Interview with Louis Markewich
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Interviewer: Judy Ehrlich, Rick Tejada-Flores
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Interview with Louis Markewich, conducted by Paradigm Productions on August 22, 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—00:00:31:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, so would you begin by introducing yourself?

Louis Markewich:

I'm Louis Markewich, I live in Houston, Texas. I served in the, in the Army with Lew Ayres in the 36th Evacuation Hospital, World War Two.

00:00:32:00—00:00:58:00

Interviewer #1:

What, what was Lew Ayres like? What, what was Lew Ayres like?

Louis Markewich:

Lew Ayres was a, a real fine human being. He, he was completely accepted by every man in our unit. He was a good soldier, and maybe a finer humanitarian.

00:00:59:00—00:03:09:00

Interviewer #1:

When you say he was a good soldier, he was a man who declared himself to be a conscientious objector. Did he think of himself as a soldier?

Louis Markewich:

Yes, I think he did.

Interviewer #1:

Could you—

Louis Markewich:

He was a, he, he went first to the CO camps—

Interviewer #1:

You, could we—

Louis Markewich:

—but—

Interviewer #1:

—start that again? I'm sorry. You need to say, I think he was—

Interviewer #2:

I think, Lew Ayres.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Louis Markewich:

He—

Interviewer #2:

—Lew Ayres.

Interviewer #1:

I think, I think, Lew Ayres, or Lew.

Louis Markewich:

Lew Ayres was a, a conscientious objector at first, and then they offered him a place in the Army, a noncombatant, which he accepted. And when he came over to San Anton', where he was stationed first—I think it's Camp Barkeley at that time. Tent city we called it. And I met him the next day when I enlisted and was sent the same place. We introduced ourselves and everything. But the area where we finally ended up was in the South Pacific, where there are no noncombatants. Everybody was a target, ex-specially [sic] against the Japanese. Course, ***the only difference between he and every other person in the unit, when we went overseas, he is the only one, didn't, didn't carry a weapon.*** He was very, see, clear about that. He, every other part of the job he was assigned to was done first class, even to a, when we got in combat areas at, that was actually still keeping on the fight, he actually took care of even Japanese soldiers that we captured that were wounded, which gives the character of the man, of what he believes in, and never failed. He did it all on his own, yet within the rules and regulations of the job we had.

00:03:10:00—00:03:57:00

Interviewer #2:

Now, Louis, when you first met him in San Anton', when you were in training together, and you found out that he was a pacifist, or a conscientious objector, or whatever, whatever, however he described it, and you hadn't seen how he was gonna operate in combat, were you worried that this might be someone who wouldn't be reliable, or who would let you down?

Louis Markewich:

On the contrary, when I went into the service the next day and met him at the tent, nothing was ever said about being a conscientious objector. He was just another soldier, like everybody else. Here was no Hollywood picture stars. He was just another soldier going through basic training like everybody else.

00:03:58:00—00:04:49:00

Interviewer #2:

But I mean, you're, you're thinking, this is a guy who's married to Ginger Rogers!

Louis Markewich:

Not me, because at that time, I went to movies, but they didn't mean anything at that time. When I enlisted in the Army, that's all that mattered. To go and do the job, get the war over with, and come back again. There was nothing ever discussed with Lew, his former wives, his pacifist, anything. It was all soldier. And I don't, thinking back—'course, it's a long, long time ago—I don't remember anybody in the Army—

[airplane overhead]

Louis Markewich:

—making any comments to any of those effects.

Interviewer #2:

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

Interviewer #1:

We've got a plane.

Interviewer #2:

—hold for the plane.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Airplane.

Interviewer #1:

We've got a plane.

Interviewer #2:

This—

[cut]

00:04:50:00—00:06:23:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

And...

Louis Markewich:

When we were all—

Interviewer #1:

Wait one sec.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Go ahead.

Louis Markewich:

When we were in basic training at Camp Barkeley, we got pretty close. We made our hikes together and camped together and all that. When we finally left, and were taken to California, in the, oh, in the—oh, Coxcomb Dairy. I just, I just thought about it. The desert. And, and we, we pitched our tents, dug our latrines—that included Lew—dug our latrines, and when we had off-time, Lew and I would walk to the base of the mountain and then climb up. Our discussion was mainly, mostly religious, but had nothing to do with conscientious objector anything. It just has to do with various religion. I was Hebrew, and we discussed a lot of that. He was interested in that. He was interested in the holidays, he was interested in the mea-, meaning of the holidays, and how we celebrated it. Well, he knew a lot of that before he even asked, because he was a student of religion. And that's what we did, talking up and down. I'd give out half-way up, and he'd keep going, and then I'd, waited for him till he came back, and we went back to base. And we did that quite often. And I enjoyed that, and I think he did, too.

00:06:24:00—00:07:43:00

Interviewer #1:

Would you say he was a spiritual person? Would you say he was a spiritual person?

Louis Markewich:

Mutual?

Interviewer #1:

Spiritual.

Louis Markewich:

Spiritual? Yes, very much so. He did tell me he was non-denominational; not particularly. But he leaned toward theosophy, that's, was religion, which is, which is mostly spiritual thinking, oh, different things that actually don't appear in the Bible, but they are discussed. Like, there are a lot of things in Judaism that are—even practices—it's not in the Bible, but it refers to it simply because—well, Boaz married Naomi. Why? It's not in the Bible. It's a story that the Bible tells because through that came the lineage of David, King David. So they had to show where, where David came from, through, of that romance, and that marriage, created all that. That's the things we discussed at different places—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

—in the mountains—

00:07:44:00—00:08:05:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

Uh—

Louis Markewich:

—as far as religion was concerned.

Interviewer #2:

Louis, and, I know no one was aware of him being a movie star and so forth, but when you, by the time you were in the Army, had you seen "All Quiet on the Western Front"? Talk a little bit about what that movie represented to you.

Interviewer #1:

Wait one sec.

Interviewer #2:

What are you guys doing?

Interviewer #1:

Close the door.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Shutting the door.

Interviewer #1:

The door. I just realized the door's open back there. Didn't want—

[door closes]

Interviewer #1:

—any outside noise. OK.

00:08:06:00-00:08:52:00

Interviewer #2:

So tell me a little bit about what, what "All Quiet on the Western Front" meant to you.

Louis Markewich:

Well, I saw the picture, "All Quiet on the Western Front". But you gotta understand, at that time I was a very, a teenager. I enjoyed it, I liked it, but I don't see the meaning, I didn't see the meaning then what I see now of it. As far as him being the star, yeah, but that's all it meant. It didn't mean any special favors, didn't mean any bow-towing and, you're just another soldier. That's all it meant. As far as the picture is concerned, I saw it then, but it don't mean, it didn't mean then what it means now.

00:08:53:00—00:09:18:00

Interviewer #2:

What does it mean to you now?

Louis Markewich:

War is hell, and there's no beauty in war, and there's no winner in war. You go through the motions, half-way political, and then you go through the fight, you do the job your country asks you to do for peace, and hope that it, nothing, doesn't happen again.

00:09:19:00—00:10:31:00

Interviewer #1:

OK. What, would you, or, go back a step. You, you described to me earlier the day you met Lew Ayres. Would you describe that again, the, your meeting with Lew Ayres, and realizing you were gonna share a—

Louis Markewich:

Well—

Interviewer #1:

—tent with him?

