

# The Elkhart Truth

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## Mennonite Problems In Wartime Depicted

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By **PAULA PROUGH**  
At the onset of World War I, in 1917, the plight of the



**KENNETH REED**

Mennonite community was highlighted by the first mandatory military draft.

At that time, there were no alternative services available to the conscientious objector. It was either the army or prison.

As a result, many Mennonites found themselves in the quandary of upholding their convictions submitting to the basic human fear of imprisonment, and finding themselves in constant conflict with their beliefs versus the bearing of arms.

"The Mennonite Soldier," a novel by Kenneth Reed, a native of Pennsylvania, and a student of New Testament ethics for three weeks at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, depicts the problems of the Mennonite community during the war.

### Tells Of Brothers

The book is basically a love story, following the experiences of two Mennonite brothers who try to be faithful to their personal and religious convictions, and yet cope with the draft.

Research for the book was done by interviewing WW I veterans, conscientious objectors and Vietnam veterans. Parts of the book are based on four years of letters between an Amish veteran of the Korean War and his fiancée.

Reed also used some of his own experiences as a CO, who taught English in Japan from 1966 to 1969 as his alternative service.

### Right, Wrong Reasons

He said he met many soldiers who were in Japan on leaves from Vietnam, and saw how it is possible to be a CO for right or wrong reasons.

The author believes that if one declares himself a conscientious objector for any reason other than to follow the teachings of Christ, CO

status is being used as a "cop out."

Of the soldiers he met in Japan, Reed said, none was antagonistic toward him, but rather admired him for supporting his beliefs.

### Bitterness Reflected

Some of the bitterness Reed experienced as a Mennonite youth is reflected in the book. He said he hopes the book will enlighten Mennonites with similar conflicting emotions.

Reed also said he would like to see more communication between Mennonite communities and "locals."

"The Mennonite Soldier," is published by Herald Press and is being sold in some area bookstores. Copies also are available at Fort Benning, Ga.