

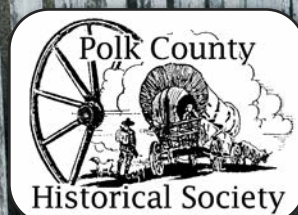
Itemizer-Observer  
Section C • Nov. 9, 2016

# HOME FRONT

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

*When the nation  
was at war*

Editorial  
Contributions  
made by:



# FEAR



Imagine hearing about an enemy attacking the United States 3,000 miles away. All you know is what you see in the headlines of the local newspaper ... and dark, ominous news reports on the radio. You are warned to be on the lookout for enemy attackers who are lurking just off the coast ... 60 miles away by road.

You scan the sky in search of bombers that might come inland from aircraft carriers that took part in the vicious attack.

Last week, you greeted your neighbors when you met them on the street and asked how their children were doing in school. This week, you look at them suspiciously wondering if one of them is a spy or saboteur who is supporting the enemies who just attacked without warning or provocation. You are relieved when they are gathered together and removed to a location where they can be monitored and prevented from aiding their relatives over there.

That was the situation then ... they lived without 24-hour news channels ... without cellphones, Facebook or internet.

Immediately after the attack, people lived in fear. What news they received was heavily censored. We had never been in this sit-

uation before — all we had to rely on as to what to expect and how to react was what we had seen in the newsreels showing Europe and Asia being overrun.

What can you do to help out? Men enlist or are drafted into the armed forces to fight the enemy directly. But those left at home — what can they do?

What Polk County and others all across the country did was to share the burden. They began to volunteer to become sky watchers. They collected, salvaged and turned in a myriad list of mundane materials that were in short supply but were desperately needed to continue the war. They supported the troops by helping with morale boosting activities — sending care packages and letters, organizing dances, knitting warm clothing items.

They pitched in to cultivate and harvest crops that were in danger of going to waste due the farm help away in the armed services. They took classes that prepared themselves to deal with emergencies as first responders. They “cheerfully” dealt with the annoyances of blackouts and rationing.

They did all this to help out in a time of need.

Would we do as well today?

Editorial for Home Front was submitted by the Polk County Historical Society.

A special thank you to these people at the PCHS: Sonya Ely, Ann Gage, Jo Ann King, Gloria Klimczak, Barbara Latham, Bette Jo Lawson, David Moellenberndt and Sue Robinson

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# History of agriculture in Polk County

Speech by Walter Leth (Farm Advisor), March 14, 1974

Abstracted from transcribed oral history cassette at Polk County History Museum

The war period was kind of tough on us. We had a hard time getting enough workers. We lined up all the women and all the kids we could get, and then we imported 1,100 Mexicans during that period.

If you ever saw a thrill, seeing those Mexicans come and get off the train out here past Eola a little ways, the train stopped and all these Mexicans got off, and the kind of gear and everything they had was a surprise. When I was down at the train to see them off, when they went back to Mexico, they all had nice new suitcases, all brand new hats and good shirts, good clothes and so on. It was quite a different sight than those that had gotten off the train, because they were so poor coming out of Mexico.

We almost had a riot out here; it wasn't our fault but we got blamed for it. A government man that was supposed to take care of feeding them, because it was on Friday, went back to Portland Friday evening because he wasn't supposed to work Saturday or Sunday, and our job wasn't to feed them but to place them with farmers.

So, I had a fellow working with me that was out of Klamath Falls. He went into In-

dependence and found a meat market there that let him have all the meat we needed on the cuff, and we made chili and got a bunch of tomatoes and got some women to help us, and we finally got those Mexicans fed.

They thought we were the ones to blame — and we weren't supposed to feed them at all — and we got them set up for a couple of days until this fellow came back from his weekend vacation and took over again. But this was a bureaucratic situation, and he could care less about those people wanting something to eat, and having traveled on the train as long as they had, they were pretty hungry.

At any rate, we recruited enough people in the war period so that we got enough people to do 308,000 man days of work — and that is an awful lot of work. You can do it when you have to.

