

On the Line FOR PEACE

Henry H. Miller—Trained for kindness

What kind of training did you have at home?" the U.S. Army officer asked Henry H. Miller. It was 1919, and World War I was underway. Henry had

been drafted to serve in the army, and had ended up in a military camp in New Mexico. The officer was trying to get him to work for the military. Henry gave a surprising answer to the question: "Well, I was trained to be good to my neighbors, and work for our neighbors, help them, do all kinds of things like that."



Instead of training to kill during World War I, Henry Miller cooked in prison for the other men who refused to fight.

Henry grew up in an Amish family and later joined the Mennonite Church. **He felt it was not God's way to kill, so he ended up milking cows and cooking** instead of going to fight in the war.

Because Henry refused to fight, he was court-martialed (tried in a military court) and sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to a military prison. There, Henry was given a number instead of a name. While in prison, he walked a quarter of a mile to milk cows. At first, an armed guard would go along, but later Henry got a star above his number, which meant he could be trusted to go and milk without being guarded.

Through his experience of refusing to do army work and being in prison, Henry said he learned to get along with other people.

Today, if someone doesn't believe in being part of the army, they are not forced to join. Neither Canada nor the United States forces people to go into the army. But questions of war and violence remain. Jesus's teachings of peace are still part of our training.

If you were asked, "What kind of training have you had?"; how would you answer? Most of us wouldn't be able to milk a cow, but hopefully we could say that we have been trained to be good to our neighbors.



Henry lived in this bunkhouse in Deming, New Mexico, with other men who objected to fighting in WWI. At times they held church services here.

TRAINING TODAY

Today's world is different. Henry didn't know about video games and never played with action figures. How does what we do during our recreation time train us for life? **Can we play violent video games and not have them change our ideas of who is a hero?** Is someone who doesn't fight still "cool"? Ever wonder why action figures aren't trained for kindness? Can we watch violent movies and learn to value patience and nonviolent ways of solving problems? Sometimes it's hard to think about our games training us to think and act a certain way.

SHOPPING FOR PEACE

The Christmas shopping season is just around the corner. Christmas celebrates the coming of the Prince of Peace—but violent toys are on many Christmas wish lists. Did you know that Finland has made it illegal to sell and advertise war toys? That's pretty amazing.

This Christmas give gifts that promote peace. Before you buy a gift for a friend or for your younger brother or sister ask yourself:

- ✓ Does this gift promote fighting as the best way to settle differences?
- ✓ Does it show violent actions as "cool"?
- ✓ Does this gift make war seem okay?
- ✓ Do you need an "enemy" to use this gift?



Let your friends and family know you want to give and receive gifts that promote peace. Let them know you want to be trained in getting along with people.



PLAN A VIOLENT TOY TRADE-IN

Organize a toy trade-in with your Sunday school class or group of friends. **Invite kids to turn in toy guns, violent video games and action figures, army figures, and any toy that promotes violence. In return, give them a favorite book, art supplies, or a coupon from a local store.** You can get adults to help sponsor the trade-in and provide the gifts.



After collecting the violent toys, turn them into a peace sculpture by gluing them together in a creative way. This could be displayed in your church entrance with an explanation of what you did.

