Interview with Warren Sawyer
Date: ca. 1998
Interviewer: Judy Ehrlich

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 Warren Sawyer, 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—00:00:17:00

Warren Sawyer:

[laughs]

Camera Crew Member #2:

Rich, you're good?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Yep.

Interviewer #1:

Everybody's OK?

Camera Crew Member #1:

We are rolling.

00:00:17:00—00:01:59:00

Interviewer #1:

We're rolling. OK, we can begin by introducing yourself.

Warren Sawyer:

I'm Warren Sawyer. I currently live in Moorestown, New Jersey, which is eleven miles across the river from Philadelphia. I've been there for thirty-five years. I'm in the real estate business. I've been involved with interracial housing. I worked with the poor and the middle income. I've integrated a number of areas purposefully. Well, I mean, my decision was always to give a person the kind of a house they wanted, where they wanted, if they could afford it, regardless of race, whatever. And I'm proud of the things I've done in that line. Not terribly long ago I helped a Vietnam widow who had two boys, and she had her $10,000 from his insurance. And the interesting thing was, in my business—people in those days paid no attention to a black person if they came into the office. And, as I say, my vow was to help anybody that I could. And when you went into a real estate office, a black person was often ignored, ignored as far as a future, keeping in contact with, and working with, and trying to find a house. Well, she came to my office, and I told her right off the bat, that if I could find her a house, why I find it anywhere she wants it, wherever she can afford it. And I showed her this house that another broker had listed. And the broker, after he found out that it was a colored lady—we had the agreement signed—he said he didn't want to see me or cooperate with me again. So [laughs] that was an interesting thing. Then—

00:01:59:00—00:03:16:00

Interviewer #1:

How long ago was that?

Warren Sawyer:

This must have been about twenty years ago, I guess. Then I had another, extremely well-educated man—he'd been in Africa, on a Ford Foundation, who'd been teaching in the locals' high school, teaching English and French. And when he came back from Africa, he went to the bank to get his money, he had been having sent there automatically in his savings account, and nobody would work with him, I found him a house in the best part of the town, Mount Holly. And, the person who lived next door was involved in the rejuvenation of the downtown metropolitan area of Mount Holly, which is a small village. And even the bank stalled, and hemmed, and hoo'd, and hawed, so that I had to threaten the bank. I said, look here, this man here's had his money here all these years, why are you stalling? And they had no answer. They said, well we have to go through papers and all that kind of thing. And I said, we're going to go to another bank unless I have a mortgage for this man in two days. Well, they came up with a mortgage. [smacks lips]

Interviewer #1:

Great.

Warren Sawyer:

Not because of my power, I [laughs], I couldn't do anything with them, of course, but it was

an interesting experience along the way.

00:03:17:00—00:05:30:00

Interviewer #1:

Go back a little to where, to how you became a conscientious objector.

Warren Sawyer:

I thought—

Interviewer #1:

—and to your decision to, to, apply for conscientious objection status, and—

Warren Sawyer:

Well, I have a, I have a checkered background in, in religion. I was born a Methodist, and then I was taken into the Anglican Church, then I was a Roman Catholic, and an altar-boy in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, and my two brothers likewise. [bells ringing in the background] Then I left New York City to live with two maiden aunts who went to a Quaker Church. And when I say church, as opposed to meeting, it's where you have a minister, and a choir, and a collection. You wouldn't know the difference between it and a Methodist service. The minister at that time was a very ardent pacifist, he'd been a CO in World War I. And, the teachings of Quakerism at the young people's groups, and, pacifism, and emphasized from this, minister got me interested, and after four years of attending this church, and conferences, and meetings, and yearly meetings among the Quaker organization, I decided that I'd become a Quaker. And, when I made that decision, I, knew that I would be a pacifist—I was only seventeen—I knew that I would be a pacifist if any altercation came along between the nations. And, if, I knew that if I joined the Quaker Church and war came along, that if I did not take the pacifist position, that I would resign from the Religious Society of Friends. Because I felt that, with "that of God in every man," which is a basic Quaker tenet, and the peace—you couldn't kill anybody—that those two things kind of go hand in glove with each other. And so, at seventeen, in 1937, that was my position. Then, when the war came out, why, they did have the opportunity to go to prison or be in the CPS—Civilian Public Service. And, and being somewhat immature, I wasn't ready for prison, so [laughs] I went to CPS.

00:05:31:00—00:05:56:00

Interviewer #1:

Was that the right decision in retrospect?

Warren Sawyer:

I think probably it was, because I was immature. Very immature, really. But, if I had to do it again, I'd go to prison, and I've thought this for a good many years, that I should've gone there. And I would assume, I would like to think that the, all the Quakers, would go to prison if the opportunity comes again. I hope it doesn't.

