

9-25-2008

Interview No. 1602

Fred Bourland

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Interview with Fred Bourland by Julie Wise, 2008, "Interview No. 1602," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Fred Bourland

Interviewer: Julie Wise

Project: Bracero Oral History Project

Location: Keiser, Arkansas

Date of Interview: September 25, 2008

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1602

Transcriber / Summary: Mayra L. Avila

Fred Bourland was born in 1948 and grew up in Blythe, California in a small farming community; he attended school in a split term in order to be able to work the harvest season; he remembers working on his father's farmland; he picked cotton, soy beans, and wheat alongside Mexican workers; buses would bring in black men who worked as choppers, while white migrant workers, worked as pickers; Mexican workers were brought in when extra labor was needed, they would be subcontracted out to smaller farms; he remembers seeing 50 to 100 men working alongside one another; the Mexican workers were housed in barracks and slept in army cots; he recalls the Farm Bureau and Extension Agents in the fields, inspecting the conditions of the workers; he states that Mexican men were hard working and essential to picking his father's farm; he recalls men made .03 cents a pound of cotton, regardless of race; the town was segregated but Mexicans did not hangout around the town; he remembers them only going to the grocery store and returning to Mexico once their contracts ended. He explains that mechanization in the 1960s decreased the number of workers needed; he concludes by stating that he would welcome the program again and that hand picking was not abuse but hard work.

Length of interview 39 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a