Finding Aid to the Rene Battaglini oral history, 1979, MS 3539

Finding aid prepared by California Historical Society staff; revised by Marie Dunlap in 2010.
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Title: Rene Battaglini oral history
Date (inclusive): 1979
Collection Number: MS 3539
Creator: Battaglini, Rene
Extent: 1 folder (0.1 Linear feet)
Repository: California Historical Society
678 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA, 94105
415-357-1848
reference@calhist.org
URL: http://www.californihistoricalsociety.org/
Physical Location: Collection is stored onsite.
Abstract: Contains a transcribed copy of Lucille Kendall's 1979 interviews with San Francisco labor organizer Rene Battaglini documenting his involvement in the labor movement of the 1930s and 1940s in San Francisco, as well as the history of the San Francisco hotel strikes of 1937 and 1941-1942.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English.
Access Restrictions
Collection is open for research. Readers must sign an agreement of use form.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Rene Battaglini Oral History, MS 3539, California Historical Society.
Separated Materials
The original sound recording from which the Battaglini oral history was transcribed is stored separately on cassettes 57.1-57.7.
Bertha Metro Papers, MS 3422
Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union Records, MS 458A
Louis Goldblatt Oral History, MS 3538
Phyllis Foley Oral History, MS 3537
Sam Kagel Oral History, MS 2465
Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's public access catalog.
Cooks Union, Local 44
Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union. Local 283 (San Francisco, Calif.).
Bars (Drinking establishments)--Employees--Labor unions--California--San Francisco.
Hotels--Employees--Labor unions--California--San Francisco.
Labor unions--California.
Restaurants--Employees--Labor unions--California--San Francisco.
Strikes and lockouts--California--San Francisco.
Oral histories.
Donor
This oral history was transcribed from six interviews with Rene Battaglini conducted by Lucille Kendall for the California Historical Society in 1979.

Biographical Information
As a member and officer of Local 44 of the Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union, Rene Battaglini was active in the San Francisco labor movement of the 1930s and 1940s, serving leadership roles in the hotel strikes of 1937 and 1941-1942. Born in Grenoble in 1905, Battaglini received his early labor education in France, where he participated in the syndicalist trade union movement. After stints in the French army and as a sous chef in Singapore, Battaglini moved to San Francisco, where he found work as a cook at the St. Francis Hotel, joining the Cooks' Union, Local 44, in 1931. The 1937 hotel strike was the turning point in Battaglini's labor career. During the strike, he headed Local 44's Patrol Office, later serving on the Board of Arbitration to establish a new contract. He then ran for union office on the progressive, rank-and-file ticket, holding successive offices as recording secretary, secretary-treasurer, and president of the Cooks' Union. As a union officer, he was active in the organization and conduct of the 1941-1942 hotel strike. At the age of 37, Battaglini was drafted into military service, serving in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) behind enemy lines. When he returned from the war, he resumed his duties as president of the Cooks' Union, a position he held until 1948, after efforts were made by the International Union to oust him and other suspected communists and communist sympathizers from office. Unable to find work as a cook in San Francisco, Battaglini returned to France and studied at the Sorbonne. Eventually, he moved back to San Francisco, where he began a new trade as a ship's clerk, joining Local 34 of the International Warehousemen's and Longshoremen's Union (ILWU).

Scope and Contents
This oral history collection consists of a transcribed copy of Lucille Kendall's 1979 interviews with San Francisco labor organizer Rene Battaglini; an interview history; a photocopy of a 1950 photograph of Battaglini; a copy of a speech given by Battaglini at the 1947 International Convention of the Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union opposing an anti-communist resolution; and an index to the transcript of the interviews.

The Battaglini interviews shed light on the history of the labor movement in San Francisco, California, and across the country in the 1930s and 1940s. While Kendall was primarily interested in documenting the San Francisco hotel strikes of 1937 and 1941-1942, her interviews with Battaglini cover a number of other labor-related themes, including: the organization of culinary workers in San Francisco; the role of rank-and-file progressives within the Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union; and the Red Scare of the late 1940s and its effect on unionism in the United States.