00:05:57:00—00:06:31:00

Interviewer #1:

You do? You think it would be because it was too much of a compromise, or why, why would you say that?

Warren Sawyer:

Well, [laughs] it would seem to me that, if we can make more problems for the government as far as war is concerned, and there are more people involved, in that position, they're gonna be thinking twice about being involved in a war, eventually just hoping that it might grow, and grow, and grow, and grow as a movement, to, influence government.

00:06:32:00—00:07:25:00

Interviewer #1:

But the work you did was very important during the war. Talk a little about what you did—and, and because our time is short, let's, maybe we'll skip the forestry work, unless there's something really significant about that to you.

Warren Sawyer:

The—

Interviewer #1:

Was there something in the forestry work that you thought was really important, or what—

Warren Sawyer:

No, that's why I left.

Interviewer #1:

OK.

Warren Sawyer:

I was only, I was only in the forestry business building in the Crabtree Meadows in the, in the, Blue Ridge Parkway. I was only there from February until September, extremely frustrated, because, I would rather be working with people, even though I came, raised on a farm. I far, far preferred to be working with people. And so, Williamsburg in Virginia, and Byberry in Philadelphia were the two first hospitals opened up approximately the same time, and I went to Byberry with the original unit—

Interviewer #1:

Could you—

Warren Sawyer:

—in, in September of '42.

00:07:26:00—00:08:15:00

Interviewer #1:

Could you describe, the, conditions in Byberry?

Warren Sawyer:

Well, bedlam.

Interviewer #1:

Maybe—

Warren Sawyer:

[laughs]

Interviewer #1:

—I'm sorry, say that again. You know what I can say to you? Would you, my questions aren't gonna be included, so if you could include, incorporate my question into your answer.

Warren Sawyer:

All right. What was my reaction when I went there? Bedlam would be one, be one response. Really, quite unbelievable, to see how people were living, to see how they were treated, to see the, I would say, total disregard of, of humans' feelings, and, the degradation—

Interviewer #1:

Oh.

Warren Sawyer:

—of their condition was just appalling, that's all. [laughs] I don't know how else to say it.

00:08:16:00—00:08:43:00

Interviewer #1:

You didn't say where.

Warren Sawyer:

Beg pardon?

Interviewer #1:

You didn't say where you were.

Warren Sawyer:

Oh. At Philadelphia State Hospital, otherwise known as Byberry. It was an old, old hospital, it was built at the turn of the century, it was built for 3,000 patients, and we had over 6,000, and you can imagine the frightful conditions, in terms of over-crowding; non-care; no personal care, of course. And, it was just, well, it's almost unbelievable.

00:08:44:00—00:09:11:00

Interviewer #1:

Give us some specifics. We're gonna look at the, we're gonna see the pictures. Maybe you could talk about, and, as you know these pictures, but maybe not look—have him not look at them now, right, Eric?

Camera Crew Member #3:

What is it?

Interviewer #1:

Just have him talk about them—

Camera Crew Member #3:

—he might be—

Interviewer #1:

—and then we'll come back—

Camera Crew Member #3:

—reminded. Just be—

Interviewer #1:

Yes.

Warren Sawyer:

I can show some. [lifts photo album] All right. You want me to take some of these big ones out and show them?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, well, well, we'll have to shoot them separate—

Camera Crew Member #3:

Not, not show them to the camera.

Interviewer #1:

Don't show the camera, just, maybe just so you remember and, and we can look at them—

Warren Sawyer:

OK. Well, OK.

Camera Crew Member #3:

Is he—

[cut]

00:09:12:00—00:09:27:00

Warren Sawyer:

Just as a reminder?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah—

Warren Sawyer:

All right. Shh.

Interviewer #1:

—just as a reminder.

[production discussion]

Interviewer #2:

Wait, maybe open it up so he's looking through it?

Camera Crew Member #3:

Well—

Interviewer #2:

Yeah?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

And then we'll do close-ups of the pictures.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, and then we do close-ups of the pictures, but have him look at that album, 'cause it is his personal—

Camera Crew Member #2:

Rich, I'm going to be wired—

Interviewer #1:

—album, just—

Camera Crew Member #1:

—well, but I gotta see where he—

[cut]

00:09:27:00—00:13:25:00

Warren Sawyer:

I arrived at—you—

Interviewer #1:

Are we ready?

Warren Sawyer:

—ready?

[production discussion]

Camera Crew Member #1:

We're gonna wait for Rich to get settled.

Camera Crew Member #2:

I'm, I'm OK.

Interviewer #1:

OK, now we're all right.

