary:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #1:

I'm going.

Interviewer #2:

Go ahead with Bayard.

Stephen Cary:

After the great contribution that Bayard had made, he said he had to leave early, and he asked us to leave his name off, because he said, I'm a, I'm gay, and it'll hurt sales. This is important. [burps] We said, we can't do that, it's ridiculous. You've been a key member of this group. Well, it was left there, [gulps] excuse me, it was left there overnight. Next morning, because

we, we, we'd had a wonderful, really expansive week together, we had another Quaker meeting at Haverford College. And we sat together, Bayard was about to leave—it was a farewell meeting for Bayard. And he rose, and you know, Bayard, Bayard had a professional voice. He was, had a tenor voice, it was absolutely magnificent. And he sang, he sang, started off by singing "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," and then he finished that. And then he sang, "There Is a Balm In Gilead that Makes the Whole World Free." And when he finished that the whole place was in tears, I was thinking—well, from that day to this, you see, Bayard was, was my brother, and from that day to this, I have never been able to look at, at, at, at homosexuality as a lifestyle.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Stephen Cary:

It's the way people are built. And Bayard Rustin was my brother, and Bayard Rustin was a magnificent human being. The fact that he was gay was irrelevant—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Stephen Cary:

—and anybody that sits and tells me that it's a sin, that Bayard, that Bayard is, is in, is in, is in an evil situation, I just, I just can't believe it. I've known too many people—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Stephen Cary:

—who were wonderful human beings, and therefore I, I just—Bayard was the first one that showed me that. That's why I love Bayard.

00:50:11:00—00:51:37:00

Interviewer #2:

But Bayard was this multi-dimensional person. He was, he was a Quaker, and a brilliant strategist, and a pacifist, and—

Stephen Cary:

He was all—

Interviewer #2:

—he was—

Stephen Cary:

—everything, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—he, he was in Montgomery in 1956 when Dr. King was not as experienced.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Do you think he made a difference then?

Stephen Cary:

Oh, sure he did. He was, Bayard, Bayard was his—

Interviewer #2:

Start off by—

Stephen Cary:

—personal secre-—

Interviewer #2:

—saying—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Yeah, start over.=+

Stephen Cary:

I think that Bayard Rustin had an important influence on Martin King, because he was his, kind of personal secretary. Bayard was the one who planned the great march, the "I have a dream" speech march. He was the one that put that, put that together. And he would've been, had he not been gay, he would have been as prominent in the civil rights movement as, as, as Abernathy and King and, and that crew, and Andy Young, and all those guys. But he, obviously, he, he was under wraps. He was, he was behind the scenes. But he was a, he was a giant. He, of course, became very much involved in labor union, he was very much involved with the, with the Pullman por-, car porters, very pro-Israel, and many of his pacifist friends, rather fell out with him because he was too mu-, he was very much in the—I never, he and, I never fought with Bayard. From beginning to end, I was a great friend of Bayard's. But he, he, he was much more prominent in labor circles than he was in pacifist circles at the end of his life.

00:51:38:00—00:52:37:00

Interviewer #1:

But there's, there was an issue here of something we've read here and there that, that King was armed at one point, because he was threatened, and he had armed guards around him—not he, not personally armed, but his guards were, and that when Bayard and Smiley, Glenn Smiley, went to Montgomery—

Stephen Cary:

I would, you know, I, I've, I, I don't believe that. It may be true, and I would not deny it. I, as far as I know it never happened, that he was—

Interviewer #2:

[unintelligible]

Stephen Cary:

—armed. Early on in the, when he was first emerging, the Friends Service Committee got a phone call from the R.J. Reynolds Foundation, said, if we give you the funds, will you take Dr. King to India for six weeks and have him exposed to the Gandhian tradition?

Interviewer #1:

Mm.

Stephen Cary:

And we said, great. And my great friend, Jim Bristol, and his wife Dee, were over there in,

in, in India, and they were the hosts for Bayar-, for Martin King and, and his wife for six weeks, through India. And this was part of the background for King's emerging, his growing up. Mm-hmm.

00:52:38:00—00:52:50:00

Interviewer #1:

What year was that?

Stephen Cary:

Oh, gosh, I would've guessed—I'd, I wouldn't want to say when it was. It was before Montgomery.

Interviewer #2:

Yeah.

Stephen Cary:

Before Montgomery—

Interviewer #2:

And—

Stephen Cary:

—it was before Montgomery.