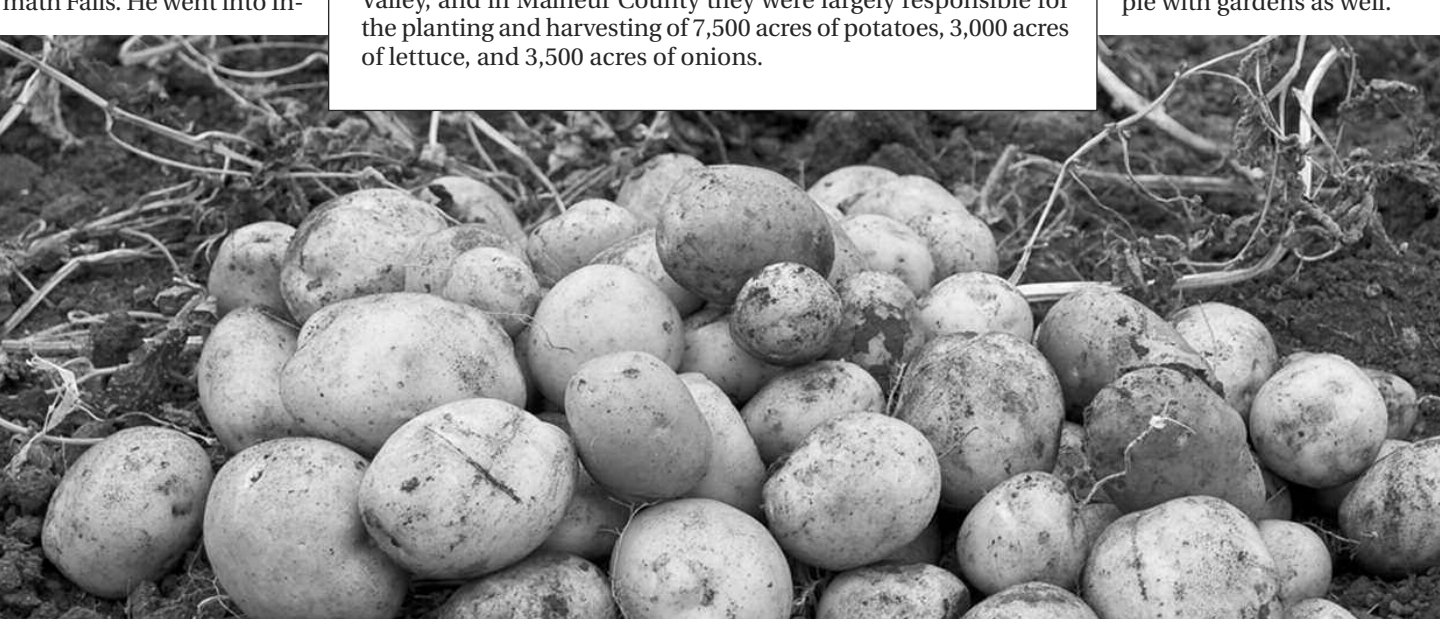
We had 29 new jobs handed to us in our office during that war period with gas rationing, machine rationing, baling wire rationing, and all that kind of thing to take care of. It is kind of interesting that, at that time, only 600 of the farms in the county grew gardens and during that war period, we increased that to 1,100. We had 1,300 city and town people with gardens as well.

## Farm wage rates soar in Oregon, top U.S. average

Definite indication of the demand for more hands on Oregon Farms to harvest "food-for-victory" crops and help care for livestock is shown by data on wage rate increases in a recent review of the agricultural situation, said L. R. Breithaupt O.S.C., extension agricultural economist. Specifically, farm wage rates were approximately 50 percent higher in Oregon this year on July 1 than at the same date in 1941, and more than twice as high as the five-year average from 1935 to 1939.

## POW laborers

The last years of the war saw the arrival of prisoners of war to work on Oregon farms. From 1944 to 1946, farmers could request help from POW laborers held at six camps operated by the Army in Oregon. Jackson, Benton, Polk, and Marion counties each had one camp, while Malheur County had two camps. More than 3,500 prisoners, mostly Germans, worked in Oregon fields. In 1945, they harvested 3.8 million pounds of hops in the Willamette Valley, and in Malheur County they were largely responsible for the planting and harvesting of 7,500 acres of potatoes, 3,000 acres of lettuce, and 3,500 acres of onions.







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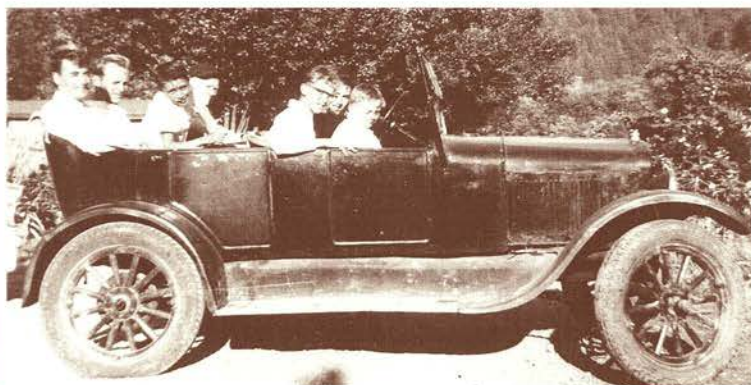
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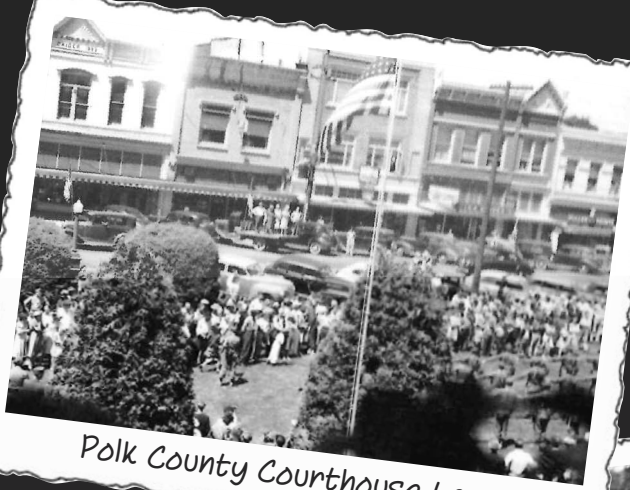
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# A Snapshot in Time