Warren Sawyer:

When I arrived at Byberry in September of 1942. Byberry's at the north end of Philadelphia, the very, near the outskirts. Here was a, whole a set of great big, old brick buildings with fenced, fences in between the buildings, where the patients would have an opportunity to be outdoors and get a little bit of exercise. We COs, I was among the, there were sixteen of us who went first there. We were housed in a, a cottage, all of us together. We didn't learn until later that Dr. Zeller, the superintendent had guards—armed guards, who were hospital employees—outside of cottage one, which was the number of the cottage we were in, guarding us, because he was afraid that because of the, the anger of the other hospital personnel that they might raid the place, or do, do damage, or threaten us, or whatever. Now

that didn't come out until quite some time later, and it was rather interesting, because we were not aware of it at all, not at all.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Warren Sawyer:

Over the course of the three-and-a-half years I was there, before the time was up we had 150 men in there, and we were almost running the hospital. It's interesting also that the AFSC had, a girl's unit there, young women—college or otherwise—who were looking for employment who were socially conscious, like we like to think we are. And that was kind of nice for us, after just coming out of the woods with no social activity whatsoever. The conditions of the hospital and the wards, well, just, well, worse than appalling. Roaches everywhere, particularly in the incontinent ward, and the, and the, the violent ward—they called them disturbed instead of violent. And, we had worker patients who worked in the kitchen, who worked in the dining room, taking, food to those who were locked—padlocked—in their beds in the disturbed ward. Padlocked, meaning that their feet were, strapped and padlocked to the foot of the bed, and just a little bit of movement on their arms on each side, with padlocks. Worker patients, the hospital wouldn't have functioned if we didn't have them to help us, because they worked on all capacities possible on the wards, helping in the disturbed ward, helping in the hydro ward, and in the continent ward; shaving each other when it's time to shave once a week, or every two weeks, and—those poor fellas who got shaved. I mean, they were bloody all over when these fellas got done with them. It was just awful in that respect, though the patients did the best that they could, of course. The doctors, and nurses—very, very few in number. I worked in what they call service two, which is a group of buildings: A, for the incontinent ward; B for the disturbed; C for, worker patients; and D, where they had, an assortment of patients from, for all kinds of things. Syphilis was there, of course. And, the, the number of doctors, I started to say. For those four buildings, which represented almost 2,000 patients, we had doctors who would come round once a day, a very superficial visit just seeing those who'd been banged up or cut or injured, or whatever, and nobody else ever saw a doctor year in and year out.

00:13:26:00—00:13:41:00

Interviewer #2:

Excuse me for a second, there are people who need to come in. Why don't we let them go through?

Interviewer #1:

I think they went around.

Interviewer #2:

No, they didn't—

Interviewer #1:

Oh, did they go—

Interviewer #2:

—they're waiting right out there.

Interviewer #1:

Oh, they're waiting, fine.

Interviewer #2:

Just let them go.

Interviewer #1:

What, you know, how about coming in a little closer here and go back out once he mentions, talks about the pictures?

Camera Crew Member #1:

All right.

Interviewer #2:

Do you need to come in?

[inaudible discussion outside]

Interviewer #2:

Yeah, but we both—

[cut]

00:13:42:00—00:15:02:00

Interviewer #1:

—oh yeah, but this is so, we really need to cover this stuff, so we'll make it as quick as possible, but it's really good, and maybe we're gonna have to drag you back.

[whispered production discussion]

Interviewer #1:

What?

Warren Sawyer:

Should I go ahead?

Camera Crew Member #2:

Yep.

Camera Crew Member #3:

Yes.

Warren Sawyer:

The—

Interviewer #1:

He—

[whispered production discussion]

Warren Sawyer:

—in the disturbed ward, B building, 300 patients, they, very common to use hoses for beating the patients to keep them in line. Conditions were terrible, plaster off the walls, holes in the floor where the cement had been broken. Working with utensils, bed-pans, urinals and so on, where the enamel's all been chipped off. All of the equipment that we had, including that, was just in deplorable conditions. As far as common things—like sheets, shirts, belts, shoelaces—things like this that everybody needs, they were just in such short supply that people were going barefoot, they'd take a rope to tie around their pants, some fellas would steal the shirt off somebody else's back and have two or three shirts. And with only two people, working, for example, in the incontinent ward, on a day shift, or three if we're lucky, it was just impossible situation to give any consideration to the patient, or any individual care.

00:15:03:00—00:16:32:00

Interviewer #1:

Did you say how many people there were on the incontinent ward? I don't think you said that.

Warren Sawyer:

Between 300 and 350 in the building.

Interviewer #2:

We need the question included.