—when we, when we sent, I came in from Houston, and he came in a day before—

Interviewer #1:

Would you back up and use his name more? 'Cause we're gonna, we're gonna just use little pieces of this. Instead of saying, he, could you say Lew—

Louis Markewich:

Oh—

Interviewer #1:

—or—

Louis Markewich:

—yeah.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Louis Markewich:

You told me that. Lew Ayres came to Camp Barkeley a day before I came in from Houston, Texas, and when they processed me they sent me right to that tent that, he was there, Lew Ayres was the only one there at the time. I introduced myself, he introduced himself. At the beginning it didn't have much meaning. And the next few days I learned, oh, that's right, "All Quiet on the Western Front", and that. But I was young then. I was no hero-worshiper. And it was just start-getting on, that's all. And I'm happy to say it lasted for fifty-five years.

00:10:32:00—00:11:01:00

Interviewer #1:

Did you know about, was it, was it common, was it common knowledge enough at the time that you knew he, he was a conscientious objector when you met him, or was that, did that not—

Louis Markewich:

I read it in the paper that Lew Ayres, the actor in Hollywood, who was going to conscientious, the CC camp for conscientious objectors. That's all it meant, I just read it. It didn't have any effect or anything.

00:11:02:00—00:11:25:00

Interviewer #1:

And you don't remember, do you remember at the time, whether anyone talked about that, or said, was negative about him because of that, or what was the, what was common opinion about him?

Louis Markewich:

I, I, I, I think I do, but I don't really know, but I don't remember at this time, hearing any comment from anybody in the unit—

Interviewer #1:

What—

Louis Markewich:

—as to, as it kept growing and growing.

00:11:26:00—00:12:16:00

Interviewer #2:

No, but—

Interviewer #1:

No—

Interviewer #2:

—Louis—

Interviewer #1:

—I mean before.

Interviewer #2:

—in terms of, you know, when, when people would say, oh, he's a conscientious objector, in those days, a lot of, to a lot of people that had a real negative sound, because it somehow meant that you weren't gonna serve your country.

Louis Markewich:

If I may say, those comments that you heard were probably only civilians. I didn't hear one Army personnel s-, say anything like that. But it, probably civilians that were talking about, oh, Lew Ayres is here in San Anton'. Oh, he's that conscientious objector. That's baloney. The Ar-, soldiers never talked like that. You're here, you're a soldier, we gotta do j-, do a job. And that was, that's all I can remember about that, or maybe it's in my subconscious. I don't know.

00:12:17:00—00:12:45:00

Interviewer #2:

No, we've heard that from other soldiers, that they were saying that that was the kind of thing civilians said.

Louis Markewich:

The, right.

Interviewer #1:

But when you were a civilian, before you went in, at the time that Lew first went to camp—oh, you were already in the military.

Interviewer #2:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

But do you remember if anyone, do you remember negative stuff about him before you met him?

Louis Markewich:

No, I don't remember anything about Lew Ayres, at all.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

I was no hero-worshiper for movie stars.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

I was too young then.

00:12:46:00—00:14:51:00

Interviewer #2:

K.

Louis Markewich:

And—

Interviewer #2:

So, so Louis, let's move along to when you're shipping out, and you're actually in, in up to your ears, as the saying goes, and you, you and Lew were together for four years in a tent, in a foxhole.

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

What, what was it like living through that experience?

Interviewer #1:

And, and—

Louis Markewich:

Well—

Interviewer #1:

—would you remember to look at me?

Louis Markewich:

Huh?

Interviewer #1:

Look, look at me—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

—even if you're answering him. The only reason—

Louis Markewich:

—but the—

Interviewer #2:

He can't see me Judy, it doesn't matter.

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

No, oh, OK—no, his eyes are going—

Interviewer #2:

He can't—

Interviewer #1:

—a different—

Interviewer #2:

—he can't—

Interviewer #1:

—direction.

Interviewer #2:

—see me, I'm, I'm—

Interviewer #1:

OK. Let me just say one thing—

Interviewer #2:

Just—

Interviewer #1:

—which is, would you say what Rick said, in, in your own words, and, as you answer the question? Would you say what Rick said, about being in—

Interviewer #2:

You're—

Interviewer #1:

—a foxhole—

Interviewer #2:

—confusing him.

Interviewer #1:

—with him?

Interviewer #2:

You're confusing him.

Louis Markewich:

Oh, why I... well, I'll tell you, Lew and I were pretty close all through the wars, even to the landings. He would be behind me, or I would be behind him climbing down the ropes on the boat, dropping into the little boat going onshore, LCI. We would hang together. And of course, going in, lot of times [laughs] where I would be in front of him, and we co-, couldn't get to shore, you would have to jump in carrying your pack, and the weapon—I did. But I'm

so tall, I went under. So he in the back would grab my pack and pull me up until we got to shallower waters. So you can say he saved my life. [laughs] Anyway, when we got onshore, course, we found a spot and dug a hole. Let me make it clear. In our particular unit, we didn't, we dug the foxhole, but it wasn't a permanent thing. It was for maybe the first night. The next we'd, we'd fill up little pup tents by it, and, till we moved on further. But we, we're all together, we all did the same, we were all under the same conditions, and took it day by day.

00:14:52:00—00:16:07:00

Interviewer #1:

You told me something that really made an impression on me yesterday, that you slept on the ground for four years. Would you say that?

Louis Markewich:

Well, I, not literally. Oh, we never were, in the whole Army service, in what you would call a barracks. We were in a tent or outside, and that was—but like I said once before, you live under certain conditions so long, it becomes a normal way of life. And that, to us, that was the normal way of life. Taking your helmet, go to a creek, wash clothes, take a bath. There was nothing wrong in that. You wouldn't do that here. I, I was, one time, not too long ago, I went, my wi-, I went with my wife and daughter and her family on a camping trip in mid-Texa-, [stutters]. When I was laying on that ground during the night, I thought, what the hell am I doing here? I had four years of this. We're out doing thi-, I got a $100,000 home here and I'm sleeping on the ground? I said, that's got to be baloney. [laughs]

00:16:08:00—00:17:00:00

Interviewer #1:

[laughs] You—

Interviewer #2:

So, but—

Interviewer #1:

—choose that.

Interviewer #2:

—but Louis, it's not just—

Interviewer #1:

—music?

Interviewer #2:

—being uncomfortable. The big question in war—

Interviewer #1:

Are you hearing music?

Interviewer #2:

—is, are you even gonna survive? I mean, did you and Lew talk about whether you were gonna make it, or—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

—'cause you, your—

Louis Markewich:

We, we, didn't—

Interviewer #2:

—your unit took a lot of casualties, didn't it?

Louis Markewich:

Now, we didn't talk about making it. We saw the difference in going ashore, seeing American soldiers wounded, even dead, and went to our spot, and that's it. But we never talked about surviving. We never talk about getting wounded. But the, you, you go through it as though it was the thing to do, and there's nothing else. There's no such thing as civilian life after so long, and you do the things you have to do.

00:17:01:00—00:18:00:00

Interviewer #2:

But, but when you're in the middle of it, did you think you were gonna survive? What did you think personally—

Louis Markewich:

Oh, yeah, there, the survival, you're afraid, nobody's a hero, except when they do things out of control that they wouldn't normally do. But you see, at the time, it's the thing to do. Yeah, like coming in on the third wave of the Leyte, Philippines, return. Sure you're concerned with the shells going overhead from the American ships bombing the land. Yeah, you're concerned, but your concerned [sic] is in here, [taps chest] in you. And it, and the truth of the matter is, your concern is not the next guy running behind you, the next guy, the guy in front of you. You're concerned, is you. Get in there, do what you're supposed to do, and be safe.