Hank & Winona Kliever



Polk County Courthouse Lawn



Scrap Drive — Academy Bldg.



Children's Parade — Clay & Jefferson

## The other cost of World War II

In one week's *Polk County Itemizer-Observer*, three notable articles appeared that illustrated the hidden cost of the war — the worry at home and the changed lives affected by wartime.

The paper was dated March 23, 1944, and included these headlines on the front page:

Valsetz Boy Missing in Action; Veteran Returns to Civilian Life; and General Conditions Good, Food Bad in Japanese Camp, Says Repatriate.

The veteran, T/Sgt. Frank Harms, stated he didn't see any enemy action, but he was in Hawaii and Australia while hostilities were going on all around the area. While he was in Australia, he suffered a punctured eardrum and had to be taken to Santa Barbara, where he was given a medical discharge.

The repatriate was the Rev. John Trachsel, who told of his five and half months in an internment camp in occupied China. He spoke at the Evangelical Women's Missionary Society at the

Evangelical Church. He recounted the conditions that he and many other missionaries had to endure. The multi-cultural group of missionaries, numbering about 1,700, all had been housed in an old Presbyterian Church.

The young Navy man, who was missing from a Valsetz family, was only 19 at the time.

This was one week in the life of three families from varied backgrounds and communities in Polk County. It is easy to see that it was a time of tremendous stress for everyone. Many of us know stories from our own families or friends of that time.

The late Richard Arvidson, of Dallas, was a civilian working in the Philippines for Pan Am airlines when the area fell. He spent several years in a camp for civilians. He was hesitant to talk of what he saw and experienced.

There are many stories to explore and much more to discover in the historical records and family genealogies at the Polk County History Museum.



# Happy Veterans Day



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*The Smith Cemetery, located near Lewisville; The English cemetery located near Airlie; The Butler Cemetery located near Monmouth; the Montgomery Cemetery located between Maple Grove and Pedee; The Heffley cemetery located on Fairview Road near Helmick State Park; The Liggett Cemetery located within the John W. Liggett donation land claim now within the property of Edward Dunnett; The Joseph Smith Cemetery located on Tampico School-Airlie road on property of John W. Smith; Family burial plot, located near Tampico School Road on property of B. A. Folks; Family burial plot located near Tampico School Road on property formerly owned by Mattie Sheppard. (I-O Sept. 10, 1942)*



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# Snippets from home and letters from over seas



**William C. Retzer, of Dallas**, has been appointed Polk County chairman by the Oregon Retail Jewelers association in a statewide drive for the collection of old costume jewelry to be sent overseas for use of American troops in bartering with natives on the South Pacific islands. (I-O Aug. 5, 1943)

**Postal Rates rise sharply on March 26** — Important changes in postal rates and fees have been announced by Tracy Savery, postmaster. These rates become effective on March 26, 1944. The rate for first-class mail for local delivery has raised to 3 cents for each ounce or fraction of an ounce. (I-O March 9, 1944)

**Lt. Bob Conwell, former Dallas boy**, wrote under date of Jan. 3 from Oflag prison camp in Germany to Bill Blackley, answering a letter Bill had written him last September. Lt. Conwell was captured by the Germans a year ago in the battle of Kaserine Pass. (I-O March 9, 1944)

**Mrs. Hoffman enlists in WAVES after husband killed in action.** Hoffman presented herself at the Salem Navy recruiting station two days after learning of his death to complete her enlistment. (Aug. 3, 1944)

**Dallas lumber in North Africa** — The lumber which has been rolling from the Dallas plant of Willamette Valley Lumber Co. is following closely in the wake of invasion bound troop on many fronts. A recent letter indicated "... have just built the best bed ever. The cross-piece underneath is a piece of lumber from the Willamette Valley Lumber Company." (I-O March 9, 1943)

