

Kathy Lynch Murguia 1965-1983

I believe all the stories of the volunteers who came and joined the farmworker movement provide a depth important to understanding the success of La Causa. To chronicle these stories adds a critical piece to the history of the union. As volunteers, we joined the movement because we shared Cesar's dream of building a union for farmworkers.

In remembering Cesar, I recall him often telling supporters, "Don't forget us." It came as a gentle nudge, but for all its subtlety, the message was poignant. I would like to believe he was referring to farmworkers generally. Even today as I travel to and from different parts of California, seeing field workers, I think about their lives. Memories of my own experiences in organizing farmworkers are vivid. The relationships I developed during those years will never be forgotten. Recalling these friendships and related events continues to give meaning to my life. I believe what we accomplished remains unique in the history of union organizing.

As a child of the 1950s, and a young adult of the 60s, I believe my personal circumstances offered a rare variety of choices on how to live my life. In addition, they provide a context for understanding the level of commitment I brought to the movement, which I believe was true for volunteers generally. Personally, I was tired of platitudes and research studies. The notion of praxis or action came from Catholic liberation theology, and my spirituality became central to my decision-making process. Politically, I considered myself a mainstream Democrat. However, in my opinion, Marxism seemed to provide a fresh interpretation on understanding the dynamics of the political reality of the period.

In the early 60s I was a student at Berkeley, in my second year of studies, when my mother died. In the months following her death, I lost interest in my studies. My involvement with Newman Hall, a Catholic student center at Berkeley, intensified. There I met and became friends with a French Catholic Worker priest, Fr. Jacques Valentin. He told captivating stories of his work with the French Underground during World War II. Indirectly, Jacques taught me to think like a cultural radical. With his encouragement, I left the Bay Area and went to France to study. I attended the Catholic Institute and later, the Sorbonne. During this time, France was at war with herself over the Algerian question. Plastic bombs were exploding in the heart of Paris. Military police were everywhere. Student demonstrations in support of a free Algeria gave me my first taste of political activism. I returned to Berkeley in 1963 with an altered perspective on politics and social change.

I resumed my studies at Berkeley, and returned to Newman Hall, where I became friends with a group of students who referred to themselves as "Amigos Anonymous." They had traveled to rural communities in Mexico and worked at building schools, libraries, etc. Several were associated with Friends of SNCC and were planning to go to Mississippi to work on voter registration. I joined them in late June of 1964, driving a car that was needed in Holly Springs, Mississippi. During those early years of political activism, I was involved in other projects, though I felt most comfortable working with folks associated with the

Catholic Worker. It was through my association with this group that I came in contact with Citizens for Farm Labor (CFL). They had been active for many years and were focused on creating a network of support and advocacy on behalf of farmworkers. They published a small magazine, *Farm Labor*. It was hand-collated and printed articles about California agriculture and farmworkers. CFL members were also active legislatively. Because I had briefly worked in fruit sheds in north San Jose, CFL asked me to provide testimony to the California Industrial Welfare Commission. I did so. In 1964 the commission issued its first wage order covering women and minors in agriculture. I worked with them as a work-study student beginning in the fall of 1964.

Although I was a student during those early years (1963-65), my interests were elsewhere. I was active in various campaigns and projects. I worked on a voter registration drive in support of the Rumford Fair Housing Act and joined fellow students in front of Sproul Hall in a face-off with the Hell's Angels. I joined the crush of students who protested the banning of tables on campus, which led to the free speech movement. I watched as Mario Savio was dragged from the podium of the Greek Theatre; I supported the sit-in at Sproul Hall, picking up friends who had been arrested and transporting them back to Berkeley. I canvassed the produce markets in West Oakland for vegetables for the soup kitchen at the Peter Maurin House and was mesmerized as Ammon Hennacy talked about the green revolution. I was active in the anti-war movement and once fell off a troop train during an anti-war demonstration. The latter resulted in my being fired from my job as a part-time swim instructor with the Albany Unified School District.

I include this personal background to provide a context for my decision to join the farmworkers as a full-time volunteer in 1965. As I entered adulthood, I was barreling down a path of activism based on a belief that social change within our constitutional framework was a moral imperative. I saw the farm labor movement—along with the civil rights and anti-war movements—as being on the cusp of that change. I was naïve enough to believe that we were engaged in completing the Revolution of 1776.