Interviewer #1:

We need the whole thing.

Warren Sawyer:

Beg your pardon?

Interviewer #1:

Would, if you could start that again—

Warren Sawyer:

Oh.

Interviewer #1:

—and explain how many workers there were—

Warren Sawyer:

OK.

Interviewer #1:

—and how many in the incontinent ward.

Warren Sawyer:

In, in A building, the incontinent ward, they kept, 300 patients, 300 to 325, and, with only two attendants and—CO attendants, because we had taken over the building. It was the worst building there, they used what, the hospital used what paid employees they had in other buildings. I might make one comment about the paid employees. Most of them lived from

paycheck to paycheck. They'd come on work drunk, and they'd go from Byberry, Philadelphia State Hospital to Norristown Hospital, and just float around, and then eventually, within three or four months, they'd be back at Byberry. And the desperation for personnel was so bad that, they would take these same people back, even though they knew were, they were drunks before they left.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Warren Sawyer:

And, they had room and board. So when I say, paid attendants, they are not the COs. We got two dollars and fifty cents a month for our labor, which was, later—that was at first. Later we were raised to fifteen dollars a month, with the idea that we would buy white coats. Well, a white coat in an incontinent ward is an impossibility.

00:16:33:00—00:17:22:00

Interviewer #1:

Describe the, conditions of the incontinent ward.

Warren Sawyer:

All right. The incontinent ward was meant—feces all over the place, urine all over the place. And, people had no control of their bowels, and no interest. I mean, they would just lie in their own filth, day after day. A catatonic patient is a patient who, you can raise his arm up and he'll keep it there till you take it down. And, of course, a lot of schizophrenics. And so, they were just, the catatonic patients in particular, just did not care. In terms of their mental abilities at that time, I don't know. I mean, all, all stages and all kinds. But they just had no self-respect, shall we say, and their mental condition didn't permit them to have that self-respect. The—

00:17:23:00—00:18:34:00

Interviewer #1:

What did it look like walking into that room?

Warren Sawyer:

As you walk, as you go into the front door—of course, everything is locked at all times, in or out. The only people that had keys were the CO attendants. And on the right you faced this great big auditorium-kind of a room, with a, a kind of light metal guards on the windows, radiators under radiator guards. Bright, as far as the amount of natural light coming in is

concerned. But the filth and the smell—I can remember very well when we lived in cottage one, which is some distance away from the male side, where we worked. There's about a half-mile from where we lived over to the, A, the male section of the hospital. And you could smell A building when you got halfway between our building, where we lived, and a half a mile away, so it's approximately a quarter of a mile. You could smell A building way over there. The place has just been saturated over these many, many years. I suppose the scent is in the, in the walls and everywhere else. But it was awful.

00:18:34:00—00:21:00

Interviewer #1:

And people weren't clothed?

Warren Sawyer:

They would not keep their clothes on, some of them; and some of them would have clothes stolen from them as soon as it was put on. Sometimes you'd find a man wearing three pairs of pants. The desire for possession and privacy, whatever the motive was, if he had a motive. Just something, to own something, I guess, for some people. But, the, many, with two people on during the day, how would we have time to dress these fellas, who had no sensibilities, as far as what to do, how to do, dress, and so on. The big job, of course, was on the weekends, when the relatives came to visit. And in A building, the incontinent ward, we probably had, oh, we might have thirty visitors for these three hundred patients. Some people never saw a relative, never saw a doctor, never saw a nurse, unless they were injured, as I said. So on Sundays, visiting day, the job of shaving, which was done by the patients, and getting what clothes we had for those who were going to have visitors—again, tying a person's pants on, no belts, and trying to get a shirt that was in halfway decent condition; coming back from the laundry torn, with holes on, nobody to mend.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Warren Sawyer:

Nobody to do any repair of any kind of clothes, for the clothes, so that as soon as their visitors were gone, why—and incidentally, they sat in the entranceway of the building, which was a sizeable room and had benches there. But as soon as they were gone, why, those clothes were taken off the patient again, because he was an incontinent patient, and try and save those for another person if he's having visitors. The shortages were the shortages of clothes, the shortages of sheets, pillowcases, any normal thing. So terrible to deal with. Mattresses in an incontinent ward that are all cloth and ripped apart from use and from urine, and so on. This is what patients were sleeping on, and—whereby they should've really had rubber mattresses, which was completely unavailable. And it was just a very, everything saturated with smell.

00:21:01:00—00:22:37:00

Interviewer #1:

Intense.

Warren Sawyer:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

What, how does nonviolence fit into the picture of what you found there, and what, how the patients have been treated by other—

Warren Sawyer:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #1:

—attendants, and what the CO consciousness brought to the, to the hospital?