00:18:01:00—00:18:58:00

Interviewer #1:

Talk about the health risk. See, you said that of the people in your unit, very few of them came home without disease, or—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah, there was a big number of casualties, they call casualties. But most of it, I would say eighty percent in our unit, was disease, because of the South Pacific, oriental diseases that this country, at that time, knew very little about. Very little. And at one time they sent a pathologist to the little town of Palo, where we were, six miles offshore, that, to catch all the d-, cats and dogs in the u-, in the, in the little town, so they can kill 'em, and examine 'em, and find out about the diseases, and there were a lot of diseases.

00:18:59:00—00:20:48:00

Interviewer #1:

Do you, do you want a drink of water? Do, do you want a drink of water?

Louis Markewich:

No, no.

Interviewer #1:

No, you OK? Would you say what you said, there were some, two things that you said to me before. One was, of the 240 people, only eight came back that didn't have some, tr—and did you mean tropical disease?

Louis Markewich:

Tropical.

Interviewer #1:

You said orient-—

Louis Markewich:

[stutters]

Interviewer #1:

—you said oriental disease.

Louis Markewich:

Tropica-, it was most-, mostly tropical. Malaria, dengue fever, and they had one—I don-, I don't hear it much here—elephantosis [sic], where, most, you saw it in that little town. Half the kids were running around with like, big, like, big hernia bulbs. That's called elephantosis. That's a tropical disease.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

And the, where, they were afraid we would get it, in wading, in moving or marching through rice paddies. We wore boots, of course. And one night they took us across—oh, this was before the Philippines. We were in New Guinea. They took us across to a little island offshore called Goodenough Island. And I just got that back. They put us on this boat like cattle. When we got there, it was nothing there but jungle. So they issued us mosquito netting that we put, that we slept in overnight, because of the dengue fever there. The next day they put us back on the boat and took us back. I don't know what that was all about, but that shows you what we'd, had to, had to wear mosquito head-, I, netting over our head all the time that we were there, and part of New Guinea.

00:20:49:00—00:22:48:00

Interviewer #1:

I just need you to say this, wha-, 'cause you still haven't said it. The number of people were, who were in your unit—

Louis Markewich:

Oh—

Interviewer #1:

—and how many were—

Louis Markewich:

—well—

Interviewer #1:

—came home with—

Louis Markewich:

—we had approximately 240 officers and men in the unit. I don't know the exact number. I know, I know once our cook got hit by stray bullet, killed him. That was our first fatal casualty. Stray bullet came out of the woods someplace. Anyway, I remember that. He was a Connecticut boy. And a lot of others just were sick. We lost, we lost about four people in one night. We dug holes under a house because the Army gave us notice, there was gonna be a Japanese attack across the bridge by a river in that little town, and for us to take cover, dig holes. Well, we did that, and we stayed, we stayed under that house in the hole all night long. It never happened. But four guys just went—lost their mind, just, just being under that kind of tension all the time. And they didn't know what they were gonna fight. We found out later that the Japanese were using civilian, native civilians as shields, and tried to cross the bridge, but they got 'em first—

Interviewer #1:

Hmm.

Louis Markewich:

—and they never got across the river.

00:22:29:00—00:23:27:00

Interviewer #1:

I, I still didn't get you to say the thing you said to me before, which was that only eight people came back without being ill, that hadn't gotten some tropical disea—

Louis Markewich:

It wa-, it was something like that—

Interviewer #1:

You—

Louis Markewich:

—without disease.

Interviewer #1:

—yeah, can you say something—

Louis Markewich:

But they never were evacuated. They were treated, and still k-, was at work.

Interviewer #1:

Right.

Louis Markewich:

See?

Interviewer #1:

I just need you to say it, though. Just—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah. I—

Interviewer #1:

—say those numbers—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—or some of 'em.

Louis Markewich:

Yeah, in our unit of 240 officers and men, I can only remember about eight of the personnel came through the whole war without any disease or wound. The rest of 'em—disease, mostly. And mostly, was treated on the premise [sic] and put back to work. But—like malaria's. Malaria don't go away. They got it, that's all. It may not be active, but they have it.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

And they probably still have if, if they're still living.

00:23:28:00—00:24:38:00

Interviewer #2:

So, Louis, during all that time, when you look back, when did you think, when did you and Lew feel like you were in the most danger? When did you think, oh, this is it, I'm not gonna make it? Were, were there moments like that for you that you can remember?

Louis Markewich:

The, the moment most dangerous was the return to Leyte. But I don't think ours was the same feeling of danger—

Interviewer #2:

Hmm.

Louis Markewich:

—as an infantryman—

Interviewer #2:

Yeah.

Louis Markewich:

—or as a seabee, who went in fir—the joke, the leading joke in, in New Guinea, was, they captured a Japanese soldier and ask [sic] him, who's the best jungle fighter, the Americans or the Aussies, or the Australians? Oh, no, no, no, American no good fighter, no good fighter. Why do you say that? Americans remove jungle first, then fight, referring to the seabees coming in with bulldozers, building roads right away, then the Army comes in. So it's, that's, that's the thinking.

00:24:39:00—00:25:23:00

Interviewer #2:

But, but even though you weren't in the first wave, it wasn't a picnic going into Leyte or those other landings, was it? I mean, was it—

Louis Markewich:

Well, yeah, they had all, there are units that are scheduled certain landings, mostly because of what they do. Like, headquarter unit officers, they don't need to be on there the first beach, they landed the last beach. So, they assigned you. And we happened to get assigned for the Leyte landing on the third wave. That's pretty fast. That's a, more, that's the first wave I've ever had that close in, or that early in, rather.

Interviewer #2:

Can you remember, but—

Camera Crew Member #2:

I need to change—

Interviewer #2:

—I mean—

Camera Crew Member #2:

—the tape.

Interviewer #2:

OK, I wanna, yeah, I wanna talk a little more about Leyte, specifically. We're gonna change tapes.

[cut]

[end of tape]

00:25:24:00—00:27:47:00

Interviewer #1:

—yes.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Rolling.

Interviewer #2:

OK, so, so, talk a little bit about, about that morning on Leyte. I assume it's real, real early in the morning when all this is happening?

Louis Markewich:

They—

Interviewer #2:

Tell us—

Louis Markewich:

—we—

Interviewer #2:

—set the scene.

Louis Markewich:

Well...

Interviewer #2:

Go ahead.

Louis Markewich:

They, they got us up the night before. They didn't want anybody under the deck. And we were all ready. They—and the interesting thing here, they started handing out free package of cigarettes while the Navy was bombarding the beach, and, and guess what package of cigarettes I got. Crawfin-Tupplees, [sic] Houston, Texas, congratulations, you're going back to the Philippines. It was like a letter from home. And here I was reading that package, and it was like a letter from home. And after about five hours of bombing, we loaded on the ship-, on the LCI, they took us in on the third wave, and we dug in until the whole deal was through. But you know, there was an interesting thing that happened. It, it ju-, it ha-, it just so happened on th-, about the third day on the beach, we see all the ships in the bay pulling out. What's going on? And they say, prepare for beach shelling. I didn't know what that meant,

prepare for beach shelling. So, we, we st-, stayed near our foxholes. And nothing really happened. And you know, it was, it was about thirty years later that I found out what happened, and I found it in Herman Wouk's book “War and Remembrance”. He had a chapter—he was in the Navy. He had a chapter in it concerning Leyte, about the Japanese navy almost going into Leyte b-, beach unchallenged. They would've wiped the whole beach out. But for some reason or other, the Japanese admiral stopped, turned around, and went looking for Halsey.

