

Biographies to Inspire

When the Brethren still lived in Europe, **John Naas** was called upon to serve in the army of the King of Prussia. He was arrested and hung by his toes and fingers in prison. You can read his story in the book called "The Tall Man."

Christopher Sauer, Jr. was a leader in the Brethren Church during the **Revolutionary War**. Because he believed war is wrong, he wouldn't fight in the army. Because of his social prominence, the American soldiers wanted to make an example of him. They took him from his bed one night, beat him, painted him black and red, and forced him to walk a long way without his shoes. George Washington finally told the soldiers to stop tormenting Christopher Sauer and let him go.

Almost 100 years later during the great **Civil War**, Brethren still would not join the army. Some of them found places to hide and others paid money to the army so they wouldn't have to fight. Young Brethren men in the South used the Underground Railroad to escape Confederate army conscription. The armies on both sides were suspicious of the Brethren. Since they weren't fighting with them in their army, they assumed the Brethren were spies for the other side! Because of these suspicions, both armies stole horses, grain and supplies from the Brethren, and put the Brethren into jail! Some men were even captured and forced to be in the army, and were beaten when they would not point their weapon to shoot at the enemy.

One time, an army officer asked **President Lincoln** to force the Brethren to serve in the army. President Lincoln said, "No, I will not do that. These people do not believe in war. People who do not believe in war make poor soldiers. Besides, the attitude of these people has always been against slavery. If all our people had held the same views about slavery as these people hold, there would be no war!"

John Kline was a Brethren preacher and a doctor who lived in Virginia during the Civil War. Even though he was not supposed to cross enemy lines, he went anyway. He visited sick people and members of the church no matter where they were. But the soldiers put him in prison accusing him of carrying messages to the enemy. One day some soldiers stopped John Kline and shot him in 1864. You can read his story in the book called "The Middle Man."

During **World War I**, Brethren men still refused to go to the army and were arrested. Many went to prison and some even died from the bad treatment in prison. The percentage of Conscientious Objectors who died in U. S. prisons was the same as the percentage of U. S. soldiers who died on the battlefield.

When Brethren could tell that World War II would start, they worked together with the Mennonites and Quakers to organize a plan for "alternative service". They met with **President Roosevelt** and told the government they would help the country in other ways in "Civilian Public Service" (CPS). The three churches took on the entire financial burden of CPS. Some volunteered to be "guinea pigs" in hospitals where they would receive experimental treatments to see if they would help soldiers. Some of these men got very sick from the treatments and died. Other men helped survey this country and put out forest fires.

In 1948, the Brethren started **Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS)** as a way to help people in the United States and overseas who were poor or had suffered from the war. The Brethren leaders worked with the government so that Brethren people could serve in BVS instead of the army. When **President Kennedy** started the Peace Corps, he used BSV as a model.