Finding Aid to the Clemmie Shuck Barry oral history, 1931-1978 (bulk 1975-1978), MS 3251

Finding aid prepared by California Historical Society staff; revised by Marie Dunlap in 2010.
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Title: Clemmie Shuck Barry Oral History

Date (inclusive): 1931-1978
Date (bulk): 1975-1978

Collection Number: MS 3251

Creator: Barry, Clemmie Shuck

Extent: Transcript and papers: 2 folders (0.2 Linear feet); Tapes: 9 audiocassettes

Repository: California Historical Society
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San Francisco, CA, 94105
415-357-1848
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URL: http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/

Language of Materials: Collection material is in English.

Abstract: Contains a transcript and sound recording of Lucille Kendall's interviews with Clemmie Shuck Barry, an interview history, and scattered personal papers documenting Barry's activities as a labor organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) in the 1930s, particularly during the 1934 strike at Sam Finkelstein & Sons in Norfolk, Virginia, and the 1936 strike at Friedman-Harry Marks Clothing Co. in Richmond, Virginia. Also documents Barry's involvement in the Communist party in San Francisco in the late 1930s and 1940s, and her efforts to integrate housing in Marin County in the 1950s.

Access
Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Clemmie Shuck Barry Oral History, MS 3451, California Historical Society.

General Note
NUCMC 82-438

Related Collections
The following oral histories were prepared by Lucille Kendall in her effort to document the lives of women labor activists and radicals for the California Historical Society's "Women in California Collection":
Dorothy Elizabeth De Losada Oral History, MS 3522
Elaine Black Yoneda Oral History, MS 3524
Helene Powell Oral History, MS 3518
Katherine Rodin Oral History, MS 3517
Louise Lambert Oral History, MS 3520
Marion Brown Sills Oral History, MS 3525
Mildred Edmondson Oral History, MS 3523
Sonia Baltrun Kaross Oral History, MS 3515
Violet Orr Oral History, MS 3516

The following oral histories were prepared under the auspices of "The Twentieth Century Trade Union Woman: Vehicle for Social Change," a project of the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, The University of Michigan-Wayne State University:
Separated Materials
The original sound recording from which the Barry oral history was transcribed is stored separately on cassettes 21.1-21.9.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.
Communists--California.
Discrimination in housing--California--Marin County.
Strikes and lockouts--Clothing trade--Virginia.
Women labor leaders--United States.
Audiocassettes.
Oral histories.

Donor
This oral history was transcribed from eight interviews with Clemmie Barry conducted by Lucille Kendall for the California Historical Society in 1975 and 1978. Papers were donated by Clemmie Barry.

Biographical Information
Clemmie Shuck Barry was born on August 24, 1901, in Edgar, Nebraska. She was the first person in her family to attend college, graduating from the University of Denver in 1927. After college, Barry directed educational programs for the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in West Virginia and New York. In 1934, Barry resigned from the YWCA and accepted a position as organizer with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA). Between 1934 and 1937, she organized clothing workers in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Georgia. Notably, she participated in the 1934 strike at Sam Finkelstein & Sons in Norfolk, Virginia; and acted as chief organizer during the 1936 strike at Friedman-Harry Marks Clothing Co. in Richmond, Virginia, which led to the 1937 Supreme Court case upholding the National Labor Relations Act (Labor Board v. Friedman-Harry Marks Clothing Co.).

In 1937, Clemmie and her second husband, Dick Barry, moved to San Francisco. There, she worked as a case supervisor for the State Relief Administration, volunteered as an organizer for the State, County and Municipal Workers Union, and became active in the Communist Party. In 1940, she was called before the California Un-American Activities Committee and subsequently blacklisted. In 1946, Clemmie and Dick Barry moved to Mill Valley, California, where Clemmie worked as a real estate agent. In 1952, she was fired and blacklisted after she and Dick sold some of their Mill Valley property to two African American families. In 1957, the couple moved to Lassen County, returning to Marin County ten years later after Dick suffered a massive stroke. At the time of the interviews, Clemmie Barry was an active member of the Marin County Commission on Aging and the Democratic Women's Council of Marin.

Scope and Content
This oral history collection consists of a transcribed copy and sound recording of Lucille Kendall’s interviews with Clemmie Shuck Barry; an interview history; and scattered personal papers, including correspondence, photocopied photographs, and newspaper clippings. The Barry interviews were conducted under the auspices of the California Historical Society's "Women in California Collection" as part of an oral history project documenting the lives of women labor activists and radicals in California.

The collection documents Barry's activities as a labor organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) in the 1930s, as well as her political, professional, and civic activities in San Francisco and Marin County from 1938 to 1978. In particular, it sheds light on two major clothing workers' strikes in which Barry served leadership roles: the 1934 strike at Sam Finkelstein & Sons in Norfolk, Virginia, and the 1936 strike at Friedman-Harry Marks Clothing Co. in Richmond, Virginia. The collection also documents Barry's involvement in the Communist party in San Francisco in the late 1930s and 1940s; her questioning by the California Un-American Activities Committee in 1940 and subsequent blacklisting; her efforts to integrate housing in Marin County in the 1950s; and her work as a senior citizens advocate in Marin County in the 1970s.