Interviewer #2:

Hmm.

Louis Markewich:

We didn't know that. I didn't know it until about thirty, reading that book, I found out the answer to that.

00:27:48:00—00:29:32:00

Interviewer #1:

Wow.

Interviewer #2:

But Louis, just talk a little bit more about that moment. The first wave's gone in, the second wave's gone in. Again, you know, you and I were talking about, people don't have any sense of what—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—what that's, what, what did it feel like when you, when they finally say, here we go. What, what was that like?

Louis Markewich:

Well, you, you, you hope and pray that you go in safe, nothing. When you g-, get in to shore, it's like kissing the ground. And you've, it, it's something that you ca-, you can't, I ca-, nobody can tell anybody else how they feel, or what goes through their mind, their subconscious mind. Fifty million things, your whole life goes through your mind, and what, where you came from. Of course, being in the service that long, the Army don't want you to think that way. They want you to think of one thing: get the ground, let's say, and hope—

course, s-, soldiers are expendable. You're just another percentage point, and if you keep that percentage point down, you're doing a good job. Period. As far as, as far as your fears, that's all within you. You cannot tell anybody how you feel, or they can't tell you how they feel, or I can't tell any civilian how they feel, or how it is going through that. It's just a, a, a subconscious moment for you. And you thank God for survival. Period. It's nothing you did. God's smiling upon you, that's all.

00:29:33:00—00:30:09:00

Interviewer #2:

I mean, what is it? It's, since, Leyt, Leyte was in '44?

Louis Markewich:

October twentieth, 1944.

Interviewer #2:

OK, so that's fifty-five, fifty-six years ago. You'd think that, you'd think you would've forgotten that stuff by now.

Louis Markewich:

It's in my mind, it's just as vivid now, looking at it in my mind, as it was then. I'm blessed to have my mind that way, or to have my health so can I enjoy my older years.

00:30:10:00—00:31:23:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm. Let me, let me ask you something. Lew, Lew Ayres and his, the letter that he wrote declaring his conscientious objection to the draft board, he said, [reads] so in my opinion—

[inaudible production discussion]

Interviewer #1:

—we will never stop wars until we individually cease fighting them, and that's what I propose to do. Do you feel like what he did, with you, in the military, as a noncombatant, was that still fighting a war? Did he end up, did, doing the opposite—

Louis Markewich:

He—

Interviewer #1:

—of what he said?

Louis Markewich:

—Lew felt the same way the first day till the last day he was out. He felt that way about any human being, living human being. He even, ***areas where they had Japanese wounded soldiers, he was the first one in the tent, to see what kinda help they needed, although they were the enemy, and although they would have killed him had then been able right now. But he didn't look at it that way. He saw it as, another human being needs help,*** and he was there to get him what kind of help he could.

00:31:24:00—00:32:38:00

Interviewer #1:

So do you think he separated out being support, being medical support to, that that wasn't fighting for him? Was that different? It wasn't—

Louis Markewich:

I don't—

Interviewer #1:

—support?

Louis Markewich:

—I don't think so. Knowing Lew then, I think he was just anxious to get home and to get back to his career. When we, when the war ended, the government put out a directive—anybody over, I think, of, thirty-eight, it was—that request, could request going home, and he did. And he worked in a, a Army s-, radio station till he got the next boat out, or next plane out. And he always told me that he had regretted that particular action, by leaving the unit when he did, and not going to Japan, as the Army of occupation. He said, it's like reading a book and not reading the last chapter—went all through the war, and just didn't finish it, although war was over.

00:32:39:00—00:33:33:00

Interviewer #1:

Could you describe your unit? What was a, what, you had to describe to me, it was a, sort of a precursor to the MASH units of later.

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

What was, what was the work of your unit?

Louis Markewich:

Our unit was a medical, immediate medical surgery, as close to the front lines you could get, rather, the way it used to be, they would take him in a litter-bearer, and take 'em days before a doctor would even see 'em. Well, this was a unit made up called the Evac-, 36th Evacuation Hospital, which later on, in the Korean wa-, army, war, became known as the MASH unit—mobile surgical hospital unit, you know. Ours was the forerunner, or the, it was being looked at, or how it was going to work. And we made it work, and they put it in regular in th-, in the Army. It was the original, the first.

00:33:34:00—00:34:42:00

Interviewer #1:

Describe it a little more. What does that mean, you were right up front?

Louis Markewich:

Well, we had nurses. And we were within, about fifty yard perimeter, the front line, and we set up our tents back there. And when a wounded soldier got to us, we tagged it, and saw what kind of injury it had, or wound. It was serious? Right away into the surgery. If it was something that can last until they got back to a station hospital, we'd do, we would evacuate 'em that way. But the, most of 'em were operated there, taken care of, and sent back to [unintelligible]. But the, it was, it was a—well, it, talking about MASH, Lew, then me, were the original, what in the "M*A*S*H" series, was known as Radar in the office, assistant to the colonel. So, you're looking at the original Radar of MASH unit, but at that time it was 36th Evacuation Hospital.

00:34:43:00—00:35:55:00

Interviewer #1:

Mean, could you describe that scene that we see in the "Life" magazine picture, the one in the hospital—

Louis Markewich:

Oh.

Interviewer #1:

—and the—

Louis Markewich:

When we got to Palo, we took over a 200 year-old cathedral, and we put all the cots and bed in-between the aisles of the, in the seats of the local people, and that's where wounded were, was taken. And we had a tent on the side of the cathedral that had, whatever extra wounded we'd have, even, one where we've, talked about the Japanese prisoners, they were put in one, too, and taken care of. But all day long, there would be local people going, coming in to say Mass. Lew, and I, and the cameraman for "Life" magazine put our tent up in the lofts of the cathedral, and we stayed there about three weeks, listening to the Catholic hymns, even Christmas Eve, midnight service. We, we, we watched one of those, and it was a, it was a break in the war. It was back to normal.

00:35:56:00—00:36:38:00

Interviewer #2:

But you were still caring for people? The, the, your work still went on?

Louis Markewich:

Yeah, oh, yeah, that never stopped. That's twenty-four hours a day, see.

Interviewer #1:

Was that not clear? The floor was full of people on cots—

Camera Crew Member #2:

No, it's all right.

Interviewer #2:

It's—

Interviewer #1:

Maybe—

Interviewer #2:

—it's—

Interviewer #1:

—you could explain it a little more that you turned it into a hospital, sort of, that's—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah, we, a hospital ward, where we, the wounded were taken after they went into surgery, and put there on a cot until they could find evacuation to Japan, or, or to the station hospitals, where they ha-, where they, where they were. But, let me get my thoughts together. He—

00:36:39:00—00:38:10:00

Interviewer #2:

Well, let's, let's—

Interviewer #1:

I just—

Interviewer #2:

—move on a little bit. You, that was towards the end of the war, right? That was in '44, when you're there.

Louis Markewich:

Yeah, that was—

Interviewer #2:

—and, and you, and at that point, or pretty soon after, you and everybody in the unit is told to prepare to head for Japan. You know you're going to Japan, right?

Louis Markewich:

That, not, not then.

Interviewer #1:

No, it's—

Interviewer #2:

Not, so—

Louis Markewich:

Not then.

Interviewer #2:

—it's later?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah—

Louis Markewich:

We—

Interviewer #1:

—it's six months later.

Louis Markewich:

—when we left—

Interviewer #2:

Mm.

