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## Guide to the Oregon Emergency Farm Labor Service Oral History Collection, 1992

### Title

Oregon Emergency Farm Labor Service Oral History Collection (OH 08)

### Dates

1992 (inclusive)

### Creator

Oregon State University. Dept. of Anthropology.

### Summary

The Oregon Emergency Farm Labor Service Oral History Collection consists of interviews conducted in 1992 by Oregon State University students of five individuals familiar with farm labor in Oregon during World War II.

### Quantity

0.15 cubic foot, including 8 audiocassettes (2 boxes)

### Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research.

Oregon State University Libraries, University Archives  
121 The Valley Library  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, OR 97331-4501  
Phone: 541-737-2165  
Email: [archives@oregonstate.edu](mailto:archives@oregonstate.edu)  
Web: <http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/archives>

Finding aid prepared by Elizabeth Nielsen, 2009.

## Historical Note

The Emergency Farm Labor Service in Oregon was sponsored by the Oregon State College Extension Service to ensure an adequate farm labor supply during World War II and the years immediately after. Between 1943 and 1947, Oregon's Emergency Farm Labor Service assisted with over 900,000 placements on the state's farms, trained thousands of workers of all ages, and managed nine farm labor camps. Farm laborers included urban youth and women, soldiers, white collar professionals, displaced Japanese-Americans, returning war veterans, workers from other states, migrant workers from Mexico and Jamaica, and even German prisoners-of-war.

Leonard Adolf was born in 1921 in Bethune, Colorado and lived and worked on farms in Colorado and Washington. He earned his B.A. (1946) and Ph.D. (1953) degrees from the University of Washington. He joined the faculty of the Oregon State College History Department in 1955 and retired as Professor Emeritus of History in 1987. He specialized in Asian history and was instrumental in development of the Peace Studies certificate program at Oregon State University.

Eldon Earl Bevens was born in Dallas, Oregon, in 1925, and was the owner of Muir and McDonalds Tannery in Dallas, Oregon.

Lena Burien was born in Albany, Oregon, in 1909, and lived in the Albany-Corvallis area all of her life.

George and June Kalb were native Oregonians who lived on farms and worked in canneries and mills in the Willamette Valley during World War II.

O.E. Mikesell was an Oregon State Extension Service Agent in Linn County during the period of the farm labor program. Mikesell graduated from Oregon State College in 1934 and became the 4-H Club Agent in Linn County, a position he held until becoming the Agricultural Extension Agent for Linn County in 1943. He continued in this position until 1974, when he retired with 40 years of service for Oregon State University.

## Content Description

The Oregon Emergency Farm Labor Service Oral History Collection consists of five interviews conducted in 1992 of individuals familiar with farm labor in Oregon during World War II. The interviews were conducted by Oregon State University students in cooperation with the University Archives in preparation for the exhibit: *Fighters on the Farm Front: The Emergency Farm Labor Service in Oregon, 1943-1947*.

Interviews of the following individuals are included in the collection: Leonard Adolf; Eldon Earl Bevens; Lena Burien; George and June Kalb; and O.E. Mikesell. The primary topics addressed in the interviews are rural and farm life; work in canneries, mills, and a tannery; and life on the Oregon homefront during World War II.

The interview with Leonard Adolf address his work on farms in eastern Colorado and Washington as a child and young adult; his education and career as a history professor; his research in Asian history; and his participation in protests against the Vietnam War.

Bevens' interview includes information about the role of his tannery in the war effort and the use of emergency farm labor on farms in the Dallas, Oregon, area. Lena Burien describes home and farm life during the Great Depression and war years, gardening, canning, and growing crops for the local canneries; and her own children and grandchildren. The interview with George and June Kalb includes information about work in canneries and mills during World War II, rationing and sources of food during wartime, and their own experiences picking berries and hops as children.

O.E. Mikesell describes his work with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and as an Extension Agent, especially in food production during the war and the recruitment and assignment of farm workers.

The collection includes audiocassette tapes of the interviews, transcripts, brief biographical information, and interview logs for some of the interviews. There are two tapes each for three of the interviews (Adolf, Bevens, and Kalbs) and one tape for each of the other two interviews (Burien and Mikesell). A CD use copy of the Mikesell interview is also available in the Archives.

The interviews were conducted during fall term of 1992 by students in the Oral Traditions course (Anthropology 498) taught by Joan Gross. Interviewers were Tere Herrera (interviewed Burien and the Kalbs), Candace Johnston (interviewed Adolf), Dawn A. Stetler (interviewed Bevens), and Daniel Pike (interviewed Mikesell).

### **Preferred Citation**

Oregon Emergency Farm Labor Service Oral History Collection (OH 08), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

### **Acquisition Information**

The materials were transferred to the Archives by the Anthropology Department in 1993.

### **Related Material**

Extensive materials pertaining to the Emergency Farm Labor Program are part of the Extension Service Records (RG 111). The [Braceros in Oregon Photograph Collection](#) documents the activities of Oregon's Bracero workers during World War II. The *Fighters on the Farm Front* exhibit developed by the OSU Archives in 1993 is available [online](#) through the Oregon State Archives. The Extension Faculty and Staff Oral Histories (OH 14) include interviews with other Oregon State University Extension employees; the Soap Creek Valley History Project (OH 06) includes interviews with rural residents in Benton and Polk Counties.

### **Subjects**

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the OSU Libraries Catalog. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons, or places should search the catalog (<http://oasis.oregonstate.edu>) using these headings.

### **Organizations**

Oregon Emergency Farm Labor Program.  
Oregon State College. Federal Cooperative Extension Service.  
Oregon State University--Faculty.  
United States. Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

### **Topics**

Agricultural laborers--Oregon.  
Agricultural extension workers--Oregon.  
Agriculture--Oregon.  
Canneries--Oregon.  
Farm life--Oregon.  
History--Study and teaching (Higher)--Oregon--Corvallis.  
Tanneries--Oregon.  
Tanning--Oregon.  
Vietnam War, 1961-1975--Protest movements--Oregon.  
World War, 1939-1945--War work--Oregon.

### **Forms of Materials in the Collection**

Audiocassettes.  
Oral histories (document genres)

### **Other Creators**

Adolf, Leonard Allen, 1921-  
Bevens, Eldon Earl.  
Burien, Lena.  
Herrera, Tere Lynn.  
Johnston, Candace G.  
Kalb, George.

Kalb, June

Mikesell, O.E. (Oscar Edwin)

Oregon State University. University Archives.

Pike, Daniel.

Stetler, Dawn A.