

# Oregon Flax Business Just About Extinct Now

By PAUL W. HARVEY JR.

SALEM (AP) — The 40-year-old dream that a thriving flax industry would develop in the Willamette Valley is all but shattered, and Warden Clarence T. Gladden of the state prison wants to close up the flax plant.

This plant, which turns the flax into fiber, was created 40 years ago to give the farmers help in starting the new industry.

Now it is the last prop keeping life in the dwindling flax business of Oregon. It is the only place where the Oregon flax farmers can sell their product.

**DIFFERENT**  
Ten years ago it was a different story.

World War II had just ended, and the flax plant had cleared a profit of \$1,200,000 from 1941 through 1945. There also were nine cooperative plants in the valley. Twelve thousand acres were sown to flax, of which the prison contracted for 3,500. There were several linen mills in the Salem area.

Things were good, then, because the Eastern linen mills couldn't buy from European sources. But as soon as the war ended, the market for Oregon flax diminished as the European flax returned.

Now, all nine cooperatives have folded up. The prison contracted for only 860 acres last year, and won't contract for a single acre this year. It is doubtful whether any flax will be grown in 1956.

All of the linen mills are gone from the state.

**LOSING MONEY**  
The flax industry started losing money when the war ended. It has lost \$120,000 since then, and now is losing \$20,000 a year. The industry, which for many years had guaranteed farmers \$60 a ton for No. 1 flax, has dropped its guarantee to \$52.

Gladden wants to get rid of the plant because he feels it is holding back his plan to establish new prison industries that will train convicts to hold jobs after they get out.

The money being lost could better be spent on new prison industries, such as a clothing factory, Gladden feels.

"Virtually all of the work in the flax plant," Gladden said, "is unskilled. A prisoner who works there isn't trained for anything."

"If you're going to have to have

an industry that's losing money, you might as well have one that will give men some training.

"The plant is a constant source of worry because it presents the greatest fire hazard imaginable. It's full of dust, and one spark could blow the place up."

**INMATES EMPLOYED**  
Gladden says the plant employs 165 inmates during the winter months, and as few as 16 in September. He objects to this seasonal nature of the work, because the plant workers have to be idle in the off seasons.

The convicts earn from 50 cents to \$1 a day in the flax plant. The Board of Control has been talking about closing up the plant. The 1955 Legislature passed a law authorizing the board to get rid of it.

Flax growing and processing is a long and complicated process, and the penitentiary has to pay the growers in advance for their crops.

The farmer plants it in March, with the prison's flax experts choosing the land and supervising the planting and cultivation.

It is ripe in 100 days, and then it is pulled and sent to the penitentiary, where it is de-seeded and stored through the winter.

In May of the year after harvesting, it is soaked for 4½ days, and then put into the fields for drying. In the fall, it is brought into the prison plant for extracting the fiber.

**WHOLE PROCESS**  
The whole process, from planting to removal of the fiber, takes 18 or more months.

After that, it's a matter of finding a market for the fiber. The prison now has 110 tons it would like to sell.

All sales are made through a broker in New York City.

Much of the new construction at the prison, including the wall, canteen and a warehouse, has been made possible by the lush flax profits in the war years.

Gladden doesn't think those profits are likely to be repeated. So he wants to sell out.

## Morty Meekle



## Guided Missile Info Given

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Pentagon has set loose a flood of new guided missile information in an evident effort to knock down Democratic claims that weapons development is lagging.

In less than two weeks, the armed forces have given details on four new guided missiles, ranging from short-range anti-aircraft to intercontinental types. The Pentagon also has disclosed improvements to two others.

It also was giving special treatment today to about 80 members of Congress who are visiting the Caribbean where the Navy is demonstrating its new guided missile cruiser Boston as well as the super aircraft carrier Forrestal.

The flood of weapons data is remarkable for the usually secretive Defense Department and indicates a change of policy since Senate Democrats first began steady criticism when Congress returned in January.

Less than three weeks ago, Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson said he wanted to quiet down guided missile talk because he thought the sales department was ahead of the engineering and production departments already.

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But shortly thereafter, the Navy took reporters to the Caribbean for a preview of the exhibition Congressmen were getting today. The Navy demonstrated its Terrier anti-aircraft missile in operation against a drone target, the first such public showing. It announced development of a new anti-aircraft missile, the Tartar, to be standard armament on future destroyers. It disclosed that a new, longer range Terrier is under development.

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## Concert To Benefit Scouts

The Girl Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls and the Boy Scouts will benefit from the ninth annual barber-shop quartet and chorus concert to be staged at the Pelican Theater on May 19, by the Klamath Falls Chapter of the SPEBSQSA, Inc.

From proceeds of the eight previous SPEBSQSA performances, these youth organizations have received sums totaling \$3,500 which has been used for improvement of the Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls camp at Lake of the Woods, known as "Esther Applegate Camp" and for the Boy Scouts camp at Crescent Lake.

A feature of the performance this year will be the 40-voice Cascade Chorus from Eugene-Springfield. This is the champion chorus of the Evergreen District of the SPEBSQSA and is the one which will represent the district in the International Chorus Contest to be held at Minneapolis on June 15.

The group has previously participated in contests at Detroit, Michigan and at Washington, D.C. The director is J. H. Leabo.

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Dancing 9 till 2

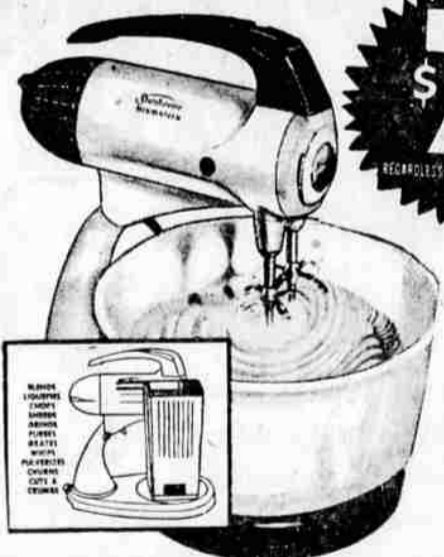
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