

Rough Draft  
Pfc. Kevin C. Hicks  
Petition for Conscientious Objector Status 1-0  
Formatted According to AR 600-43 Appendix B-1

General Information

- 1) Kevin C. Hicks
- 2) 315-90-2158
- 3) N/A
- 4) 3<sup>rd</sup> Squad, Headquarters platoon, Bravo Company, 16<sup>th</sup> Armored Engineer Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. RA
- 5) 1432 NW Hartford Ave. Bend, OR 97701
- 6) Our Lady of Perpetual Help; August 1981 to May 1988, Roman Catholic School. Our Lady of Providence High School; August 1988 to May 1992, Roman Catholic School. Valparaiso University, Majoring in Mechanical Engineering; August 1992 to May 1994 Lutheran School. Northern Virginia Community College August 1994 to May 1995 State School.
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) 2678 Knob View Ave.  
New Albany, IN 47150  
  
1745 Harwood Pl.  
Springfield VA, 22152  
  
359 39<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94123  
  
1955 5<sup>th</sup> St.  
San Rafael, CA 94901  
  
1241 Meadow Ln.  
Orinda, CA 94502  
  
2678 Knob View Ave.  
New Albany, IN 47150
- 9) Robert Franklin Hicks (Deceased)  
Claudette Hicks 2678 Knob view Ave. New Albany, IN 47150
- 10) Robert Franklin Hicks Agnostic  
Claudette Hicks Roman Catholic
- 11) No
- 12) No

## Training and Belief

I, Kevin C. Hicks, am seeking an honorable discharge as a conscientious objector 1-0

***1) Describe the nature of the belief which requires you to seek separation from the military or assignment to noncombatant training and duty for reasons of conscience.***

First and foremost I believe that war in all of its forms is wrong and has no place in this world. I am absolutely against participating in any war because the experiences I have had in the army have forced me to face questions that I must answer honestly and in accordance with my beliefs. Questions such as “What is one human life worth?”, “What is the point of War?”, and “What is the end result of War? After participating in combat and having three confirmed kills, I am perpetually asking myself the same question in everyday situations as simple as passing three young men on the street; “Why is it acceptable (even commendable – I was awarded a Valor device on my Army Commendation Medal) to have killed those three men, however, according to my upbringing as a member of this society, utterly unthinkable to kill the three men walking down the street?”

The easy answer is because the men walking down the street are not trying to kill me, but that answer does not satisfy me when looked at alongside the question “What is one human life worth?” The only answer I can come up with is that war forces both sides to completely dehumanize the enemy, even when it is obvious they are just like me, and I am just like them. When I begin to think about and examine my feelings on war I come to the realization that there is no real difference between them and me, between the three I killed and the three walking down the street, we are all human. That one realization is enough to convince me to never participate in war.

War is the organized killing of people between two sovereign nations, for the betterment of one of those countries. That is the point of war- forcing one nation’s beliefs upon another. With the organizational effort it takes to run an army, not to mention the material and monetary needs, imagine how much war could be avoided. By proper education, a truthful unbiased media, and a nation populated by those that understand the inherent interconnectedness of all humans, what need of war could still exist? I understand that this can seem to be an extremely optimistic reality to believe in during this day and age, but if I do not start working towards such a peaceful world, then it will never come to be.

I deeply believe in the goodness of human beings. After reading LTC. David Grossman’s book, On Killing, I was immensely relieved to learn that 98% of people are against personally killing their fellow humans. This instinct exists in the furthest reaches of the human psyche. Having studied religion for the better part of my life this truth coincides with my understanding of theology. Commandments like “Do not Kill”, “Love your Enemy, Like your Neighbor”, “Do not Covet your Neighbors possessions,” or the more modern humanistic version; “Who would Jesus Bomb?” all speak of working our differences out without resorting to violence.

These questions have been pondered and debated for almost all of history, my personal answers have only come together since my time in Iraq. Having discovered these truths my moral obligation to live them is so obvious and deeply rooted that the

idea of picking up a weapon and even pointing it at someone is completely unthinkable to me. I will never participate in any war again.

