

**NATIONAL HOME FRONT PROJECT**  
**Four Men of Peace and an Episcopalian**  
**Finding Aid**

**Four Men of Peace and an Episcopalian** intends to preserve the memories and histories of five of the 12,000 religious conscientious objectors who served in some of the 151 Civilian Public Service (CPS) Camps located across the United States during World War II.

Civilian Public Service was a program created before the war and funded by the Historic Peace Churches, including the Quakers, the Mennonites, the Brethren, the Amish, and the Hutterites. It was agreed to by the Selective Service, as an alternative to jail for religious conscientious objectors (COs) to World War II. Conscientious objectors had to be supported by the views of their church and its hierarchy to qualify for the program. Non-religious COs were not permitted to take part in CPS and could still be sent to jail for refusing to serve in the military.

Eventually, the U.S. government took over management of the program, although it never funded it. A dubious points system determined how long participants were required to serve in CPS. Some conscientious objectors were even kept in the camps long after World War II had ended. Interestingly, though prisoners of war were paid, religious conscientious objectors working for CPS were not. They received only a five-dollar stipend per month for stamps. Any money the Civilian Public Service program earned by work the men did was also not allowed to be used by the military. It was held by the government and later mysteriously disappeared. Very little, if anything, has been taught about the history of Civilian Public Service to the general public.

To document and share this lesser-known aspect of World War II history, the Four Men of Peace and an Episcopalian oral history collection was created in the early 1990s in California and Philadelphia. While four of the interviews were originally used for a university project, all are now being made available to historians and the general public through various ways, including the National Home Front Project. These five featured conscientious objectors served as fire-fighters, carpenters, road builders, tree planters, loggers, radio operators, surveyors, and in many other roles in the camps. Two worked in mental hospitals. Two of these men were used as human guinea pigs for medical experiments, including the Minnesota Semi-Starvation Experiment. All went on later in life to serve their communities as men of conviction, compassion, and peace.

Dorothy's interest in Civilian Public Service began as a child, when she listened to many heated discussions about CPS between her father, Virgil Nichols, and her uncle, Malcolm Nichols. Because of his hearing disability, Malcolm had been classified as 4-F and would have never been chosen to serve in the military. However, he was required to serve in Civilian Public Service simply because he chose to register as a religious conscientious objector. On the other hand, Virgil served in the U.S. Army. And each believed they had made the better decision.

Dorothy later researched Civilian Public Service at various archives in Washington, D.C., at Swarthmore College's Peace Collection, and at the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia. She also retained all of her uncle's letters and documents that he carefully preserved about CPS during and after his detainment. Her resulting oral history project includes

interviews with Methodists James Dyer, James Griffith, Robert McCullagh, Malcolm Nichols, and "the Episcopalian," Lawrence Miller.

**For more information about the Four Men of Peace and an Episcopalian oral history collection, please view the documentary below or contact Dorothy Nichols at [mlsanddjn@aol.com](mailto:mlsanddjn@aol.com).**

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**Website Partner Page:** <https://nationalhomefrontproject.org/four-men-of-peace-and-an-episcopalian>

**SoundCloud Playlist:** <https://soundcloud.com/nationalhomefrontproject/sets/brooklyn-navy-yard-oral-history-project-collection>

**YouTube Playlist:**

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLa\\_23qMkarx4S\\_ef\\_nDHAfQPN9mYpen\\_L](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLa_23qMkarx4S_ef_nDHAfQPN9mYpen_L)

**Collection Summary:**

- Dyer, James Daniel
- Griffith, James
- McCullagh, Robert "Bob" Patterson
- Miller, Lawrence
- Nichols, Malcolm

**Quantity:**

- Sessions: 5
- Narrators: 5
- Artifact Images: 98
- Audio Length: 9:12:31

## **JAMES DYER**

**Interviewee:** James Daniel Dyer

**Interviewer:** Dorothy Nichols; Malcolm Nichols (friend)

**Archival Processors:** Katy Shenk and Mairin Corasaniti

**Copyeditors:** Erica Fugger and Cameron Vanderscoff

**Date:** May 9, 1992

**Location:** Arcadia, California

**Session Number:** 1

**Project:** National Home Front Project

**Interview Contributor:** Four Men of Peace and an Episcopalian

**Accession Number:** DyerJames\_HFN-OH\_050992

### **ABSTRACT**

#### *Biography*

James Daniel Dyer was born in Whittier, California, in 1910. After attending a Methodist youth conference and seeing a vision of Christ, James felt compelled to register as a conscientious objector based on his religion before the attack on Pearl Harbor. During World War II, James was assigned to the Civilian Public Service camp called Camp Coleville to do “work of national importance.” At that camp he worked on a fire suppression crew and as a radio operator, among other roles. He went on to pursue a career in the social services and remained involved with the Methodist Church in Arcadia, California, as its local historian.