Louis Markewich:

—Palo—

Interviewer #2:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

—that 200th year-old cathedral—

Interviewer #2:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

—we got on a boat and went to San Fernando, Luzon—

Interviewer #2:

Oh, really.

Louis Markewich:

—the main island—

Interviewer #2:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

—of the Philippines. From there, we went down into Bataan, Corregidor, and back to Manila—

Interviewer #2:

Mm.

Louis Markewich:

—where paratroopers took over and fought. And we were there, and a lot of errors were made, and a lot of victories, and [stutters]—well, I'll boil it down to one thing. Very serious war against prominent aggressors, you bet on the one that makes the least mistakes. Not the one that's better, the one that makes the least mistakes. We made 'em at the beginning of the war, they made 'em at the end of the war. We won.

Interviewer #2:

Mm.

Interviewer #1:

Hmm.

Interviewer #2:

But—

Interviewer #1:

Do you—

Louis Markewich:

But I'm not discounting the fact that brave soldiers and good fighters, and—but it's, that's the way it turned out.

00:38:11:00—00:38:27:00

Interviewer #1:

Just a little point of information. Did Eugene Smith, did the photographer stay with you that whole time?

Louis Markewich:

He—

Interviewer #1:

He—

Louis Markewich:

—stayed—

Interviewer #1:

He—

Interviewer #1:

—stayed—

Louis Markewich:

—every time we, as long as we were at Palo. When we left, he went in another direction.

Interviewer #2:

Mm.

Interviewer #1:

But he—

Louis Markewich:

Went someplace else.

Interviewer #1:

But he was there for three weeks with you—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah—

Interviewer #1:

—doing—

Louis Markewich:

—yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—that—

Interviewer #2:

But—

Interviewer #1:

—that kind of, that—

00:38:28:00—00:40:10:00

Interviewer #2:

—I guess—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—I guess, Louis, I'm interested in that moment, I guess, at the end of the Philippine

campaign where everybody either hears the rumors or gets the orders that you're getting prepared for the invasion, and what that felt like, to know that you were gonna have to—

Louis Markewich:

Well—

Interviewer #2:

—head for—

Louis Markewich:

—we—

Interviewer #2:

—Japan.

Louis Markewich:

—we actually didn't—

Interviewer #1:

[inaudible]

Louis Markewich:

—feel, when we were staging in northern Philippines, feel, we didn't think in terms of Japan. We thought, the only place left, next to Japan, was Taiwan, and we said Formosa. We thought that was gonna be what we were staging for. But then when the war ended, they told us what it was, that on ni-, November the first, 1945, was going to be the actual invasion of Japan. And you know, they told us, we went into that place and, when the war ended. It was called Wakayama beach.

Interviewer #2:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

And they inspected the defenses, and they said, had we had to go in fighting, we'd have had sixty percent casualties. It was that way. Under the water, over the water. Every place. So dropping the bomb was the best idea they had in the war, 'cause 1,000,000 guys were saved. And you asked any soldier, I'm glad they dropped the w-, bomb. Civilians go around, oh,

they shouldn't have dropped the bomb. Yea-, sure, while you're over here in Houston, Texas, or in the, San Francisco, sure they shouldn't have dropped the bomb.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

You know what I mean?

00:40:10:00—00:40:40:00

Interviewer #2:

Yeah. Thank you.

Interviewer #1:

Was there any, wa-, was there ever any jokes about Dr. Kildare, serving as a medic, Lew Ayres on the job?

Louis Markewich:

[shakes head]

Interviewer #1:

People didn't call—'cause I noticed on some of the articles, people saying that—

Louis Markewich:

No, they didn't, the—

Interviewer #1:

—Dr. Kildare, or—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah, they, soldiers saw reporters interviewing him, I think. We never saw the writte-, written article. But nobody talked about that here.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

It goes back again, only the people not involved talked about it.

00:40:41:00—00:41:09:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm. So he wasn't known as Dr.—'cause at the—

Louis Markewich:

No.

—objector camp, they did mention—

Louis Markewich:

No.

Interviewer #1:

So there wasn't any—

Louis Markewich:

No, he, he, Lew did a beautiful job in the assignments he was given, and he did it with all his heart. And the, there was no doubt that he was in it to see the war end, and that's it. His primary concern, to see that the war ended any way he could.

00:41:10:00—00:41:50:00

Interviewer #1:

He was, he was older than you—

Louis Markewich:

Yes.

Interviewer #1:

—and older than most of the people in your unit?

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

And was he unusual in other ways? How would you describe—could you say he was older than you by an—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah. He was older, but he didn't act older. He—course, you got to think, people, people act according to the experiences they had, and the, he had no, no reason to, to be any different than he is, or was. He was a beautiful man, like I said.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

A very good humanitarian.

00:41:51:00—00:42:28:00

Interviewer #2:

Was he the kind of guy that would try to, if, if he knew that you saw things a different way, would he try and convince you of his position, or—

Louis Markewich:

No.

Interviewer #2:

—or argue with you, or...

Louis Markewich:

No, Lew Ayres would never try and turn anybody, or convert anybody. He talked, if it was something he really was interested, he would wanna hear your version, your side. And, but as far as trying to convert or change anybody, that wasn't him at all, and completely opposite to what his personality was.

00:42:29:00—00:43:50:00

Interviewer #1:

He later went on and became very ecumenical in his interests, and did this, that documentary on—

Interviewer #2:

“Altars”—

Interviewer #1:

—“Altars”—

Interviewer #2:

—“of the World”.

Interviewer #1:

—“the World”, of the, about world religion. Would you de-, would, was that an interest for him early on, and was that something he talked—

Louis Markewich:

Oh—

Interviewer #1:

—about?

Louis Markewich:

—yeah. He had interests all along in that. In fact, when he got out of the service, after resuming his career, Lew took about two years off, took a cameraman and traveled the world, filming the world's great seven or eight religions. It took him two years to do it, one year to edit it, and it's still on tape, or cassette, called “Altars of the World”. It's a beautiful piece of work. He used to go lecture with it when he was speaking, and now I think it's in the family, that they're trying to promote it. To anybody interested in something like that, contact, contact his agent in, in California.

00:43:51:00—00:45:39:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

So, tell me something, Louis. When you, you, apart from talking to us, when you talk to younger people, people that might be your children's age, and try to explain to them what, what that whole war was like, how, how, what do you, what do you think the most important thing to tell 'em is? How do you try and make it make sense to them?

Louis Markewich:

In the few times that I've talked to people growing up that are not too familiar, World War One—World War Two, it's hard to really define any particular thing except, there's no glamour in war. Nobody wins wars. They're, they're ended, but nobody wins it. You lose a lot of lives simply for nothing. And history teaches us we don't learn from history. But talking specifically about World War Two, the younger people, they listen. I don't know how much they understand or grasp. They're polite, they listen, but the next day I don't think they remember it or talk about it, because they're not, it's, it's not something that happened to them, or family—maybe their grandfather or grandmother, whatever. But it's not very effective now, fifty-five years later, that you tell people of your experience. Oh, that's bad. That's all it meant. So, I don't do that much. I don't do that much at all, especially—

Interviewer #2:

'Cause it doesn't—

Louis Markewich:

—to the younger people.

Interviewer #2:

It doesn't work, right?

Louis Markewich:

No. No.

00:45:40:00—00:45:54:00

Interviewer #2:

So, so does that mean that they're stuck in the same thing, and they're gonna have to go through what you went through?

Louis Markewich:

Well, you can tell 'em that, but they won't believe it. It doe-, you, can't happen here, that's

crazy.