***2) Explain how your beliefs changes or developed and explain what factors caused the change in, or development of, your CO beliefs.***

My earliest concepts of war were based on early video games and hearing military stories from, or about, my grandfathers and my father. Since an early age I have been drawn to the military, and I tried very hard to get into the US Naval Academy after high school. I have actively pursued a study of military hardware and small unit tactics as mental exercises for most of my adult life and even turned that knowledge into a job in the electronic entertainment field. When the Naval Academy appointment fell through I started college with the intention of earning a Mechanical Engineering degree and becoming either a materials engineer or a systems engineer. After two years of college I began working in Therapeutic Outdoor Recreation, a big title that translates to taking kids with disabilities on camping trips and other outdoor adventures. This was the first time that my eyes were really open to what makes us human. Seeing these people that I had so little in common with have the same dreams, hopes, and needs that I had has given me a perspective on life that I carry with me to this day. As life went on I decided to pursue a more corporate life and started working in the video game industry, eventually rising to Associate Producer in the war game division of Mattel Interactive. I was laid off due to the poor economy in 2000. I then traveled the country working at various outdoor recreation jobs and then back to the video game industry. Having studied military history for so long, and being from a military family, and on the eve of our next war with Iraq I decided that the time had come to enter the military. I was drawn to the MOS of Combat Engineer after all the historical reading I had done and my desire to help people through mine removal, bridge building and light EOD work. I was sworn in the day we started the second gulf war. I was observant enough to see where we were headed before the war started. Even with the common thread of “no sane man ever wants to go into combat” in all the reading I had done on war, I joined the army. My primary goals were to serve my country, live overseas, earn money for college, and have the opportunity to help people both domestic and foreign. These goals after seeming so feasible after talking to a recruiter quickly started to run into the reality of being a private in the army. I have long held the belief that everyone has certain inalienable rights. Much like the Bill of Rights states, “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” I thought this to be a basic human if not at least American belief, I quickly found out this is absolutely not true, or at least not put into common practice, especially by many soldiers in the army. I have seen too many flagrant violations of these rights, with no repercussions, to believe the army gives them more than just lip service.

Events like watching an Iraqi national get beaten after passing by my platoon and having his car backfire become almost commonplace in war. At the time, well before any of us had seen any actual combat, the backfire sounded as though it might have been single shot aimed at us. We were dismounted at the time and quickly mounted our HummVees and drove after him. Upon getting him to stop members of the platoon

immediately charged the drivers side door and after opening it, threw the man to the ground and started beating him. This was before the car was searched, before we looked in the back of the pickup, before any guilt was established. My job at the time was to guard the back of the pick up truck in case anyone was hiding under the tarp. The truck was actually hauling ice to the markets. The man's son was pulled out of the car and then forced, as he was not able to move under severe guard, to watch his father get beaten for no apparent reason. There was no interpreter and the yelling was coming furiously and from all directions. After we searched the vehicle and found no weapons and decided the man, his friend (there was a man sleeping under the tarp I was guarding earlier), and his son were not a threat we just let them go and drove away. No compensation, no apologies, nothing. That is a completely unacceptable way to treat another human being, and it happens all the time in a war zone.

Another experience with even graver results happened while in Karbala during actual combat. After fighting for a number of days we got reports that the militia were using mopeds to get ahead of our convoys and place spotters so they could ambush us, the description over the net went something like this "Hajji in a black man dress, going up and down the alley on our flanks could be a spotter be careful." Maybe 30 minutes down the road, after a couple of small firefights, I hear over the radio that the spotter has been shot. The CO attached to the convoy goes up and then radios back "Hey everyone you need to watch your fire, this is an old man with groceries in his bag, it is not a spotter." Driving by that dead man on the side of the road, with his families groceries spilled about him intermixed with his blood, all because he decided to wear black that day and got a little too close to an American convoy is something that I will never be a part of again. In fact it is something worth actively fighting against. He had a family that will never know anything about his death, other than that we were responsible. No one was held accountable, no one was even punished, in fact there is no record of this ever occurring other than this document, my memories, and his family's loss.

These are just two of the events that have changed my view on war and the army, after 18 continuous days of combat and 12 months deployment there are many more stories. Too many to tell, each one alone enough to convince me to never contribute to war again, all together more then enough to understand war is never justified, never "worth it", and has no place in the modern world.

### ***3) Explain when and why these beliefs became incompatible with military service.***

I became a CO around November 2004. Right after redeployment I talked about applying for CO status with a number of my friends and family, but made the decision to stick with the army and see if my thoughts would change. I thought I might just be really emotional and over reacting to things I had seen and done in Iraq. As the months went on and I thought more and more about it, my thoughts did not change. In fact my reading habits started to include more antiwar literature, I began discussing antiwar politics with those around me, I started researching antiwar organizations like "Veterans for Peace" and "Stop The War Brigade" and joined Veterans for Peace. I started realizing that being a CO was not a reaction to what I had seen and done during my deployment, it was (a melding of old beliefs and new experiences) an evolution of previous beliefs and new experiences that had never been presented the way they were now.