Interviewer #2:

And the other—

Interviewer #1:

So—ahh, so he had much more than a cursory knowledge—

Interviewer #2:

The other—

Interviewer #1:

—going on there—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah—

Interviewer #2:

The other—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

00:52:51:00—00:53:59:00

Interviewer #2:

The other person that you, you were quite fond of, who also seemed to change his political philosophy over the years was your old friend Max Kampelman.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Talk a little bit about Max.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah. I knew Max Kampelman in a, in a, in Big Flats. And Max was very articulate, and very bright, thoughtful. And whenever we had a problem with the Legion, or with some hostile group in Corning or in, in Elmira, we'd always name Max to be one of our [laughs], one of our emissaries, 'cause Max could, you know, he could talk the left hind leg off a donkey. He was absolutely superb. And that's why I was extremely interested when, years later—I'd lost track with Max. We were good friends, and I liked Max—when he emerged as one of the principal negotiators of the arms treatment in, in the Reagan era. He was, he was a, he was a Reaganite. And I, I have not known Max since, but I, I understand why he was such a successful negotiator, that he was named to that very key post. So, I hope to see him again one of these days.

0:54:00:00—00:55:13:00

Interviewer #1:

Would you go back a little bit to what we were talking about, about the civil rights movement? We were hoping to make an argument that there's some thread between the COs of World War Two and their influence on the nonviolence—

Interviewer #2:

That in fact, they—

Interviewer #1:

—of the Civil—

Interviewer #2:

—they didn't shape the civil rights movement, but they, they brought something important to it.

Stephen Cary:

Well, I would've said that in the, at, as the thing began to emer-—you had the sit-ins in Greensboro, you had the Freedom Rides. Many of the people who participated in that were pacifists emerging out of the second wave of guys who'd been in jail, or guys who had been in CPS. So there was a, there was a, a, an, an influence in, in who was caught up with, with the injustice, and with, concerned about civi-, civil rights. You couldn't be four years of CPS and not recognize the relationship between segregation and all that went with it, and, and the relation between justice and peace. So that these people were part of the civil rights movement, the very beginning. And I think that, that there was that kind of invisible link, but a very genuine link between the, between the pacifists who emerged from the Second World War and leadership in the civil rights movement.

00:55:14:00-00:56:35:00

Interviewer #2:

And the, then, the, the, the next era, the next big point where pacifism gained a, a national audience was, was during Vietnam. Again...

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Did you, what role did your generation have in, in guiding, or influencing, or contributing to, to the, the...

Stephen Cary:

Oh, boy. [laughs] Oh man. Of course, the, as the war wore on, and the demonstrations became more and more large, and so forth, they, they were organized time and again by this same generation of, of, of young, of men who were now more mature, now. But, you know, people who were in the, in that cellar bait in Chicago, except Dave Dellinger, all those, these were, these were guys who came out of that Second World War, often prison fellas. So that the opposition to the Vietnam War was, was mobilized in many respects by these CPS graduates, or by prison graduates. And I myself was involved in all kinds of witnesses, partly out of my experience in Vietnam in 19-4 to '65, but basically, out of my feeling that that this war was absolutely impossible. So that, yeah, I would've said that there was a real, real connection between these two groups.

00:56:36:00—00:59:25:00

Interviewer #2:

Good. Good.

Interviewer #1:

Can you—

Interviewer #2:

Vietnam was, Vietnam was—1964 was really different than 1944, wasn't it?

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer #2:

What was different?

Stephen Cary:

And it—well, this, we're talking this, about, but the good war, the good war of nineteen, 1940 to 1945, whereas the Vietnam was a bad war. And there's a certain, there's a certain validity of that. I mean, ***the, the, the the problem of Hitler was infinitely more difficult than the problem of Vietnam for a, for a person who was, who was wondering about what to do.*** From my standpoint, Vietnam War was a tragedy from the very beginning. It was not necessary, it was unwinnable; it was a, a, a fiction to talk about South Vietnam as a separate