Interviewer #1:

Hmm.

Louis Markewich:

But every war is crazy.

00:45:55:00—00:47:25:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm. Did you learn anything from Lew Ayres? Did you—

Louis Markewich:

Did I learn...

Interviewer #1:

—did you learn anything from Lew Ayres?

Louis Markewich:

Oh, I learned plenty from Lew Ayres. I learned about being a human being, being respectful no matter who the person is; being respectful, what they believe; and... well, I guess my heritage goes deeper down than my just saying something. Judaism is my heritage. Judaism tells you, particularly a rabbi, if somebody comes to your office and asks to be converted to Hebrew, it's his first job to talk him out of it. When he talks to him, says, go home, listen through what I've said. If you still demand it, I'm obligated to give you a try. That's just, from Lew, I learned so many things put together that had all fit in to what I believed before, and [rustling sound] made sense. He made it that simple. It made sense.

00:47:26:00—00:47:43:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

He touched the microphone there at the end of the...

Interviewer #1:

Could you, you touched the microphone at the end, so we can't use it. Can you just say the, say—

Louis Markewich:

No, I—hands were...

Interviewer #1:

Just, can you just say that again, 'cause when you touched the mic it, it makes a—

Louis Markewich:

Oh, I did-, ah...

Interviewer #2:

That's OK.

Louis Markewich:

I don't remember what I said.

00:47:44:00—00:48:33:00

Interviewer #1:

You were just saying that it fit—well, let, let me, let me just, let me just expand on that a little bit. Did, do you think that, that people in this country learned something from Lew Ayres?

Louis Markewich:

Well, I, I don't know about that. If they would read what he truly believes in, Lew's words would hit 'em right in the heart, hit 'em right where, where they breathe. Like with me, he, he ch-, he changed my whole thinking in the right direction, although I was already in the right direction as far as I was concerned. But he made it see, made me see it more clearly on the different things he talked about.

00:48:34:00—00:49:02:00

Interviewer #1:

So do we have—

Interviewer #2:

[inaudible]

Interviewer #1:

—do you think he influenced other people as well? Did you, did you get the sense he influenced other people around him as well?

Louis Markewich:

No, not really. Not outwardly, which showed. They—like I said, he was just one of the guys, and that's it.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

See? You could, it just happens that way with me, since I have continued our friendship for the last fifty-five years.

00:49:03:00—00:50:22:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Would you explain something? He was a conscientious objector who was a medic, but most medics were not conscientious—

Louis Markewich:

No.

Interviewer #1:

—ob-, could you explain that?

Louis Markewich:

No. [stutters] Hardly any medics, that I know of, objected like that. Not that I kn-, he was the only one publicly acknowledged that, but it had no effect on his actions or his work. There were two different Medical Corps, actually. Same Army, but two different Medical Corps, in this respect.

Interviewer #1:

Mm.

Louis Markewich:

In Europe, the Medical corps ran around with red cross signs, and they were all pretty well free, except near the end of the war, when Germany got belligerent. In the Pacific, there was no such thing as a Red Cross, because that was targets. The Japanese used that as targets to get anybody in there, wound 'em, when he came for help, kill them, whatever it is. They were used. Therefore, as far as noncombatant, there's no such thing in the Pacific as noncombatant.

00:50:23:00—00:51:07:00

Interviewer #2:

Well, but you were saying that Lew was the only guy who didn't wear a gun, but....

Louis Markewich:

Yes. In our unit, we all carri-, carried weapons—either off, off the combat field, or on. But Lew, Lew Ayres never carried an offensive weapon—that's gun, rifle, knife, anything. He did his job, it got done. We won the war, with or without a gun. [laughs]

Interviewer #1:

But that wasn't true of anybody else in the unit? He was the only one in the unit who was unarmed?

Louis Markewich:

As far as I know, yeah, that, that's it. He was the only one that—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

—never carried a weapon.

00:51:08:00—00:52:29:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

Well, I think, maybe that's all?

Interviewer #1:

Mm, but, it was something—oh.

Interviewer #2:

I mean, let me ask you a general question. I know, I know Lew is a remarkable guy, but—so it's hard to generalize about conscientious objectors, because Lew was the only one you met—but—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

—how does it strike you? Does that strike you the, that, the position that since wars are bad, I just don't wanna fight. Does that strike you as naive, or, or sort of off—

Louis Markewich:

Well, I—

Interviewer #2:

—the mark somehow?

Louis Markewich:

—look. I'm, I, I'm, I, I'm no expert on this, and I didn't, knew, know Lew before the war. But you've got to understand it, it had a lot of deeper feeling that, I don't like the war, I'm not gonna fight. It had a more, deeper religious feeling in his belief. And I mean, I mean, people say they believe, but they don't really true believe. He truly believed. He knows the meaning of, of noncombatant, or war. And I gotta, my personal feeling is, I gotta have a co, complete belief that that picture, "All Quiet on the Western Front", had a profound effect on him, and what he believed, and what war is all about.

00:52:30:00—00:53:28:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm. Yeah, I find this really interesting. I don't know exactly what the question about it is, but he was in a movie as a pacifist, and then he was in a movie as a doctor, and then he became a medic who was a noncombatant. It seems like he combined—

Interviewer #2:

His life is —

Interviewer #1:

—his major—

Interviewer #2:

—like—

Interviewer #1:

—roles in his films—

Interviewer #2:

—into his life.

Interviewer #1:

—into his life.

Louis Markewich:

Yeah, every-, every-, everything he did or does—

[beeping]

Louis Markewich:

—seems to be well-written for him particularly. You take the picture “Johnny Belinda” he made with Jane Wyman—she won the Academy Award. Nobody else could've been that d-, doctor in that picture, because that was perfect. That was him personified. Every personality about that character was Lew Ayres, and he made it that way. That's, that made her look good, and she won the Academy Award.

00:53:29:00—00:53:57:00

Interviewer #1:

And was that doctor, was he Doctor Kildare?

Interviewer #2:

No, no.

Louis Markewich:

No.

Interviewer #2:

He was a different—

Interviewer #1:

No, I know, but was Lew Ayres, Doctor Kildare?

Louis Markewich:

Oh, yeah. He, that was him, of course. It was his feelings inside. Kildare played a passionate doctor, and believing doctor, and that was Lew all the way through. Yes.

Interviewer #2:

And we have just enough to get some tone on the end of this tape.

Interviewer #1:

I think we're done.

[cut]

[end of tape]

00:53:58:00—00:55:26:00

Interviewer #1:

—option of being a conscientious objector.

Louis Markewich:

I didn't know Lew Ayres before the Army, before the thing. I don't think that Lew Ayres regretted taking conscientious objectors—

Camera Crew Member #2:

Oh, the charger.

Louis Markewich:

—out—

Interviewer #2:

Vicente, turn that off.

Louis Markewich:

—the service—

Interviewer #1:

—hold—

Interviewer #2:

Stop.

Interviewer #1:

—hold on one second.

Interviewer #2:

The, the battery charger is—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, that's noisy. I'm sorry, start, you're gonna have to start again.

Interviewer #2:

Has to go in another room, oh, OK. Go ahead, start—

Camera Crew Member #2:

Sorry.

Louis Markewich:

I don't object—oh, [stutters], I didn't know Lew Ayres before the war, but I don't think he objected to taking the conscientious objector's stance. But the thing he, I felt, he did, or could look in his eyes and see, he felt badly about how it affected his friendship with the people at home, his friends and coworkers. That bothered him more than being a conscientious objector, because he knows, although he believed that way, he's giving full time to the United

States Army, so he knew he was fulfilling that obligation to the country. But he didn't know how to correct the difference, which was his friends and his coworkers.