When the Delano grape strike began in September of 1965, I went to Delano with a Bay Area food caravan. I was still working with Citizens for Farm Labor at the time and was also in my last semester at Berkeley, where I was majoring in sociology. During this first month of the Delano strike, Cesar's National Farm Workers Association had voted to join forces with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO, headed by Larry Itliong. Within a short period of time I was traveling on my own to bring food, clothing, and money raised on campus to Delano. On one of those weekend trips, while at the office on Albany Street, I met Cesar. He seemed reserved and tentative as he made the rounds serving wine and greeting supporters. I recall having a discussion with Doug Adair and Bob Salodov, and later meeting Dolores Huerta, who urged me to come out to the picket line the next morning (Saturday). I settled in the pink house behind the office where other volunteers were stretched out in sleeping bags. We rose early and slipped out into the misty morning air. I joined a group leaving in a large station wagon. We fell in line with a caravan of cars headed for the fields in search of workers. Most of the table grapes had been

harvested and there were gondola crews picking wine grapes. The caravan slowed and began pulling off the road, lining up one by one on the dirt. A striker in the lead car exited with binoculars. Others joined him, pulling out picket signs and bullhorns. The striker with the binoculars was Manuel Vasquez. He climbed on top of his car and peered into the fields, then asked for a bullhorn. What followed was an eloquent speech to the workers explaining the strike and urging them to leave the fields and join the picket line or work elsewhere. Others on the picket line joined him, shouting, "*Huelga. Venganse con nosotros!*" ("Come with us.")

After returning to Berkeley and my classes, I began planning my next trip to Delano. My routine became to collect food, clothes, and money during the week and on weekends, travel to Delano. I worked with another student, Richard Boyden, from the Student Committee on Agricultural Labor. We asked for donations of food and money at tables at the local Berkeley co-op and staffed a table outside Sather Gate on Telegraph Avenue. In early November, we received news that Cesar was coming to the Bay Area on a speaking tour and we needed to plan a noon rally. Richard took care of most of the logistics, public address system, paperwork for the UC bureaucracy, etc. It helped that his dad was a professor of music on campus. I hunted down coffee cans, wrapped bumper stickers around them, and created a leaflet. I used the resources of CFL. I found a small photo of Cesar and I wrote a message, using CFL's mimeograph machine.

The night before the rally, Cesar spoke at a local high school auditorium. It was a good turnout of local community supporters. LeRoy Chatfield was there, as was Roger Terronez, who had come to organize the Bay Area boycott. Cesar was a mixture of eloquence and humility. People listened. I was transfixed. He was enthusiastically received. I left a pack of leaflets regarding the noon rally at Sproul Hall and went to check in with Richard, who was working on the Sproul Plaza rally.

The following day, I was apprehensive. We had left leaflets everywhere, having posted them around the campus. Details of how things proceeded are sketchy in my memory. I do recall we had a great crowd and that during his speech, Cesar paused and read a note he had been handed. He announced that 44 Delano strikers had been arrested, including his wife, Helen, for exercising their right to picket. He went on to describe what it was like on a Delano picket line and why he was asking for support. Before ending, we started passing the cans. I took charge of a big bucket that was a deposit for the cans. Things moved very quickly at that point. The idea was to capture folks at the point they felt compelled to respond to the injustice Cesar was describing. It worked. At one point, Wendy Goepel asked me to find her at the end of the rally. She had come with Cesar and was driving him to San Francisco State University for another speech. As the rally ended, I along with my bucket joined them. Wendy asked me to go with them. She drove her Volkswagen, with Cesar in the passenger seat and me in the back with the bucket. I was eager to get a total on the contributions. I was amazed at the checks for \$20, \$50, and the bills. There was change, but the majority was paper. As I sorted, I knew we had done well. I clipped together the stacks and gave a tentative estimate of over \$6000 in donations for the strike. Cesar had a

huge grin on his face. I love to sing, and for whatever reason I began to sing a lively ballad called "The Fox." I was elated.