Warren Sawyer:

The, well, the patients were used to being fought by the attendants, to control them—hit, I'm sure, because they did use rubber hoses and that sort of thing; sawed-off broom handles. And, I think, I think the patients got a quick feel that in dealing with us, working with us, or we with them, there would not be any brutality, any beatings. We always broke up fights through resistance, trying to break them apart, you know, holding your hands and this sort of thing. Nonviolent resistance. One thing, though, before I forget it, I think is, is a sad story, but a rather humorous story in the incontinent ward. One of our men—because we didn't have any soap many times, we didn't have scrubbing brushes, or anything. They used to put the incontinent ward, the fellas, in the showers and use a long stick brush. Well, this one fella, I remember so well, he, feces was just caked on his body. And one of our fellas just stripped himself down and went into the shower and got a close-up of scrubbing this fella down. That was an unusual situation, but it, I just didn't want to forget to tell you that one.

00:22:38:00—00:22:44:00

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Camera Crew Member #1:

I think I'm gonna change the tape.

Interviewer #1:

OK. Karen, what are, I know—

[cut]

[switches tape]

00:22:45:00—00:23:05:00

Warren Sawyer:

[holding a book, "The Turning Point"; clears throat] All right.

[production discussion]

Interviewer #1:

Read it to yourself first and see if you agree that it would be a good little passage to read, or if there's something else. What I want to talk to you about is the—

[Small group of people enters the room. The group includes Nelson Fucson]

Interviewer #1:

—how nonviolence is used in the prison situation. [to Nelson] Hi. We kidnapped him. [to Interviewer #2] We didn't finish—

Warren Sawyer:

[to Interviewer] I do better with questions asked—

Interviewer #2:

Yeah.

Warren Sawyer:

[to Interviewer] I do better with questions asked—

Interviewer #1:

OK.

Warren Sawyer:

—then going on on my own—

[Nelson approaches the interview setup]

Interviewer #1:

OK, you can do that instead.

00:23:06:00—00:22:33:00

Nelson Fucson:

You just going to start on him?

Warren Sawyer:

Hi, Nelson! [laughs]

Interviewer #1:

—yeah, we, we're just finishing up. We did some, and we just, just had a quick fix for lunch and we're gonna finish up.

Nelson Fucson:

OK, I've, I've been waiting for you over there, so I—

Warren Sawyer:

You've been waiting for me over where?

Nelson Fucson:

Have you eaten?

Warren Sawyer:

Yeah.

Nelson Fucson:

Oh, you've eaten?

Warren Sawyer:

Yeah.

Nelson Fucson:

Oh, well, I'll come back, I'll go back, I'll go back here. So, so—you want me to close these doors?

Interviewer #2:

No.

Interviewer #1:

No, that's fine.

Camera Crew Member #3:

Just, no, that's fine, Nelson.

Nelson Fucson:

Would you like me to stand here?

Interviewer #1:

Yes. That's nice. [laughs]

Warren Sawyer:

[laughs]

[Nelson departs the interview area]

Interviewer #1:

[laughs] Thank you, Nelson.

[the group of people leaves the immediate surroundings]

00:22:34:00—00:23:52:00

Interviewer #2:

Do you [inaudible]?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah. OK. [to Warren] OK, forget that, we won't do that. [reaches for the book]

Warren Sawyer:

I, oh, we're not gonna do that?

Interviewer #1:

You don't want to do that, Karen, is that what you're saying?

Interviewer #2:

Let's, let's get him to say it first.

Interviewer #1:

This point, OK, so maybe the best thing to do, rather than read that, is to make the point. Read that and make the point in your own words today.

00:23:53:00—00:24:14:00

Warren Sawyer:

Well, we're starting to, we just finished talking about A building, now we're going to the, the disturbed ward, violent ward, is that right?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah. Oh, you've got a whole lot of stories about the violent ward, not—

Warren Sawyer:

Well, not so much more.

Interviewer #1:

OK.

[distant door slam]

Warren Sawyer:

[clears throat]

Interviewer #2:

We're not gonna do the, the book, right? Let's just leave it.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, it's OK. That's fine.

[Warren gives the book to a crew member]

Camera Crew Member #3:

OK.

00:24:15:00—00:26:30:00

Interviewer #1:

So when do we roll? OK, why don't you go ahead with your story, and you can—

Warren Sawyer:

[clears throat]

Interviewer #1:

—some of these photographs.

Warren Sawyer:

Well, OK, I, am I gonna finish, we finished A building, the incontinent ward—

Interviewer #1:

Did you finish it? Do you feel like you—

Warren Sawyer:

Oh, well, I, I don't know where—

Interviewer #1:

—finished it?