#### *Summary*

In this interview, James recalls his decision to become a conscientious objector, working at Camp Coleville, and his feelings regarding his service there. He also discusses the attitude of the Church and the general public toward conscientious objectors, and the relationship between servicemen and conscientious objectors.

#### *Keywords*

*conscientious objector, draft board, Selective Service, Methodist, Whittier, California, Civilian Public Service, Camp Coleville, Forest Service, Pearl Harbor*

## JAMES GRIFFITH

**Interviewee:** James Griffith

**Interviewer:** Dorothy Nichols

**Archival Processors:** Katy Shenk and Mairin Corasaniti

**Copyeditors:** Erica Fugger and Cameron Vanderscoff

**Date:** May 30, 1992

**Location:** Big Bear City, California

**Session Number:** 1

**Project:** National Home Front Project

**Interview Contributor:** Four Men of Peace and an Episcopalian

**Accession Number:** GriffithJames\_HFN-OH\_053092

### ABSTRACT

#### *Biography*

James Griffith was born in Los Angeles in 1915. He was drafted after completing his graduate degree in social work at the University of Chicago and subsequently registered as a conscientious objector to war based on his religion. James was first assigned to a Civilian Public Service camp called Camp Glendora in Southern California. After two years, he was transferred to the Connecticut State Hospital in Middletown to work in the violent ward of their mental health division.

After completing his CPS service, James returned to Los Angeles and worked for the California State Department of Mental Hygiene for fifteen years. He then became a Social Worker for the Los Angeles Unified School District. During his years at LAUSD, James also continued to work as a part-time therapist for the State Department of Mental Hygiene.

#### *Summary*

In this interview, James describes his decision to become a conscientious objector and the effect of Pearl Harbor on public opinion. He recalls completing clerical tasks at Camp Glendora and supervising the violent ward at Connecticut State Hospital. He further explains how medical procedures and treatments, like shock therapy and insulin use, were in experimental stages in the 1940s.

#### *Keywords*

*conscientious objector, California, Methodist, Camp Glendora, Civilian Public Service, Pearl Harbor, mental health, social work, Connecticut State Hospital, Civilian Conservation Corps*

## ROBERT MCCULLAGH

**Interviewee:** Robert “Bob” Patterson McCullagh  
**Interviewer:** Dorothy Nichols; Jeanine McCullagh (wife) and Martin Smith (friend)  
**Archival Processors:** Katy Shenk and Mairin Corasaniti  
**Copyeditors:** Erica Fugger and Cameron Vanderscoff  
**Date:** May 17, 1992  
**Location:** Morro Bay, California  
**Session Number:** 1  
**Project:** National Home Front Project  
**Interview Contributor:** Four Men of Peace and an Episcopalian  
**Accession Number:** McCullaghRobert\_HFN-OH\_051792

### ABSTRACT

#### *Biography*

Robert “Bob” Patterson McCullagh was born in 1915 in Monrovia, California. After high school, he was drafted and subsequently enlisted as a conscientious objector during World War II based on his religion. Robert was sent to Three Rivers Camp, a Mennonite-run Civilian Public Service camp in California under the direction of the National Forest Service. After later serving in the print shop at the Ohio State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, Robert volunteered to participate in the Semi-starvation Experiment conducted at the University of Minnesota. At the conclusion of the experiment, Robert returned to Three Rivers Camp, where he was discharged.

After the war, he attended seminary and became ordained in the United Methodist Church, working for thirty-one years in their ministries at the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of South Dakota, the University of Hawaii, California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, and Morro Bay. Robert later retired to San Diego, California.

#### *Summary*

In this interview, Robert recalls being denied conscientious objector status by his draft board and appealing the decision. He recounts working at Three Rivers Camp and wanting to serve his country by participating in a semi-starvation experiment. He further discusses undergoing the phases of the experiment and the feeling of starvation. Robert also describes the attitude of conscientious objectors who were kept in camps after the war had ended.

