

Suber Locked Out

Barbara Sincavitch

1968

Tommie Suber arrived at the gates of Fort Wayne on August 5th at 8:00 a.m. to report for induction. He was chained to Father Bob Morrison, Ron Halstead, Kitty Denenfeld, and Victory Friedelman.

Supporting his move were forty people representing Youth for Peace Freedom and Justice, The Resistance and People Against Racism.

The chained group proceeded through the gates, straight toward the induction center and past the M.P. post. The M.P. in charge allowed them to pass, but suddenly with an astounded look on his face stammered at first softly, then loudly, "Wait a minute."

At that, the group stopped and went back to him. He asked where they were going and Tommie told him they were his "priest and friends."

The M.P. asked, "Is all this necessary?", looking at the chains—and Tommie said, "Yes, it is."

After some deliberation the M.P. said that they could not proceed to the induction center in the "present attire." To which Tommie replied, "You mean you're preventing me from reporting for induction?"

At that point there was a great pause while the wheels of the military mind cranked out and the M.P. finally said, "Wait a minute." He then went over and dispatched another M.P. to get help and asked them to go outside the gate.

The M.P. trotted off and within ten minutes the legions of decency led by the provost marshal and surrounded by a group of military flunkies confronted them.

Tommie then again explained that he was here for induction and it was his intention to report per his orders. He was told that he could report for induction but that he must take off the chains and proceed alone. Tom refused and said that he was going into the induction center in his present state. There was again a moment of dumb hesitation while the great minds deliberated.

A runner was again sent off by the provost marshal to gather instructions from higher authority. And again the five comrades-in-chains were sent outside the gates to wait.

While they were waiting two busloads of inductees came by and were greeted at the gate by chained hands giving the peace sign.

After a period of 10 to 15 minutes, an exhausted runner returned to report the wisdom of higher authority to the sergeant and the provost marshal. And again a confrontation took place.

Tommie insisted that he was going to proceed to the induction center in his present state: A demand to take off the chains was countered by an admission that there were no keys—to a threat that the army would cut off the chains (they sent for a wirecutter).

Tommie said that he didn't particularly want that done and anyway the chain was private property and if the army did it without his consent they would be committing a crime.

After much jawing back and forth, Tommie asked if they were in fact preventing him from reporting to the induction center. The captain said that they were not preventing him from reporting to the induction center but they would not let him proceed chained to four other people.

Tommie said that he had come to report for induction and started for the center.

The sergeant who was immediately in front of him reached out, grabbed the chains which united Tommie with Ron Halstead and forcefully stopped the group. Father Morrison then said to Tommie that the purpose had been served and that the military had in fact forcibly prevented him from reporting to the induction center.

Tommie asked if it were not true that he was being prevented by the military from reporting for induction in his present state. The captain said "Yes" and Tom then informed the captain that he was guilty of violating the Selective Service Law.

The chain gang left the army post to fight again, with the cheers of their forty supporters ringing in their ears.

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #60, August 15-September 4, 1968

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