Warren Sawyer:

—I stopped.

Interviewer #1:

I think we have enough of—

Warren Sawyer:

OK. [clears throat]

Interviewer #1:

—if you go on to—

Warren Sawyer:

[coughs] One of the other problem buildings, and they're all problems, but B building, where the disturbed—they used to call them violent patients, now they use the word disturbed—there were 400 in there, and I worked there, the night shift. And again, a shortage of personnel, with three people, maybe four people, on, to take care of 400 disturbed patients. And, we can just be thankful that they weren't all disturbed and excited at the same time. There were plenty of fights to break up, and that kind of thing. In the disturbed ward, why, we had a hydrotherapy treatment room, and, working and dealing with patients to try and calm them down, putting them in tubs, on canvases, and letting, they'd be there for an hour or two. I mentioned earlier about the handcuffs. These fellas were padlocked to their beds both by arms and their legs. And, we had one fella in there, a, young guy, Robert Slager, who was really an escape artist. Every once in a while they'd pick him up in Philadelphia. He'd be picked up and brought back to the hospital, three days later he'd escaped again. So—

Interviewer #1:

From padlocks?

Warren Sawyer:

He would've been padlocked, yes.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Warren Sawyer:

But when he was let out of his locks after two or three days, just to be around the building, that is when he was a real escape artist. And the hospital police personnel were always

bringing people back from somewhere down in Philadelphia. Some of them who were alcoholics were in there, and, of course, they get lit up. And they were easy to bring back, but this happened many times, too. But the building conditions were essentially the same in the disturbed ward, but didn't have the smell, of course, that the incontinent—one of the things that was bad in the whole institution is bed space. These patients, many of them—I don't remember what the proportion was—sleeping in cold, damp basements, which is not good for their health, obviously. And then others slept on the second floor.

00:26:31:00—00:26:39:00

Interviewer #1:

How about violence? How about—

Camera Crew Member #2:

Sorry—

Interviewer #1:

—the use of violence—

Camera Crew Member #2:

—could you not slap your lap—

Interviewer #1:

Sorry.

Warren Sawyer:

Oh.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Camera Crew Member #2:

I mean, because, we hear it thumping—

Warren Sawyer:

[laughs] OK.

Camera Crew Member #2:

—and we don't know where it's coming from.

Warren Sawyer:

All right.

Interviewer #1:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Thank you.

[door creaks]

00:26:40:00—00:27:02:00

Interviewer #1:

What, what was the use of violence by other attendants—

Warren Sawyer:

Paid attendants?

Interviewer #1:

Were they called guards, or it was attendants?

Warren Sawyer:

Well, when I say guards, I'm talking about the fellas who—

[person walks by in the background]

Interviewer #1:

[to Warren] It's alright, go ahead.

Warren Sawyer:

I'm talking about fellas who were employed by the hospital who did have uniforms, and they were guards as such—patrolled the place at night, and that kind of thing.

[group of people begins congregating behind Warren]

Interviewer #1:

Let's wait for a second.

Warren Sawyer:

Other—

Interviewer #1:

Let's wait a second, I want to—

[cut]

00:27:02:00—00:27:08:00

Warren Sawyer:

Probably.

Camera Crew Member #1:

Somebody's talking in there.

Interviewer #1:

I hear it. Upstairs?

Camera Crew Member #2:

Yeah.

[cut]

00:27:09:00—00:28:20:00

Interviewer #2:

That's fine.

Interviewer #1:

We're roll, we're about to roll? We're rolling?

Camera Crew Member #1:

We are rolling.

Interviewer #1:

So, would you finish, so, were talking about the, about violence, about the use of violence in that hospital, and, and the use of nonviolence in the hospital. Why don't you—

Warren Sawyer:

Well the, when we first went there, of course, the paid attendants were using rubber hoses and, and sawed off broom handles and that kind of thing. But we found that the patients reacted very well to our approach—tender, loving care, you might say. But at least we were not fighting them, and struggling with them, breaking up fights and things like that. It was done in, in a resistance, holding back people from going at each other. But they responded to, consideration that they would have—the worker patients in particular. We had very close associations with them, because they were our helpers, and we helped them. But, they respond well in terms of knowing confidently that they're not going to be beaten, thrashed, or locked up, and, and this kind of thing—isolated. So that, over a period of time we had their respect, because we respected them.

00:28:21:00—00:29:26:00

Interviewer #1:

What did you learn about nonviolence through that experience?

Warren Sawyer:

Well, seeing the reaction of mental—

Interviewer #2:

Incorporate the question—

Warren Sawyer:

—patients.

Interviewer #2:

—please.