My life became simple from that point on. At the same time, what I did became a puzzle to my family and friends. I moved into a house with a friend, Erica Gordon, who also supported the strike and had been active in organizing workers in Porterville. Through Erica, I came in contact with the Bay Area boycott staff, including Roger Terronez and Gilbert Padilla. I began joining picket lines at the docks and working with a UC professor, John Leggett. After receiving information on a truckload of Delano grapes headed for shipment from Oakland, we'd track them, setting up a picket line when they arrived at the docks. LeRoy Chatfield and Gilbert had been working with the International Longshoremen's Workers Union (ILWU) and Jimmy Herman from the Ship's Clerks to provide support. That strategy was delicate, given sections of the National Labor Act that refers to "hot cargo."

I stopped going to classes after Christmas break. After traveling to Delano the weekend before Christmas with my VW loaded with presents for the little huelgistas, I knew I wanted to become a full-time volunteer. Upon returning to the Bay Area, I began to seek out union staff. There were strikers from AWOC and the NFWA leadership that formed the core of the picket lines. I began to work with Roger Terronez. I kept track of the names of supporters who wanted to help or had given donations of food, clothing, or money. We began to set up a mailing list used for contacting supporters for major events. In late January, while I was collecting donated reams of paper from a community group in Oakland, I received a call from Delano. Roger had been killed in a freak auto accident. His battery had died and he was asking for a push to get back on the road north after having spent time with his family and meeting with Cesar. The bumpers had locked and while separating them, he had fallen backwards as the car accelerated, fracturing the base of his skull. En route to the county hospital in Bakersfield, he died. The stark truth of poverty sent a harsh message. I felt numb as all organizing stopped and plans were made to attend services in Hanford, where Roger had been recruited by Cesar to organize workers. As a NFWA vice president, organizer, father, and husband to Gloria, he was mourned. The all-night vigil became a meeting place of organizing and praying the rosary. Before I returned to Berkeley, I was introduced to Jack Ortega, who would be taking over the Bay Area boycott. It was weeks before I could shake my sadness. I was eager to be assigned to the Delano office.

In mid-February I received a call informing me that I was needed in Delano. I was assigned to work for Jim Drake in the Albany Street office, writing thank-you letters to supporters. I left the following day, packing my trunk and stuffing my life's belongings into my VW bug. Upon arriving, I was directed to a volunteer house in west Delano. The majority of steady volunteers lived together. Among others were Augie Lira, Donna Haber, Bob Solodow, and Donna Childers. I found my corner and settled in.

I reported to the office the next morning and began what became an endless effort to keep

up with the correspondence to thank supporters for their donations. I became an expert at signing Cesar's name. I reported to Jim regarding my workflow. At the same time I became part of the office crowd, which included Esther Uranday, Helen Chavez, Fina Hernandez, Donna Haber, and Donna Childers. What a group. Helen, Cesar's wife, was in charge of the farmworkers' credit union. Her frank honesty and warm regard for others immediately drew me to her.

I was given other responsibilities in the following months. I'd attend the Friday night strike meetings at a local church hall and take notes. I understood Spanish and was able to get the main issues discussed into a report. Before the meeting, I would go to the local bank, cash a check from the strike fund and distribute the \$5 weekly stipend. Strikers and volunteers signed for their money after the completion of the Friday night meeting. It wasn't much, but it meant a great deal to all of us. The meeting was always upbeat and full of spirit. At the end we'd sing strike songs like "*Solidaridad*" and "*Nosotros Venceremos*." We would end with "*De Colores*." Families were scheduled to pick up food boxes and clothing donations. Julio and Fina Hernandez were in charge of this. At that time the NFWA strike kitchen and donation storage area was located in a Quonset hut not far from what is today the Forty Acres. As time went on, volunteer life took on a rhythm that seemed freshly connected with truth and an emerging sense of collective power.

