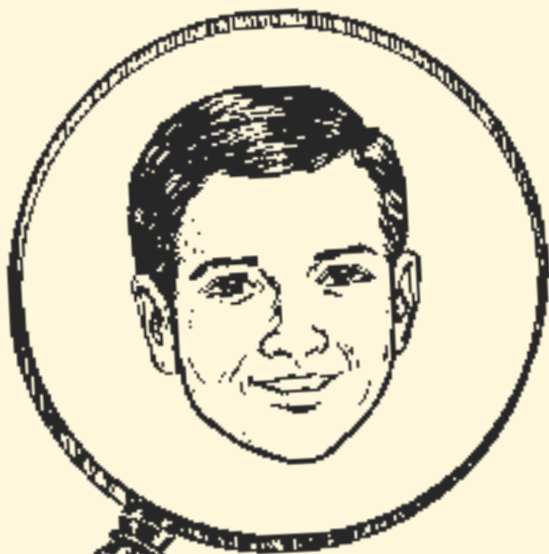


FBI INVESTIGATES CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR



How Would Your Record Look?

The following is a condensed report, from the 1960s, of a Department of Justice investigation of a young man seeking conscientious objector (CO) status. It shows how thorough and detailed such investigations were, touching family background, personal life and habits—from gym suits and class trips to hot-rodding and neighborhood fights. It shows that government authorities expect a CO's life to be consistent with his position on war.

Historical Background

Since the Civil War, the Selective Service System of the United States government has from time to time used a military draft to conscript men for service in the armed forces. In the 1960s, when a young man registered with Selective Service following his 18th birthday, he received a 1-A classification, making him eligible for induction into the armed forces. The conscientious objector had a limited number of days to appeal this classification and to request a 1-O (conscientious objector) classification instead. In some cases, the appeal board's consideration of a CO's appeal included an FBI investigation of the registrant. In order to qualify for a CO classification, the registrant had to conscientiously and consistently oppose all war due to personal religious beliefs. FBI investigations identified genuine COs as well as those attempting to avoid military duty for lesser reasons.

Since 1973, the U.S. has manned its military forces with volunteers. The draft could be reinstated, however, should the number of volunteers fail to meet the need of the armed forces. The United States government requires young men to register when they turn 18. A growing number of conservative churches encourage eighteen-year-old men and ladies to write out their nonresistant convictions and to file a copy with their ministry. These churches also encourage young people to live out their convictions and to consider a term of voluntary service.

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FBI Investigation Report

The registrant under investigation was born in Elida, Ohio, May 18, 1948. He is a Mennonite.

Reputation at School

The registrant entered Gomer High School, Elida, Ohio, in September 1962. He attended that school until November 4, 1963, when his family moved to Kentucky, but then reentered the school in September of 1964 and graduated in June 1966. A school official stated that registrant was a very religious boy who did not participate in the school dances, class carnival, or the class trip. This was because of registrant's religious beliefs and convictions. He stated that the registrant's father objected to the wearing of gym suits for the gym classes and registrant was hence permitted to wear blue jeans. This official stated that registrant is very honest, trustworthy, and registrant enjoys excellent moral character and is very sincere in his religious beliefs. In his opinion, registrant is sincere in his conscientious objection claim because he has lived a very religious life.

An official of the Clay County School in Manchester, Kentucky, stated that the registrant attended that school during the school year of 1963-1964. He remembers registrant as being a more conservative individual than the rest of the students at the school. He could find no records indicating disciplinary action having been taken against the registrant.

Work Habits

Registrant worked on a farm near Lima, Ohio, during the summers of 1960-1963. A co-worker stated that registrant's work was very satisfactory and he was a very conscientious individual. On one occasion registrant was over-paid \$5.00, and registrant returned this money stating he did not think he had earned it. This co-employee stated that all of the registrant's family enjoy excellent reputations. He stated that registrant is a member of the Mennonite Church and very sincere in his religious beliefs. He described registrant as an unusually fine boy . . .

Registrant's current employer stated that registrant's work has been conscientious and satisfactory, and he would like to have more individuals like the registrant working for him. He stated that registrant is a very religious boy, honest and trustworthy, who enjoys an excellent reputation and is of good moral

character. In his opinion registrant is sincere in his conscientious objector claim.

A reference in Tanksley, Kentucky, stated he has known the registrant since registrant's childhood. The registrant follows the teachings of the Mennonite religion and has always been active in church work. Registrant is an exceptionally fine worker and this reference has no reason to question his loyalty, morals, associates, or character. He stated that registrant had gone through a period of adolescence, experiencing some minor problems, preferring to work for someone other than his father. He made it clear that registrant never "painted the town red" and he was opposed to doing anything like that.

Nonresistant?

This reference was interviewed as pastor of the Wild Cat Mennonite Church, in Wild Cat, Kentucky. With regard to the position of the Mennonite Church on nonresistance, he stated the following: To fight or to kill is contrary to the teachings of Christ and the Bible. The Bible and Christ advise us to love our enemies, and thus the Mennonite Church is opposed to all forms of killing and fighting and turns the other cheek to one's enemies. With regards to service to one's country he advised it is the position of the Mennonite Church that to operate in a noncombatant role in the armed forces is to assist the combatants, thus violating the Scripture and the belief of the church that to fight or kill is contrary to the teachings of Christ. He stated, however, that the church encourages its members to serve the country in a civilian capacity. By assisting in a hospital or a similar institution, the members of the Mennonite Church show Christlike virtues in assisting others and relieving suffering.