I was not a CO before joining the Army. In fact I had argued the necessity of war with a number of my close friends. I used to believe that war was a tool that countries needed in which to defend their citizens and help destroy obvious evil in the world. After participating in a war and learning of the possibilities of a world without war I must leave the army and begin advocating for this world without war. I see that war is the reason for many of the problems in the world, not the solution. The family members of the man I saw killed for wearing a black piece of clothing will probably hate the USA for the rest of their lives. Without war there is much less to hate, to want to strike back against. War begets so much hate that without it, I wonder if the concept of terrorism could survive. I cannot, and will not, be part of an organization whose primary goal is to “close with the enemy and destroy them.” even in a non-combatant role.

***4) An explanation as to the circumstances, if any, under which you believe in the use of force, and to what extent under any foreseeable circumstances.***

Aggressive force should never be used. I believe in non-violent direct action for change on a systematic level. Non-violent direct action should be used to change the system and with our current level of globalization this can occur on the international level. Personally I am eagerly, looking forward to participating in anti war demonstrations, and generally living a life that advocates peace.

On an individual level, defense of one's own person against a personal and individual assault is always acceptable. The woman that is about to be raped does not have a non-violent civil disobedience option and as such should defend herself without concern for being too violent. The man that is being mugged should be able to defend against his attackers. The amount of force used should be just enough to ensure the defenders safety and should not continue past that point and turn into retribution. The key difference between self-defense and war is the size of the conflict and the organization of force. I see no reason to ever organize a group of people for the express purpose of violence, while an individual can be prepared for violence such as taking self-defense courses or carrying pepper spray they should not be the aggressor. There are no foreseeable circumstances that I would advocate war.

***5) Explain how your daily life style has changed as a result of your beliefs.***

I have begun to engage my friends in political conversations regarding the possibilities of a society without war. A culture that does not turn its eyes from violent acts, but actively tries to stamp them out. Not with band-aid fixes such as gun control or better lighting along dark walkways, although that is step in the right direction it is not a fix to the problem. The problem is a society that is ok with violence and in fact glorifies it to the point that young men and women actively seek it out and can gain reward from it at any military recruiting station. These ideas are a direct result of the new direction my reading habits have taken since returning from Iraq.

The pace of my daily life has changed, to include quiet time and time spent trying to help people around me. Time is also now devoted to creating a better environment for those around me or that I care about, either by making music or writing letters or many

other small things. My roommates and I have instated a recycling plan among our rooms, with the hope starting locally to make a broader change in our physical environment. It was in Karbala that I came to fully realize what I must do next, and that is to help people. My current goals include becoming a teacher so I will be able to show children different paths and solutions to conflicts rather than resort to the violence they see their country feels it must use. I joined Veterans for Peace and am actively looking for peaceful demonstrations to participate in and organizations that promote peace both globally and locally to join. My interest in various religions has also had a renaissance lately as I search for some of the answers my contact with war has raised. This includes visiting some of the holy sites located here in Europe, daily meditating, and increased spiritual reading. This change in my beliefs has affected everything I do. It has given me a new moral code in which to act and react with, in my daily life.

***6) Explain what in your opinion most conspicuously demonstrates the consistency and depth of your CO beliefs.***

My absolute refusal to pick up a weapon under the authority of the military for the purpose of waging war is the best demonstration of my beliefs. Who am I to judge whose life is more important? I have long valued the earth and its environment, to include the human environment, and now I understand my role in protecting it. I have dedicated large portions of my life to the protection of human life, the raising of the quality of life, and more actively to the education of those around me as to what they can do to help protect it. Now I look forward to the opportunity to again engage in actively educating people to the way of seeking peace and a more peaceful world for all. Probably the most conspicuous act I can do to demonstrate the depth of my belief is the act of submitting this application. I understand the way the army works and some of the subtler repercussions I will face upon submitting this application, but I can no longer in good conscience continue working for the army.

It is only having lived through a nearly full range of life experience that I am able to sense the depth of this belief. Having traveled full circle in many of my beliefs I understand now that these are reflections of my true self.