During the March to Sacramento (*La Peregrinación*), I was responsible to Marshall Ganz for getting needed supplies from the Delano office to the marchers. In the first weeks of the march this was fairly simple, but as the distance and numbers increased, it became more difficult. But then again, the march took on a life of its own and people began flocking to the nightly rallies. Resources and supplies began to go directly to the marchers. Items like buttons, flyers, *El Malcriado* (the union newspaper published by Bill Esher), and bumper stickers were in constant demand. When the march passed the halfway mark, I relocated to Sacramento. We were housed in a large Catholic church in West Sacramento. I recall that for at least a week before the arrival of the marchers, I was instructed to make hundreds of "Boycott Schenley" picket signs. The good news came down the night before the marchers entered Sacramento: We had signed a contract with Schenley and the new targets were S&W Foods and Treesweet labels related to DiGiorgio farms. Needless to say, we stayed up all night changing the signs. We created some simple stencils and used dozens of cans of spray paint to redo the signs.

When the marchers—10,000 strong—entered the capitol area in Sacramento, I received an urgent call from one of the march captains. A supporter who had recently joined the march was having what appeared to be a heart attack. I went to the site and spoke with an elderly farmworker who was in distress. It was not an acute emergency, so I decided to take him to the local hospital rather than call an ambulance. After he was assessed at the emergency room, he was treated and we returned to the capitol. We laughed when we learned we had missed most of the festivities and speeches, but agreed this was only the beginning and there would be other marches. I was relieved he had recovered from what the doctor described as slight dehydration.

When the volunteers returned to Delano, we were given a short vacation that included a barbecue at Lake Wollomes. Then it was back to the picket lines and office routines. During this time I became good friends with Helen Chavez. I wanted to teach her how to drive. I thought it was a strain to take care of all the things she had to do--going to the picket lines in the mornings, working full time, and managing her family's needs. I often came over on the weekends to give her rides or to go shopping, where we looked for specials on hot dogs or hamburger meat. The family would all throw in their weekly stipends to buy things that didn't come in food donations. Also we would deliver the bread that her cousin Susie brought from Los Angeles. At one point she asked me if I'd like to stay with the family. I felt shy at first, but when she asked again, I said yes. I moved from the marginal chaos of a volunteer house to the Chavezes' small, two-bedroom home on Kensington Street. The children were special. When Helen was absent, Sylvia, Linda, or Eloise was in charge. They seemed to be always cleaning and keeping the younger children in line. The sleeping arrangement was novel to me. Bobo, Birdie, and Titibet slept in the front room on the floor or the couches. The older girls (Sylvia, Linda, Anna, and Tota) slept in the other bedroom. Fernando slept in a covered porch area at the back of the house. The younger ones would compete for the couch. Usually Babo (Paul) won that one. When I'd come, we shifted. I got the couch and Babo went on the floor. I have great memories of my stay with the family.

Cesar was busy most of the time and I saw very little of him. But when he was around, the younger children were lively in their efforts to get his attention. A funny memory I have is the evening I returned from the Bay Area after a visit to my family. I had picked up some new political buttons. Because Cesar was always interested in buttons, I had planned to give them to him. I had one pinned on my shirt that said "Honkies for Huey." He stared at it and finally asked, "What's a honky?" I recall blushing deeply as I unpinned the button and handed it to him and said, "That's what I am."

There's one memory that is important in explaining how I came to spend the next 18 years of my life with the union. In the spring of 1967, I met my husband of 36 years, Lupe Murguia, at Lake Wollomes. I had recently returned from the Oxnard area where I had been coordinating the boycott of Mayfair Stores. When time allowed, I would round up little huelgistas and take them to a local recreation area and give swimming lessons. Lake Wollomes, southeast of Delano, was an oasis in the heart of the Delano grape country. On weekends, families went there to barbecue, swim, and play games.

It was a weekday afternoon, and my little class was in the water practicing breathing. As I demonstrated, I turned my head to the side and noticed someone studying me. I was uncomfortable, but went on. Afterwards, when the kids were drying off, he approached me. He was a farmworker and I wondered where he worked. I was taken by his warm and pleasant demeanor. His eyes were soft and seemed interested in what I was doing. We spoke in Spanish and I made an effort to explain the importance of "drownproofing" and bobbing and other aspects of water safety. He listened, and the conversation turned to his

work. I learned he was an organizer who was working with the Migrant Ministry and was in Delano for a meeting. I asked him if he was a priest. He laughed at this and explained he was with the worker-priests and he was the part that was a worker. He had been working at Gallo Vineyards near Modesto, but was waiting for reassignment. I was fascinated.

