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HERE ON THE EDGE: DID THE SUMMER OF LOVE REALLY BEGIN AT A WORLD
WAR II CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS CAMP ON THE OREGON COAST?

Oregon State University Press announces publication of *Here on the Edge*, the long-awaited story of how a World War II conscientious objectors camp on the Oregon Coast helped plow the ground for the social and cultural revolutions of the 1960s.

“These people had an enormous effect on the Sixties generation,” says author Steve McQuiddy. “But many Americans today are not even aware that there were conscientious objectors during World War II.”

Subtitled “How a small group of World War II conscientious objectors took art and peace from the margins to the mainstream,” *Here on the Edge* gives the complete story of Civilian Public Service Camp #56, located just south of Waldport on the central Oregon coast. There, pacifists and political objectors spent their daylight hours planting trees, crushing rock, building roads, and fighting forest fires—fifty hours a week, for no pay.

At night, they published books, produced plays, and made art and music—all during their limited non-work hours, with little money and resources. They were the Fine Arts Group at Waldport, and their focus was not so much on the current war, but on what kind of society might be possible when the shooting finally stopped. “Here on the edge,” they wrote, “we can only watch ... and bide on the time when what we are, and that for which we have taken this stand, can be tangent again to the world.”

This talented group included poet William Everson, later known as Brother Antoninus, the “Beat Friar” for his involvement with the 1950s Beat Generation; violinist Broadus Erle, founder of the New Music Quartet; fine arts printer Adrian Wilson, an early recipient of a MacArthur Genius Grant; Kermit Sheets, co-founder of San Francisco’s Interplayers theater group; architect Kemper Nomland, Jr.; and internationally renowned sculptor Clayton James.

Other notables involved with the Fine Arts Group include artist Morris Graves, poet William Stafford, fiery antiwar poet Kenneth Patchen, and iconoclastic author Henry Miller.

After the war, camp members went on to participate in the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance of the 1950s, which heavily influenced the Beat Generation of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg,

who in turn inspired Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters, leading the way to the radical upheavals epitomized by San Francisco's Summer of Love.

As the Fine Arts Group carved an unpopular path during the dark days of the 1940s, they were showing the way for the next generation, when a new set of young people, facing a war of their own in Vietnam, would populate the massive peace movements of the 1960s.

Twenty years in the making and packed with original research, this definitive history of the Fine Arts Group at Waldport explores how a legacy of art and peace resonated far beyond the borders of an isolated work camp for those who refused to fight what is often called "The Good War."

"Nearly all the great social movements in history can be traced to small groups working in obscurity, sometimes for years," McQuiddy observes. "It can be very useful for people to actually see the evidence of how small actions can make a big difference."

For more details:

OSU Press: <http://osupress.oregonstate.edu/book/here-on-edge>

Author's website: hereontheedge.com

Author bio

Steve McQuiddy writes and lectures on Pacific Northwest history and culture, particularly the eccentric quarter. His monograph, *The Fantastic Tale of Opal Whiteley*, has been widely cited and reprinted. He has written for *Salon*, *Mother Jones*, *Seattle Times*, and *Best Essays Northwest*, and has been awarded by the Society of Professional Journalists. He is an honorary director of the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission and currently teaches writing at Lane Community College in Eugene.

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