Interviewer #3:

I—

Interviewer #1:

So—

Interviewer #3:

I'd like to ask a—

Interviewer #1:

Yes.

—a clarif-—

[cut]

00:55:27:00—00:55:53:00

Interviewer #1:

—but were the friends and coworkers disappointed that he had declared himself a conscientious objector, or that he was in the Army?

Louis Markewich:

Hardly, I, I heard nothing like that in all the years we were in the service together, whether they knew it before they came in the Army or not, I don't know. But none of the personnel that even lived in the same tent with us ever said anything concerning that particular action.

00:55:54:00—00:56:32:00

Interviewer #1:

But the people that you said he was concerned about having hurt?

Louis Markewich:

Oh, his—

Interviewer #1:

His coworkers—

Louis Markewich:

—his—

Interviewer #1:

—did—

Louis Markewich:

—he—

Interviewer #1:

—what, what did they object to? Or wha-, what, how, in what way were they hurt, did he feel they were hurt?

Louis Markewich:

I, I don't know how they felt, or how much of a hold they added against him. But as far as Lew was concerned, anybody that was disappointed in something he, that he did, concerned him. And that was, that was how he felt. I, I re-, he didn't tell me that, but I read it in his eyes.

00:56:33:00—00:57:19:00

Interviewer #1:

But people were very disappointed when he took that position, right?

Louis Markewich:

In the motion picture industry, yeah.

Interviewer #1:

Could you say, say, use his—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah. Lew Ayres got, got a lot of bad press, and the motion picture industry as such was disappointed in action—probably mostly business, not personal, because at that time he was a, a big star, big-name star, and he drew box office. And when they turned it down, over, that

hurt him in the business. It's like anybody else. It's any kind of business that gets shut out. It hurts.

00:57:20:00—00:58:20:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

That's my—

Interviewer #1:

You—

Camera Crew Member :#1

—fault [coughs]

Interviewer #1:

—never said what he did at that time. If you could, could you say that whole thing again, but say when he said he was a conscientious objector?

Louis Markewich:

When he said, when Lew Ayres said he was gonna be a conscientious objector before he got drafted, the whole motion picture industry sort of leaped off the dying horse, just to save the industry and to take the so-called bad name away from the industry. And that's what he, hurt Lew more than anything else, by his, his work, or his contract deserted him at the, at that time. They didn't, they didn't s-, tell all the good things about him, only the one bad thing. You know, you know what they say. You can do a thousand good things and it's fine; you do one bad thing, and that's it, you're through.

00:58:21:00—00:58:42:00

Interviewer #1:

S-, so, declaring himself a pacifist, a conscientious objector, was considered a very bad thing, is that what you're saying? In, in—

Louis Markewich:

It was considered—

Interviewer #1:

—by Hollywood?

Louis Markewich:

—yeah, especially in these patriotic weeks of the war, the first few patriotic weeks of the war. He was a, an outcast, until he went into the medical corps.

00:58:43:00—01:00:13:00

Interviewer #1:

Could you do—

Interviewer #2:

So—

Interviewer #1:

—that—

Interviewer #2:

—actually—

Interviewer #1:

—one, there was something about—

Interviewer #2:

—actually—

Interviewer #1:

—that I just feel like we need—

Interviewer #2:

No, no that—

Interviewer #1:

—to do that—

Interviewer #2:

—was fine—

Interviewer #1:

—one more time—

Interviewer #2:

—that was fine.

Interviewer #1:

Was it, no—

Interviewer #2:

It was fine.

Interviewer #1:

—there—

Interviewer #2:

—that was fine. But they—

Interviewer #1:

I don't, I don't think so. I think, if you, wouldn't it, would you mind, Louis—

Interviewer #3:

[unintelligible]

Interviewer #1:

—just doing it one more time? 'Cause I just feel like it didn't quite, it was—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—just more concisely, just...

Louis Markewich:

What do, what more you want in it?

Interviewer #1:

Just that, just—

Interviewer #2:

Judy—

Interviewer #1:

—just do the whole thing a—

Louis Markewich:

My lord.

Interviewer #1:

—little more concisely.

Louis Markewich:

When Lew Ayres decided to take conscientious objectors [sic] before being drafted, it was a, oh, the conspiracy of the whole motion picture industry jumping off his back, turning him down, and just ostracizing him. And this is is what hurt Lew more than anything—not being a conscience objector, 'cause he believed in that, but the industry leaving him high and dry—even, even in, in spite of that he'd made so many good movies, and so many hit movies, and he was a star with MGM at that time. But when they dropped him, it hurt, it, li-, it, like, he's human. Anybody, it'll hurt. And he just went into with himself about it, and just went on what he decided, until the Army offered him the noncombatant role as a medic in the Army, which, he took 'em up.

01:00:14:00—01:02:31:00

Interviewer #1:

[whispered] Good.

Interviewer #2:

Louis—

Interviewer #1:

Thank you.

Interviewer #2:

—you were saying, especially given, you know, the fact that the studios got so annoyed at him just because of how patriotic everyone was, t-, talk a little bit about what the mood of the country was like, about how people felt after Pearl Harbor.

Louis Markewich:

Well, Lew's, Lew's situation happened to come up at a very particular patriotic time of American history, because the war, war was on almost, about a year, and everybody was looking for heroes, everybody was looking for patriotic—they were having rallies, bond drives, everything. And along comes, the one negative thing in the patriotic history, is a movie star, a famous movie star, taking a conscientious objector ride. Well, that's, it could have been anybody, but it just hit the wrong, the timing was bad to take that kind of action. I don't know if something like this would have happened if they have taken, during Vietnam, when there was half and half. It, it wouldn't have had this kind of tumult. But it was World War Two beginning against the German Nazis and the Japanese. Everybody going, worked twenty-four hours to be victorious. And that was the patriotic to do. Remember all the women went to work. That was the patriotic thing to do. His story was the only negative among any front page in the country. And it hit hard. It had the, had the effect the newspaper wanted, but it didn't have much of the effect that Lew wanted. Wanted understanding, which he never got. All he got was the, the conscientious objector against the war. Everybody's against war, but they don't do it that way.

01:02:32:00—01:04:27:00

Interviewer #2:

I, I mean, that's one of the things that's so different now. You, you said that the difference between that and Vietnam, people don't realize how unified the country was.

Louis Markewich:

That—

Interviewer #2:

Talk about that a little bit.

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—how...

Louis Markewich:

Yeah, the, that's right. This whole country was all one—men, women, teenagers, were all one. Every, there were, there were people wai-, waiting in the draft that couldn't wait to get called, 'cause that was the patriotic thing to do. Well, I was on the draft, but the didn't call me for a long time, [touches microphone] so I enlisted. Oh...

Interviewer #1:

Do that again.

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

Hmm.

Louis Markewich:

I was on, in the draft, but they hadn't called me for a long time. All my friends were gone already, so I enlisted and went in. I wasn't that, I'm not a hero. I don't want to go shoot up the whole world. I didn't go in there for that, anyway. But anyway, at that partic-, but to show you how unified the country was, that the women were working in the factories, the, the men, the kids, the boys, everybody, no matter how menial your job was at that time, it was paying the cost of the war, and that was part of it. And Lew Ayres comes out with conscientious objector because he didn't want to go to war, it wa-, the only way it could go was down, a negative opinion, regardless of what, if they knew him, if they knew what he did, they still, particularly the business they were in. They didn't want any controversy connected with their business. So they cut him loose, like a criminal. And that's what hurt Lew Ayres most of all.