country. It was, the whole—well, I could go into it hours and hours. Whereas in, in, in, in 1940, there's no question that Hitler was a terrible problem, and it was much more difficult to be a CO in that war than it was to be a CO in the, in the next war. ***And*** you, you have, you, ***in a certain degree in 1941, you were a CO knowing that you didn't have another answer***, and you were driven to it by, you felt was a choice. Am I, this is fo-, if you were a Christian. Am I a follower of Jesus, this man who preached love, who, from our standp-, from the Quaker standpoint, was unequivocal. It was a categorical card. You couldn't compromise. You had to choose between I'm gonna be a follower of this man, or I'm not. And I, I don't, I don't know what the outcome is gonna be, and I don't have an answer, but I have to take this position. That's the base upon which you were a CO in the Second World War, whereas in Vietnam you had all kinds of reasons to be a CO. So there was a, it was a, I don't think it's a good war. No war is good. And if people saw what I saw in two years, as, you know, in overseeing Quaker relief work, I traveled from, you know, I was in Europe from the north cape, you see, all the way down to Italy, and into the Soviet border, and I, and I saw a continent in ruins. I saw, the normal, the whole structure of society broken down, people fending for themselves. There was no serv-, the governments weren't existing. And the, above everything else there were these millions of people who were just in misery, suffering, cold and hungry, homeless. And people scattered, their families gone, the, the ghetto of Warsaw—well, you know, when you saw it, you never, for, would forget it. Never. So that, to say that it was a good war, people may think it was a necessary war, given the circumstances, but it was a god-awful tragedy. God-awful tragedy.

00:59:26:00—01:01:08:00

Interviewer #1:

Take us back to how people thought about it at the time. When people say, the good war, now, is it easier to say that, is it easier to say that now than it was then? And—

Interviewer #2:

And have we romanticized it, in other words?

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, to a degree, we have. I think that the great—

Interviewer #2:

You need to say it, though.

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah. People, [stutters] is it, fact is that the people talk about the good war now, and was it, wha-, wha-, I'm trying to think whether people regarded it as a good war then. People saw it, I'm sure, as, as a, as a tragedy, but they saw no option. Well, we've gotta go in, we've gotta

do it, we've gotta, we've gotta beat this guy, we've gotta finish this off. And, you know, you can make this argument. So that I don't think people thought it was a good war, but I felt they thought it was an absolutely necessary war. And I don't think people were as aware then as they are now of what was left by that war, that forty million people died in Europe, most of that, many of 'em in Russia. Forty million - that's a lot of people. And the treasures of centuries gone forever, you know. Place in shambles. Now, I, I feel this because I saw it. I was walking around in it. I saw hungry kids, you know. I had to decide, are we gonna give the food to the kids or are we gonna give it to the people in the TB sanatorium, and nobody should make that decision. That's wrong to make that kind of decision, and yet you were constantly in that kind of, that kind of situation. And when you have that, you, you, you don't ever forget it. That's why I never went back to business, because I just, my whole life was caught up with it. We gotta have, not have this happen again.

01:01:09:00—01:01:59:00

Interviewer #1:

It hasn't, and it—

Interviewer #2:

How do you have, how do you make people understand that who haven't been through it, though? I mean, that's our problem as a filmmaker—

Interviewer #1:

That was a good job.

Interviewer #2:

—but it's, it's...

Stephen Cary:

Well, it's—

Interviewer #1:

[laughs]

Stephen Cary:

—keep putting this film out. And it's, I think it's, if you, if you, if you feel it yourself, you can make it come alive to other people. And that's what I've been trying to do, was to say, war is hell, and what's left behind is double hell. And nobody, I mean, to walk through the killing fields of Cambodia, my god, you, you're, you're in tears. I mean, that, the, the, the

utter wickedness and the terrible suffering of the, of the Cambodian people. My god, you know. Why am I in the peace movement? I can't be anywhere else, you see, when you see that kind of stuff.

01:02:00:00-01:02:10:00

[phone rings]

Interviewer #1:

It's interesting that you say, you know, in a way your, your experience could be corollary to, of that—

[phone beeps]

Interviewer #1:

—of—

Interviewer #2:

Yeah.

Stephen Cary:

There goes the telephone, my wife'll get it, I—

Interviewer #1:

—that's fine, we'll, everything—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—I'll ask the question while the phone's ringing.

Interviewer #2:

Keep going, yeah. Keep going.

[cut]

01:02:11:00—01:02:26:00

Interviewer #1:

—'cause they were soldiers, that you saw—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—the aftermath of—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah. That's right.

Interviewer #1:

—that you could, you know, share the kind of experience of having not, but not having been in combat—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—but the people who have been there can see it from their perspective.

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah, that's right.

Interviewer #2:

Do you think we're done?

Stephen Cary:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer #1:

I think, I think we're done. I think this—

Interviewer #2:

One last comment.

Interviewer #1:

—was fabulous. Yeah.