Interviewer #2:

Incorporate the question.

Warren Sawyer:

Oh. What did I—give it to me again. [laughs]

Interviewer #1:

What, how did you, what did you learn about nonviolence from that time?

Warren Sawyer:

Well, I, we learned about nonviolence, I think, the very fact that giving respect to other people could be a first step toward, getting that kind of, kind response back, a nonviolent response back, and a considerable, consideration. People respond that way. I work also as volunteer in the prison, and I find that, if you show consideration, if you show thoughtfulness as to another person, that is returned in kind. That's the best thing I could say about, a quick person to person experience. [clears throat]

00:29:27:00—00:30:20:00

Interviewer #1:

But during that period, what, you walked in as a—how old were you when you arrived at—

[noise nearby crash]

Interviewer #1:

—Byberry?

Warren Sawyer:

Twenty-two.

Interviewer #1:

Twenty-two. Twenty-two year-old person, have, with this, into this really appalling situation. What, what gave you the strength to do what you needed to do to be of service in that situation?

[distant crash]

Warren Sawyer:

I'll tell you a funny story first. When I was in base camp we had a, park service man whose name was Dabney Lee, and all the time I was in North Carolina, building the national park, he was always jabbing at me, frequently, and he says: Sawyer, he says, you're the weakest-looking one of the bunch, I'm gonna get you in the Army. Well, that, of course, I had the resistance to that with no trouble, but it was just one of those funny little things that happens along the way. [pause] Give me that question again. [laughs]

00:30:21:00:00—00:31:46:00

Interviewer #1:

Oh, oh, what, what, what gave you the strength to—

Warren Sawyer:

Oh, the strength.

Interviewer #1:

—in this situation.

Warren Sawyer:

When I joined the Quakers in 1937, I knew my position was going to be if a war came along. I was very interested in the pacifist position because it went along with the basic feelings and attitudes and tenets, if you want to call it, of the Quaker religion: "there is that of God in every man." So I think that those two things go together, and I guess that is probably where I got my strength, if you want to call it that. But, that's a very strong belief, and I try to put it into practice as far as my dealings with people. I've carried sandwich boards for, for the NACP [sic], N double-A CP, and been spit at, and that sort of thing. But, you, you resist those things, if you have to, by ignoring them, as I had to do in Lexington, Kentucky. I had to keep marching all the time. I couldn't respond to those people sitting on sidewalks. Didn't have time for that. But, all these little experiences test how you feel, your attitude in general. And I think the Quaker, "that of God in every man," is the thing that carries you through a lot of these, what could be bad situations.

00:31:46:00

Interviewer #2:

Warren, could you say that again, just say that, that's what carried me through?

Warren Sawyer:

That's what, that's what carried me through?

Interviewer #1:

It's, you said, carried—

Interviewer #2:

You said, that's what, you said, that's what, carries us through.

Interviewer #1:

Carries you through.

Interviewer #2:

I would like to hear you say that that's what carried—

Warren Sawyer:

Me.

Interviewer #2:

—for yourself, personally—

Warren Sawyer:

Oh.

Interviewer #2:

—that it was—

Warren Sawyer:

OK.

—because—

Warren Sawyer:

Where do I begin?

Interviewer #2:

—if you imagine people looking at these pictures that you have—

Warren Sawyer:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

—of these horrible situations, and thinking of this twenty-two year-old person going in there, what we want to know is, how did somebody, how did you manage? How did you tap into that very personal faith or belief that you had? So I really want to know for you. And if you could tell Judy. [laughs]

Warren Sawyer:

OK. [laughs] Where do I start? From, for me, the Quaker testimony of, "there is that of God in every man," goes hand in hand with the, the peace testimony. And because of that strong feeling, that those two things in the theology go together, it has meant a great deal to me in terms of being able to meet potential bad situations such as when I was carrying a, for the NAACP in Lexington, Kentucky, a sandwich board integrating the restaurants. The very fact that people were spitting and, and calling out names, because of my feeling of "that of God in every man," there's some good in those people on the sidewalk, though I didn't have opportunity to talk with them at all, that helps me get through situations like that.

00:33:43:00—00:34:24:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Wait a second.

[a pair of people walk through]

Interviewer #2:

[to these people] Could you just keep walking? Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

I'm sorry. We'll wait.

[the group of people departs the area]

Interviewer #1:

Let me, I think we're almost done. There was one other thing I wanted to say, and it just went right out of my head.

Interviewer #2:

Could we just ask him about that same question? Because in that last part he referred to the, the, carrying the placards in Kentucky.

Interviewer #1:

Oh, but I think, no, but I think he's, he's answered that question.

Interviewer #2:

OK.