**Bus speed limit effective July 1** — Pacific Greyhound Lines announce that beginning July 1, their buses in this area will be operated with a speed limit of 40 miles an hour. By running at this reduced speed, the bus company is cooperating with the government's rubber conservation program. (M-H July 2, 1942)

**Wonder drug tried here first time** — Penicillin, the wonder drug, which may revolutionize the treatment of many diseases which in the past have brought death in a high percentage of cases, is being tried here for the first time. It has not been available except in very exceptional cases until recently because of the heavy demand for service cases. (I-O June 8, 1944)

**Dallas heralds D-Day quietly with prayers** — With no overt display of jubilation, Dallas heralded D-Day Tuesday in quiet confidence — a manner that was typical, perhaps, of cities all across the nation. (I-O June 8, 1944)

**Guam similar to Valtetz terrain, says Dallas seabee in letter** — Coming through the battle in good shape, Burton McKibben carpenter's mate 2/c in the Seabees, tells of life on the island in a letter dated Aug. 9 to his mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Burton McKibben, of Dallas.

**Cotswold ram sent here from England** — Jimmie K. Riddell has purchased a yearling Cotswold ram from the famous Garn flock in the northern part of England. It came by way of St. Johns, Newfoundland, to Chicago, where it was crated and sent on to Monmouth by express. It arrived last week in good condition, and its new owner is well pleased with his purchase. It appears to be a typical Cotswold of even fleece and an extra fine ram. This is the first time in 25 years that a Cotswold has been imported to the section west of the Rocky Mountains. (I-O June 10, 1943)

**Harvest is test time** — Every person will be needed on the farms when crops are ripe. Unless every man, woman, and child able to assist in harvesting food crops participates in such a program, there is likelihood that much valuable material will be lost in this county, in the opinion of various growers as well as of W.C. Leth, county agent. (I-O June 10, 1943)

**Texas goat, purchased by Sergeant McCrae, arrives at Riddell Ranch** — Sgt. Kenneth McCrae, who is stationed at Camp Barkeley, Texas, recently made a trip to Vance, over in the Texas goat country, and purchased a purebred type C (ringlet) yearling buck from the flock of M. D. Taylor for William Riddell & Sons, Monmouth, well-known breeders with whom Kenneth was associated before the U.S. entered the war. (M-H Aug. 6, 1942)

**County jail sets vacancy record** — Crime evidently has reached a new low in Polk County. The county jail completed its 19th day without an occupant Wednesday to set a new record for recent years, according to T.B. Hooker, sheriff. Not a single meal has been served since July 28. The previous record, made last year, was for 15 days, but during that time, a few meals were served to prisoners who were held for a short time pending investigation, but who were released without having charges preferred against them. (I-O Aug. 17, 1944)

**No jail rush this hop season** — The war of something, has all but erased the time-worn custom of a full jail during the hop picking season. So far this year, according to Deputy Sheriff Tony Neufeldt, the maximum number of prisoners during the hop season has been four. At the present time (Wednesday), only one prisoner is in jail. During the past years, the average has run from eight to 15, with Sheriff T. B. Hooker many times being ready to put out the "standing room only" sign. In 1943, the peak was 16. (I-O Sept. 1943)



**Wood shortage closes library** — Due to the fact that the library board has been unable to purchase wood for fuel, the city library will be closed from March 1 (today) until further notice, according to R.R. Van Orsdel, president of the board. The imminence of the library closing was brought up by Van Orsdel at a recent hearing on a proposed raising of the ceiling on wood furnished by the Willamette Valley Wood Co. before OPA officials. Under the adjusted price asked, the library would have been able to purchase a 2-foot slab of wood from the company at \$6.75 per cord, \$1 higher than the former price. (I-O March 1, 1945)

**Clothes drive set for Russian relief** — A drive for used clothing for Russian war relief has been arranged in Dallas for the week of Feb. 5 to 9 inclusive. Dallas controller of civilian defense is the sponsoring organization. No new clothing or money is sought. The used clothing, however, must not be too ragged or worn to be of practical value and should not be dirty. (I-O 1945?)

**Camp Adair needs civilian cooks** — Camp Adair is in need of cooks, both male and female, for employment at the camp under civilian service, according to V.C. Lee, representative of the civil service commission at the camp. The positions pay \$1,440 to \$1,680. (I-O Aug. 13, 1942)

**Rickreall will hold an air raid practice** tonight (Thursday). The church bell will ring as the signal for all members of the community to assemble on the grade-school grounds. Every squad leader will be on hand to direct the activities of his group. Everyone in the community is urged to participate whether or not he has received personal notice. (I-O Aug. 20, 1942)



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