Fight or Argument?

A friend stated that registrant is active in the Mennonite Church and has been raised in the strict Mennonite tradition. Registrant has told him it is wrong to fight or to kill and stated he desires to serve his country in any capacity except as being a member of the armed forces. Approximately two years ago

one of the neighborhood boys angered registrant and was pushing registrant around. The neighborhood boy deliberately tried to provoke a fight, and after considerable period of time registrant struck back at this individual. He then stated he was exceptionally sorry and this act of striking back was against the commandments of God. This is the only time this friend has ever heard or seen registrant strike back at anyone. He stated the registrant does not drink, smoke, or curse and his morals are above reproach. Registrant does not talk of girls and sex like the other boys and he confines his comments to the Christian girls in the area. It is his belief that the registrant is sincere in his claim as a conscientious objector and should be allowed to be so classified.

Another friend and neighbor advised that the registrant does not believe in fighting or war and registrant has had many opportunities to get in fights with other boys. On every occasion the registrant backed away or talked his way out of a fight, and this friend stated he has never seen nor heard of registrant fighting back. He stated registrant is an active Mennonite and practices the beliefs of this church; he does not drink, smoke, or curse, and is exceptionally honest and trustworthy. He feels registrant leads an exemplary life, though it is dull by this person's standards. He advised he is so sure registrant is sincere in his beliefs against war and fighting that if the need arose, *he would go in registrant's place to the armed forces* in order to prevent registrant from violating his beliefs.

Hot-Rodding?

Another neighbor stated that he is familiar with the registrant's father . . . a Mennonite pastor in the New Found area and has an exceptionally high reputation in the community . . . has always given of himself to others and for many years was the only means of communication with the outside that the town of New Found had during the winter . . . had a jeep and was willing to take his neighbors back and forth to Oneida to keep them supplied with various goods. He stated he has heard a rumor that registrant is a hot-rodder. He is not sure of the basis for this

rumor but feels there is probably some basis in it. He ventured the opinion registrant is not too serious about his belief regarding non-violence due to his alleged actions as a hot-rodder. In his opinion registrant is basing his claim as a conscientious objector more on his church's stand than on his own personal beliefs.

Another neighbor described registrant as a "number one" boy and an outstanding individual, who is far above the norm for the area . . . registrant became a member of the Mennonite Church approximately three years ago through baptism into the church. He advised that some time ago the registrant was driving some people in Oneida, Kentucky, on the winding, dirt, one-lane road from New Found to Oneida. He came around a hairpin curve and at the same time a mail carrier came from the opposite direction. Both drivers applied their brakes but they slid into each other very gently. Neither party was at fault. The road at this area turned into a blind curve where neither was able to see the other party and the maximum speed of either party could not have exceeded over twenty to twenty-five miles per hour. However, because of this incident, several people in the area who are opposed to the Mennonite religion have stated that the registrant was a hot-rodder. He stated this is completely in error and it is his opinion that this belief is being perpetrated by people who are anti-Mennonite.

Family Absorbs Loss

Another neighbor stated the registrant is a very exceptional boy . . . morals, character, associates, loyalty, and integrity are above reproach. She considers the registrant to be an above average individual. She advised that several months ago she was in a car following the registrant from New Found to Oneida when registrant was involved in an accident. She stated she saw the skid marks of both vehicles and thought the mail carrier was a little more at fault in that his skid marks were approximately six feet farther than the registrant's. She stated the registrant's family, rather than go to court which would be against their beliefs, or make any sort of trouble for

the mail driver, took it upon themselves to settle the matter out of court and by doing so they were accused of being at fault.

Because of this accident several individuals in the area who are against the Mennonite Church have claimed the registrant is a hot-rodder. She advised this is anything but true and that the registrant's personality is anything but the type of person who would be a hot-rodder. She stated he is a very peaceable individual who would rather turn his cheek to his enemy than to oppose him. She is firmly convinced the registrant is sincere in his belief as to being a conscientious objector and that the life he leads has exemplified this.

Peaceful Family

Another neighbor stated that registrant comes from an exceptionally peaceful family and that registrant's father is a Mennonite minister. The Mennonite families in the area are exceptionally devout and have stated many times they are against war and violence in any form. Registrant has received and continues to receive his religious training from his father. The registrant is described as a very friendly individual who appears always to be happy and sings most of the time. He gets along with everyone in the community; however, he appears to be different from the rest of the boys in the community. Registrant is different in that he is "a sincere Christian" and is against violence in any form. He does not know of registrant ever having smoked or taken a drink, and stated the registrant is above average in his morals, character, integrity, and honesty. He knows nothing derogatory concerning registrant and feels his entire life has followed the teachings of Christ. Due to all of the above reasons he feels that registrant is entitled to his claim as a conscientious objector.

Church Attendance

The pastor of the Pike Mennonite Church in Lima, Ohio, stated that in 1963 he had baptized the registrant into the Mennonite Church. He stated that registrant is faithful in church attendance and is an

excellent member, active in the choir and in young people's activities. He considers the registrant to be very sincere in his conscientious objection to the military service, as registrant has lived a life consistent with his religious convictions.

Would You Pass the Test? If FBI agents investigated you regarding your CO convictions, what would they discover? If the United States army can operate with volunteers, should not the army of the Lord advance with fearless volunteers to overcome evil with good?