01:04:28:00—01:05:12:00

Interviewer #1:

You said he didn't get any understanding. You said he didn't get any understanding, which was true at that time. Later, when he came back—you kept in touch with him after the war?

Louis Markewich:

Yeah, oh, sure.

Interviewer #1:

Did you feel like he d-, was understood—

Louis Markewich:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—finally?

Louis Markewich:

In, in fact it was almost like it never happened. When I went to visit him after we got out of the Army, he had been home quite a bit and he started his career already. Nothing's changed, they, there was no publicity, and he went to work, went to the studios, just like, just like normal before the war. I sense no, no remembrance of any of that.

01:05:13:00—01:06:16:00

Interviewer #1:

But was that, that wasn't because people had forgotten the war. It, was it, wasn't it because of what he did with you in the Army?

Louis Markewich:

They, that's right. They realized the service he put in, and where he was. He wasn't just stateside. He was in the middle of the, World War Two in the South Pacific, and he did a good job. We got unit commendations, medals, and everything. He didn't go around bragging about that, but yet the people found out and changed their mind. Not, not, there was no more, oh, Lew Ayres? Oh, he's the conscientious objector. Lew Ayres? Oh, yeah, he was in the Pacific, now. See? No more, oh, the conscientious objector.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Louis Markewich:

That's how it changed. That's human nature. It changes. Or like Texas weather. You don't like it now? Wait a minute, it'll change.

01:06:17:00—01:07:05:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm. Is forgiveness part of that? Do you feel like he was forgiven by the public, and is that human nature—

Louis Markewich:

Well, it, I don't know if you would term it a, a final forgiveness. No. What you do when you do it, it's there. If you change your mind later, it don't change what you did. It just changes your opinion and that's it. That's something that he didn't want forgiveness on. He was right on that. He felt, all along he's, probably been alive today, he still feels that way. So, he wasn't looking for forgiveness. It's the people that say, forgive, they're probably forgiving themself for acting the way they did, and that's it.

01:07:06:00—01:07:25:00

Interviewer #1:

Would it be, would it be fair to say he wasn't looking for forgiveness, but he was looking for acceptance?

Louis Markewich:

More so among his peers. He wasn't really looking for forgiveness, he just wanted to get back in the business he was in, and be accepted for who he is, and not what he did.

01:07:26:00—01:08:35:00

Interviewer #1:

You covered this sort of in terms of Lew Ayres specifically. But what, do, in your recollection of that period, what did people think about conscientious objectors in general? About the idea of being a conscientious objector?

Louis Markewich:

I, I, I can tell you what, personally. I was a young kid then. That didn't mean anything to me. All I know is we were in the service, that's it. You... well, ***nobody really likes to kill people in a war, although the-, they use, as an excuse to, thou shalt not murder. It's war, it's not murder. Well, he don't kno-, he didn't know the difference, and I don't know the difference, and nobody knows the difference.*** But the, he was, just wanted to be accepted into his normal life. Not forgiveness. They didn't have to write letters or newspaper. They wanted to, they could. But all he was interested in, in, get back to his home, and to his normal work, and to be accepted in it. And they did.

01:08:36:00—01:09:46:00

Interviewer #1:

Would you mind telling the story about when you went to see him after the war, and you went to the house he had lived with, lived in with Ginger Rogers, and the toy trains upstairs? I loved that—

Louis Markewich:

Oh—

Interviewer #1:

—story.

Louis Markewich:

—yeah. I was in California, visit him—I think it was 1949 or something, '50. And he lived on top of Laurel Canyon Boulevard at that time, overlooking Los A-, Hollywood in Los Angeles. And we were up there, and when I came in, he showed the, took me upstairs to his house, and the whole top floor was tracks, going into every room—bathroom, the hallway—of miniature trains. But not real small ones, pretty good size trains. That was Ginger Rogers', his second wife, hobby, for that, all through that whole t- [laughs]. And it was a beautiful setup. Really beautiful. And he still had it up there when I, last time I was there. And when he lived, when he finally moved out of that house, I don't know what happened to the train.

01:09:47:00—01:10:05:00

Interviewer #1:

So if there were walls, holes cut in the walls so it went through the bathroom and through the rooms?

Louis Markewich:

No, through the walls—

Interviewer #1:

Through the—

Louis Markewich:

—around room, and then run into the bath-, every place. Every place where there was room

enough to put a track with all these things, when—and the whole s-, the whole second floor. [laughs]

01:10:06:00—01:10:36:00

Interviewer #1:

I love that story. [laughs] It's such a great—

Interviewer #2:

OK, we have anything else?

Interviewer #1:

Anything else you can think of? Anything that you think would make—

Louis Markewich:

No—

Interviewer #1:

—bring—

Louis Markewich:

—we've—

Interviewer #1:

—his story—

Louis Markewich:

—covered—

Interviewer #1:

—to light?

Louis Markewich:

—a lot in that.

Interviewer #3:

I have a question that I've—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Interviewer #3:

—never heard discussed, really, in these interviews.

Louis Markewich:

Yeah—

Interviewer #3:

We might have—

Louis Markewich:

—we—

Interviewer #3:

—covered it.

Louis Markewich:

—we covered—

Interviewer #3:

Was—

Louis Markewich:

—a lot in there.

Interviewer #3:

—was the population aware that there was a category now of conscientious objector instead of what they perceived as traitors? Was that, was there a general consciousness that—

Interviewer #2:

It's the same, isn't it?

Interviewer #1:

[stutters]

Interviewer #3:

Well—

Interviewer #1:

Did, did people—

Interviewer #3:

—no, the law had changed—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Interviewer #3:

—so, by that time, so it was all right—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Interviewer #3:

—actually, technically, to do that.

01:10:37:00-01:11:56:00

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, that's a good question.

[someone blows nose]

Interviewer #1:

So, this, the, World War II was the first time the, conscientious objection really became legal, and—

[someone blows nose]

Interviewer #1:

—under civilian control.

Louis Markewich:

It's the first time that—well, I don't know about anybody else, but most of the people had never heard of it before.

Interviewer #1:

And so, did, were people, did people begin to have a, an awareness of it at that period? Was it kn-, was it, was there a distinction between, did people understand it was a legal, that it was legal to—

Louis Markewich:

Well, I imagine—my opinion is that more and more people became conscientious objector during Vietnam War. Any war that this country was involved in would be a lot more, and they don't te-, think it in the same way as the public in 1942 thought of, during World War Two. World War Two was a big deal. That was the biggest deal of the century, and it saved this whole world, 'cause we won the war. And now, people are beginnin' to, more and more people are beginning to act as conscientious objector. Not necessarily vow it, but to act as. And I don't know—

[saw running in background]

Louis Markewich:

—if it's very active now or not.

01:11:57:00-01:12:07:00

Interviewer #1:

I think we're done.

Interviewer #2:

Yeah, we're done.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, we just got—

Interviewer #2:

Lunch time.

Interviewer #1:

—they started sawing—

Interviewer #2:

They started—

Interviewer #1:

—over here.

Interviewer #2:

—sawing next door. We're done.

Interviewer #1:

That must mean it's, [laughs] we're done. Great.

Interviewer #1:

That means it's lunch time.

Interviewer #1:

Thank you, Louis. We're done.

[cut]

[end of interview]

01:12:07:00