Interviewer #1:

What gave him, what helped him get through that? We could ask it again.

Interviewer #2:

Just for the mental hospital.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Warren Sawyer:

[clears throat]

Interviewer #1:

So, what, so, could you be more specific about how you personally got through the experience of the mental hospital? What strengthened you in the—

Camera Crew Member #2:

Excuse me, I have to quiet these guys down.

[cut]

00:34:25:00—00:34:40:00

Interviewer #1:

What is that—and it sounds like you've done lots of things that are consistent with what you did in CPS camp, and in, in the mental hospitals as a CO in World War II. It continued on and—

Warren Sawyer:

I volunteered for a lot of things, and still am volunteering.

Interviewer #1:

Still am volunteering.

Warren Sawyer:

Yes.

00:34:40:00—00:37:59:00

Interviewer #1:

What, what is it about this group of people, this group of men who are gathered here at this, at this conference, and in general, the people who were in CPS camps, and in prison, and took that stand during World War II? What have they done to, to change the world?

Warren Sawyer:

Well, I don't know we've changed the world from the looks of it today.

Interviewer #1:

What influence have they had—

Warren Sawyer:

[laughs]

Interviewer #1:

—on, America?

Warren Sawyer:

Yes. I hope they've had more than we probably have had.

Interviewer #1:

Could you say, rather than, they, could you say who you're talking about?

Warren Sawyer:

Oh. [laughs] Because, being draftees and going into CPS, I think the very fact that we are COs would indicate that we are socially aware, and socially conscious of so many things and problems in the world. I'm not educated. And, CPS was a big education for me. [smacks lips] With all the brains, and, and the abilities, and the backgrounds of these people that I was in the CPS with, really enlightened me in many, many things. I think that as far as our, during CPS we would carry over our interests, our socially, our social awareness, and I think at this conference we have found that the COs, as a group, at least here, and I'm sure altogether, have been involved since then in social issues of all kinds. It has stimulated me. I've joined a number of organizations since, since CPS; FOR, the NAACP, the CCCO, all kinds of, WRL, etc, and been active in, with their literature, and contributions, and so on. But I carry it into action in—I, work in the prisons once a month, one weekend a month, with the Alternatives to Violence program. I got it started in South Jersey five years ago, after taking the course at Friends General Conference in Minnesota, with Steve Angell. And I've been broadcasting for many years to the blind on closed circuit TV in Philadelphia every Wednesday morning. I still work in real estate. I've worked actively in terms of working with the poor and middle income. I've integrated a number of areas—not with the idea of purposefully integrating, but with the idea that a person has a right to get the home that they want, if they have the money and if they can qualify. And I've enjoyed doing that for many, many years. I work for the Service Committee, I travel for them looking at properties around the country, and enjoy talking to other brokers that are going to handle these properties that have been contributed to the Service Committee. In CPS, I was a, one of the first volunteers in the country for the yellow jaundice experiments, and I've been along, doing that same thing now, I, for—

[a group of people enter the interview area]

Warren Sawyer:

—SmithKline Beecham in Philadelphia.

Interviewer #1:

Stop. OK, I'm sorry.

00:37:59:00—00:38:02:00

Passerby:

—I heard it, everybody's trying to get me to go to the counter—

Interviewer #1:

We're going to have to back up a little.

Warren Sawyer:

OK.

[cut]

00:38:03:00

[the group of people departs the interview area]

Interviewer #1:

We're almost done, we're really close to being done. Why don't you just finish that sentence, and I think we're done.

Interviewer #2:

I think so.

Warren Sawyer:

[clears throat] I work with SmithKline Beecham in, being a guinea pig again for prostate problems, heart problems, high blood pressure. I've worked with the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University as a guinea pig also—but I, this is just a follow-through in terms of contributing back to society; trying to help our communities and people. It's just, my nature to do that sort of thing, and my wife gets a little upset sometimes. She thinks I'm too involved. But I enjoy it. I've been to, I've been to twenty-five countries—I've gone to Tanzania, Indonesia, to work; in Belize, and building, working in the schools, building foundations, and that sort of thing. I've been in, to Cuba, to talk to the non-governmental agencies there. I went with a group of people there. I went to Nicaragua during the war, as a testimony, with the peace group, to show sympathy to the people there that we didn't approve of Mr. Reagan's policies. And all of these things, I think, contribute, hopefully, to the betterment of understanding international relations, nothing—I haven't anything profound to say. [laughs]

Interviewer #1:

That's great, you do great work. I think, I think that's it.

Interviewer #2:

That's wonderful, thank you.

Interviewer #1:

That's wonderful, I think we really—

[cut]

[end interview]

00:39:44:00