After leaving Lake Wollomes with the children, I reflected on our talk and looked forward to the possibility of seeing him again. The following week, we had dinner. We talked more about his work. He was going to be organizing workers at Guimarra Vineyards. He had already been hired on and his job was to talk to the workers about the union and have them sign authorization cards. I told him what I was doing, which wasn't very glamorous. Because I was between assignments, I went to the newly purchased Forty Acres to work with a crew on land cultivation. We were actually shoveling chicken manure into a plowed section of land.

As the week ended, I received word that Cesar wanted to see me. When I arrived at the office, Eliseo Medina and Eddie Frankel were also there. Cesar explained with unusual seriousness the current situation in Rio Grande City, Texas. Gilbert Padilla and Bill Chandler were very concerned that it would soon erupt into violence. Gilbert had reported that the Texas Rangers were beating strikers and carrying shotguns on the trainloads of melons leaving the valley. Some of the strikers had begun to carry guns.

That afternoon, we left for Texas. After driving all night and half the morning, we entered Rio Grande City and saw sheriff cruisers loaded with farmworkers leaving town. We later learned from Gilbert that dozens of strikers had been arrested for picketing. We developed a plan and started talking with the strikers at the strike kitchen. We worked closely with the families and began a campaign with a leaflet entitled "*El Guzano Melonero*" ("The Melon Worm"), to explain how nonviolence works. This, however, did not stop the violence of the Texas Rangers. One evening, after drinking at the local hotel, the rangers broke into a residence where strikers and volunteers were staying. They shotgun-whipped whomever they could reach. Magdaleno Dimas and several others were hospitalized. Gilbert was livid. He contacted Cesar to get help from the clergy and press. We began getting depositions from all the strikers on ranger violence. Gilbert set up a meeting with Governor Connelly to present the evidence of the rangers' misconduct. Eddie, Gilbert, and I started off several days later to meet the governor. We arrived in the late afternoon and were ushered to his office. He was receptive to what Gilbert had to say and after receiving the depositions, indicated he would carefully review the situation. The point was made. The rangers were withdrawn from the strike area, leaving local sheriffs to continue their arrests. Along with strikers, I was arrested several times that summer for secondary boycotting. We rocked the top floor of the Rio Grande City Jail with chants of "*Queremos Leche.*" The state statute outlawing secondary boycotting was later overturned.

After a two-month intensive campaign I returned from Texas and again saw Lupe. We continued to talk. What I recall about Lupe was his patience and warmth. As the summer ended we spent more and more time together. He talked about his work with the Migrant

Ministry and his current assignment. He was still working as a “submarine” at the Guimarra vineyards. He had been successful at signing up workers, but was unsure whether the Guimarras would recognize the union. He was anticipating a strike. He also talked about his life and his children from a former marriage that had turned bitter. He showed me pictures of his three children, Ana, Delores, and Joaquin, who were living with his former brother-in-law. He had legal and physical custody of them. He talked about how he had lost the fingers on his left hand in an accident in Firebaugh and of how he met Cesar at a hospital in Fresno. He also spoke of his love of Mexico, and his village, Zapotitlan.

The memories of his youth were mixed with pain and struggle, but also excitement and joy. The celebrations and traditions of Lupe’s village, along with his extended family, formed a rich basis for his identity. Lupe knew himself, and this confidence was comforting. I fell in love with my husband that summer and with all his memories, his family, and his hopes and dreams of building a union for farmworkers. The sweet smell of the maturing grapes mixed in with his clothes at the end of his workday, and the red-and-yellow patterned woolen *covija* added warmth and comfort in an unquiet and threatening world. We were at war in Vietnam and also, it seemed, at home. In September, I was again assigned to the Bay Area boycott. Lupe followed me to Oakland and asked me to marry him. We were married on October 14, 1967. Helen and Cesar were our padrinos. Bill Kircher took photographs.