01:02:27:00-

Interviewer #2:

If [pause], you, you, you were an administrator, you went around the camps—

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #1:

Oh.

Interviewer #2:

—you saw—

Interviewer #1:

Lean back a little, Steve—why, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—a lot of the camp—

Stephen Cary:

OK.

Interviewer #2:

—when we were talking, you said, you said one of the, one of the strangest camps you every saw was at Waldport, Oregon.

Interviewer #1:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer #2:

What did, what did you see when you went to Waldport?

Interviewer #1:

I think that's a good question.

Stephen Cary:

Well, all CPS camps were a bit of a wild place, but I would've said Waldport had a level of chaos which, to, even to me, was, was difficult. I would like, I would at least liked to have been a camp director at Waldport. Everything was a mess. I mean, the beds weren't made, and the dishes were lying around, and the guys could care le-, they were artists, you know, and they were, you know. And, so that, it was the, it was the, it was the kind of disorganization, everybody was independent as a hog on ice. It was no, there was no kind of coherence to the camp. And I, I just thought it was the, the, the Brethren must be crazy, putting every ar-, all these—everybody had their artists. I mean, we had some wonderful artists at Petersham, you know, great guys. But man, they, they, they would-, didn't fit into the group, you know. They were the guys that would sit up on the hill smoking the cigarettes, so that, I loved 'em, but they weren't people who fit in with a group. They were all independent in the—you know, musicians, poets, and, and, artists, and—oh. Geez. Wonderful people, but not, put 'em all together.

01:03:54:00—01:05:12:00

Interviewer #1:

Actually, you did, that's a, something I wanted to ask you about, was nonconformity—

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #1:

—as a concept that, that influenced pacifism, and sort of, wha-, how, from the perspective of, of the Quaker nonconformity with mainstream values—

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—and also for other CPS—

Stephen Cary:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #1:

—people, and how, how nonconformity fits into this story. And do you consider yourself a nonconformist?

Stephen Cary:

Yeah, I do consider myself a non-, I consider myself a nonconformist. But I feel that a nonconformist needs to be able to [laughs], to relate to the conforming. And I've never, I've sought to be nonconformist in some of the ways I tried to act and live, but not to be nonconformist with, with funny dress, and, and the accoutrements of nonconformity, which I have no objection to, but, from my standpoint, makes you less effective. So I, I pose, I mean, I live, as, in a way, in many ways as the conformist, but I have a convict-, convictions which make me a nonconformist. And I think a, a lot of the leadership coming out of CPS took this position, although there were plenty that were nonconformist in, in, in, in, in lifestyles.

01:05:13:00—01:07:54:00

Interviewer #1:

Just one other thing... oh, that, that concept, I mentioned it to you before, the forlorn cause. Do you sometimes feel that pacifism is a forlorn cause?

Stephen Cary:

I've never thought of pacifism as a forlorn cause, never. I, I realize that pacifism is a utopian dream, but it, but central to Quaker thought, you see, is that human beings are redeemable, you see. It's an optimistic faith, in the sense that we believe that each person can know the will of God directly, that new fragments of truth are always available—we're very imp-, human beings are very imperfect, their perceptions of God's will, perceptions of, of how to live out the message of, of Jesus, are imperfect. But there's always the possibility of new insights coming along. Therefore, you, you, you, you think that, that the kingdom of God is realizable within history, and not beyond it. So that, to say that a, that pacifism, from my standpoint, is inherent in, in Christianity. It ought to be. And therefore I would never feel forlorn about it. I would recognize that we, we have a long way to go, we ain't there, and all I'm gonna do is to incrementally witness to it. But it, it is, it is not a remnant. It is not a remnant. It is a, it is a potential force, and every now and then you see the potential re-, when you had, when you had 50,000 people in, in, in Dresden, or in Manila, standing up in front of Marcos' tanks, you know, that was a witness of nonviolent resistance. And it shook the world. And one of my disappointments is that it happened in Dresden, it happened in

Warsaw, it happened in Vilnius, it happened in, in Manila, happened all over the place, and it, it changed, it brought down communism in the end. And I thought, at the time, that never again would people say that power only comes through the power, barrel of a gun. Power will come also from mass people saying no. And I hope that that lesson can, can become more significant, because I think it's tremendously powerful. So that, no, it's, it's not there, we got a long way to go, but potentially it's got an huge power.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah?

Interviewer #2:

Yeah.

[cut]

[end of interview]

01:07:54:00