#### *Keywords*

*conscientious objector, Methodist, draft board, Three Rivers Camp, Forest Service, Civilian Public Service, guinea pig, semi-starvation experiment, University of Minnesota, minister*

## LAWRENCE MILLER

**Interviewee:** Lawrence Miller

**Interviewer:** Dorothy Nichols

**Archival Processor:** Katy Shenk

**Copyeditors:** Erica Fugger and Cameron Vanderscoff

**Date:** May 14, 1993

**Location:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Session Number:** 1

**Project:** National Home Front Project

**Interview Contributor:** Four Men of Peace and an Episcopalian

**Accession Number:** MillerLawrence\_HFN-OH\_051493

### ABSTRACT

#### *Biography*

Lawrence Miller was born in New York City on the Upper East Side in 1920. He was raised Episcopalian and attended St. Paul's School in New Hampshire as a boarding student. Lawrence subsequently followed his brother to Antioch College in Ohio. There, Lawrence became interested in Quakers and pacifism. By 1941, he had decided to register as a conscientious objector during World War II based on his religion.

After working at a Civilian Public Service camp in New Hampshire, Lawrence participated in two "human guinea pig" (HGP) experiments. He was then sent to Orlando, Florida, to build privies to combat hookworm, which included working in African American neighborhoods. Seeking to avoid violence against the population he was serving by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK)—who were agitated by the sight of white men working for and alongside black men—Lawrence volunteered to be part of another HGP experiment, where he was given pneumonia. Lawrence was then assigned to a camp in Trenton, North Dakota, until the completion of his service.

After the war, Lawrence enrolled in the Chicago Theological Seminary and earned a master's degree in religious education. He was then hired by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Philadelphia and later became secretary to the Friends General Conference. Lawrence coordinated projects in Asia and the Middle East, as well as representing Quakers at international conferences in Kenya, Romania, China, and the Soviet Union. He often spoke out for human rights and supported efforts to end world poverty.

Lawrence also participated in civil rights marches with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and both organized and marched in many anti-war protests. He moved with his wife, Ruth, to Doylestown, Pennsylvania, to revive a Quaker community. There, he organized weekly peace vigils, among other actions. Lawrence further worked with the AFSC in Bangalore, India, as the director of a Quaker youth program, and oversaw health and agricultural projects. After retiring, he published a biography of Clarence Pickett, former executive secretary of the AFSC, called *Witness for Humanity*.

### *Summary*

In this interview, Lawrence recalls being introduced to Quakers and pacifism while at Antioch College, and enlisting as a conscientious objector during World War II. He also describes working at a Civilian Public Service camp in New Hampshire, participating in three “guinea pig” experiments, and traveling to Florida to combat dysentery. He further discusses the work of the American Friends Service Committee and his involvement in the organization throughout his lifetime.

### *Keywords*

*Episcopalian, New Hampshire, Quaker, conscientious objector, draft, Civilian Public Service, Antioch College, American Friends Service Committee, guinea pig, Friends Ambulance Unit*

## MALCOLM NICHOLS

**Interviewee:** Malcolm Nichols

**Interviewer:** Dorothy Nichols

**Archival Processors:** Katy Shenk and Mairin Corasaniti

**Copyeditor:** Erica Fugger and Cameron Vanderscoff

**Date:** May 5, 1992

**Location:** Whittier, California

**Session Number:** 1

**Project:** National Home Front Project

**Interview Contributor:** Four Men of Peace and an Episcopalian

**Accession Number:** NicholsMalcolm\_HFN-OH\_050592

### ABSTRACT

#### *Biography*

Malcolm Nichols was born in Watsonville, California, in 1913 with a congenital hearing defect. He was raised a Methodist, and was deeply influenced by looking at pictures of war in the encyclopedia and by the works of Mahatma Gandhi. As a result, he registered as a conscientious objector to war based on his religion, but was classified as 4-F during World War II.

Malcolm was sent to a Quaker-run Civilian Public Service camp in Elkton, Oregon, to do work of national importance. He served in three camps from January 1943 to May 1946, working as a carpenter, a firefighter, a tree planter, and a road builder. He was also forced to work with explosives against his preferences.

After World War II, he worked with his father as a carpenter and also built furniture. He became locally famous as an early newspaper recycler, using the money he collected to put a neighbor's child through college, to pay for another neighbor's chemotherapy, to give to multiple charities, and to support himself in his later years. He lived to be ninety-five and passed away in 2009.

#### *Summary*

In this interview, Malcolm recalls working at the main Civilian Public Service camps, as well as a number of branch camps in what he describes as "made work." He speaks about working as a carpenter "after hours" and fighting an eight-day fire at one of these "spike camps." He also remembers interacting with individuals who vocally opposed his decision to object to the war.

#### *Keywords*

*conscientious objector, California, Methodist, Civilian Public Service, Forest Service, Camp Elkton, Camp Coleville, spike camps, Oregon, newspaper recycling*