

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Arthur Ehrat

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Agriculture in Illinois* Oral History project

Interview # AI-A-L-2008-029

Arthur E. Ehrat, a farmer, small businessman, and possessor of several patents, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Agriculture in Illinois* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: June 16, 2008      Location: 209 Sunset Drive, Virden, IL

Date: July 10, 2008      Location: 209 Sunset Drive, Virden, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Newlyn Hosea, ALPL Volunteer

Technical Support (cameraman, etc): NA

Transcription by: Carolyn Berning, ALPL Volunteer

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 48      Total Time: 1 hr 46 min + 1 hr 17 min = 3 hr 3 min / 3.05 hrs

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The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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# Abstract

## Arthur Ehrat, *Agriculture in Illinois*, AI-A-L-2008-029

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Arthur Henry Ehrat was born on December 20, 1924 on a farm in Shobonier, Illinois near Vandalia. From an early age he assisted with virtually all farm activities until graduating from High School. After high school he tried a number of different jobs, ending up as the manager of a grain elevator near Virden, Illinois. Art discussed his life growing up on a farm in southern Illinois during the 1930s and 1940s, rural electrification, and the beginning of the farm bureau. He spoke extensively about the impact of the depression on farm life. There is a vivid description of a tornado that essentially destroyed the farm. The oil industry in the 1930's is discussed giving specific data on how the oil was drilled, processed, and used. In an appended interview he discusses at length the process of obtaining and defending his patent for the "breakaway rim" in basketball and two agricultural patents. His rims have been displayed in the Basketball Hall of Fame and in the Smithsonian.

Art describes the beginnings of the Brownstown Experimental Farm. His wife Mary worked in various Central Illinois banks. He has been married to Mary since 1954 and has two daughters. He has been an active member of a close German Lutheran community his whole life. He is now in very active retirement in Virden.

**Topics Covered:** Growing up on a southern Illinois farm, 1927-1944; rural electrification; farm life during the depression; early farm equipment; extended family and life on the farm; Illinois Farm Bureau; farm laborers; Case farm equipment; evolution of farm market forces; oil industry in rural Illinois; World War II and Japanese Internees from the west coast; grain elevator manager; Brownstown (IL) Experimental Farm; banking in Central Illinois ; 1940's Washington D.C.; obtaining, defending, and marketing patents; break-away basketball rim

**Note to the Reader:** Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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