My first child, Jose Ricardo, was born the following year. My good friend Mandy (Cohen) had spoken with me about new birthing techniques and her experience with Lamaze. This approach was revolutionary to the medical profession in the mid-1960s. After reading various books, I decided to have a Lamaze birth. Mandy became my coach in the absence of Lupe, who was organizing. I also learned to avoid Delano water, which, according to groundwater reports, was tainted with pesticides and unsafe for pregnant mothers to drink. Though I had explored the idea of giving birth at home, in the end, the staff at Kern General Hospital was in charge of Ricardo’s birth. My water had broken early and upon being admitted to the hospital, I was given a shot to initiate my labor. The nurses joked with me as I tried Lamaze breathing techniques. Their comments of “panting like a puppy and rubbing my belly like a monkey” had their effect. The end result of the birth of a healthy Ricardo created an intoxicating joy. Lupe and I asked Cesar and Helen to be godparents to Ricardo. They agreed and Ricardo was baptized at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Delano.

During the next 16 years, my volunteer story is woven into the life of my family. Our circumstances of daily living involved remaining active in the union movement. After the birth of Ricardo in 1968, Lupe remained an active organizer, participating in various campaigns. In the spring of 1968, we attended masses and local meetings surrounding Cesar’s first fast. After the fast, we were assigned to the Oxnard area to work on Bobby Kennedy’s voter registration drive. As the primary election drew closer we moved to the East Los Angeles area to work on the “Viva Kennedy” campaign. As the election approached, we were assigned to El Monte to work on the “Get Out the Vote” effort. We

were proud of the percentage of eligible voters who voted that day. In some precincts we had a 90 percent voter turnout. We came to the Ambassador Hotel after the polls closed to wait for election results and found it packed with Kennedy revelers. Dolores Huerta worked with the Kennedy staffers to open another ballroom and a TV was mounted so we could watch the proceedings. A dream was shattered that night. Bobby's death was beyond what I knew to be rational. It was chaotic, rageful, and tragic. I don't remember how we got back to Delano.

Later that summer we were assigned to coordinate the San Francisco Bay Area boycott. Our staff included Cesar's daughters Linda and Eloise and Dolores's daughter Lori. We worked tirelessly to organize a support base promoting union grapes and having chain stores stop their purchase of scab grapes. We targeted various retail outlets and our first victory was Cala Foods. Other local volunteers joined our staff. Among them were Fred Ross, Jr., Jim Cassell, Jan de la Cruz, and Vivian Levine. We continued to have the solid support of the ILWU, thanks in no small part to Jimmy Herman and Don Watson. There's an interesting story of how Harry Bridges crossed a farmworkers' picket line, but that isn't important in this story. We gained a strike sanction from the local teamster joint council and shut down the docks completely to the export of scab grapes. The boycott was never stronger in the Bay Area.

We were living at the Sacred Heart Church on Fell St. in San Francisco. Fr. Eugene Boyle was the church rector and a union supporter. He offered us hospitality and allowed us to live in the church auditorium. We set up our household on a stage located in the back area of the building. Joaquin, Ana, and Delores had joined the family. We organized cooking in the kitchen and the kids had a large play area. Dave Perlin and his wife, Gloria, were soon assigned to work with us. Our campaign had gained momentum.

It was during our stay at Sacred Heart that I learned the Murguias were to have a new family member. I didn't learn there were two until I delivered twins at 28 weeks' gestation. I had suspected twins, but my doctor discounted my concerns. They were born on December 12, 1968, el *Dia de La Virgen de Guadalupe*. Jose Guadalupe and Pablo Luis were born too early. Their lungs were too weak and their bodies too small to survive more than several hours. I grieved their loss alone on a medical ward. I thought about the dock supervisor who had driven a forklift into our picket line the week before, bumping and knocking several of us to the ground. I anguished over the hours I had spent pushing myself beyond reason for a mother carrying twins. If I had only known they were twins. Lupe had told me to slow down, but the work was endless. In the end, I learned an important lesson about setting personal limits. I told myself, never again. There was no ceremony. Our two sons are buried in an unmarked grave in a Catholic cemetery in Colma.

I didn't realize the impact of this experience until I began to make decisions regarding the needs of my family versus the needs of the movement. In 1969, while still working on the San Francisco boycott, Lupe was reassigned to the Coachella Valley to organize. I urged Jim Drake to assign a new boycott director. I was burned out and not willing to continue in

a leadership role. In the end, I was given permission to return to Delano. Together with the children, Lupe and I returned to Delano. We lived in Tony and Rachel Orendain's house on Belmont Street in Delano. The Orendains had relocated to Texas to continue the organizing efforts. I was again expecting. The birth of a healthy child was my focus. I was lonely in some respects and missed the intensity of being involved full time in the union's organizing activities. Then again, I recalled the loss of my twins and realized that my family was my life. If I was not there for this child at this stage of her life, who would be?

Maria Guadalupe was born on December 10, 1969. That year became a time for healing. It was the first of my experiences in learning how to survive in a union movement that demanded and needed so much. To be fulfilled as a volunteer, however, required the honesty of stepping back, and saying no to the demands of the leadership. Between 1969 and 1983, there were new campaigns. But central to my life were the births and lives of my children: Jose Raymundo, born on May 18, 1971, Benito Benjamin on November 4, 1972, and Salvador Miguel on April 22, 1975.

In the spring of 1970, Lupe and I were assigned to work with LeRoy and Joe Serda on the Los Angeles boycott. We lived on Whittier Blvd. My time was occupied with childcare. I helped other women who had children and we worked on helping each other so that we could give some time to the boycotting efforts. In April, Cesar came to talk with Lupe and me. He spoke about a property that the National Farm Worker Service Center had recently purchased in an area east of Bakersfield. He described it as a quiet retreat bordered by a small creek running through in the mountains of Tehachapi. I fell in love with his idea and the notion of an educational retreat for farmworkers--a place where they could come and learn and be away from the struggle of the organizing campaigns. Lupe and I talked. I recognized it as an opportunity to establish stability for our family,

In early May of 1970, we moved to Stoneybrook Retreat, which was previously a Kern County--operated tuberculosis sanatorium. The nearly 200-acre property consisted of residences, small dormitories, an administration building, a large hospital complex, and what was called the North Unit. There was a large kitchen and boiler building. It was a self-contained compound. A small staff of county employees continued to reside on the property after we arrived. We were to conduct an inventory and learn how to operate the various systems and operations of the complex, which included the boiler-heating system, the plumbing, irrigation, and sewer systems, the kitchen appliances, etc. Mastering the great chains of keys was a challenge. We moved into one of the residences directly in front of the kitchen. There were two large bushes in front of the house. As soon as I learned they were oleanders and their flowers poisonous, I cut them down. Cesar was not happy with this decision. Be that as it may, we settled in and began our work.

We were still working on the inventory, and Lupe had formed a good working relationship with one of the county staff who was training him on the systems, when Richard Chavez arrived with strikers from Coachella. Until then, the county had believed a Hollywood producer had purchased the property. They had no knowledge that the National Farm

Worker Service Center had assumed ownership. This knowledge created an uproar. The county employees were pulled out the following Monday. Headlines in the *Bakersfield Californian* were to the effect that Chavez had taken over Stoneybrook. The local residents in Keene were enraged to find out who their new neighbors were. Nuestra Señora de La Paz, as the complex was later named, had a very turbulent beginning.

When Richard, the strikers, and the county staff left, Lupe and I, along with Maria and Ricardo, were alone. It was a quiet loneliness in the shell of a huge complex. But the creek was friendly and the many oak trees spread along the rolling landscape created warmth. La Paz was beautiful. Of course, there were the trains ... but it was still a pleasing place to be. Lupe, who is never short on confidence, continued his work. I focused on cleaning up the kitchen and hospital area.

Later that week, I had a visit from a local Keene resident, Eva Jacobs. She looked concerned as she explained to me that there was a group of local ranchers at the Keene store drinking beer and plotting to run us off the property. They had gathered as a group with their shotguns, and in her words, "they were riled up." I accompanied her to her home with Ricardo and Maria. It was on the other side of the creek. Her husband, Fred, was a librarian at Bakersfield Community College. I left the kids and went to find Lupe. We called Jerry Cohen to explain the situation. He contacted the sheriff department and within the hour Ben Austin, a local deputy from the Tehachapi substation, was at the Keene store explaining property rights to the locals. He guaranteed that each one would be arrested, charged, and convicted of any trespass or other violation of the law. He continued to have meetings with the Keene residents to calm the situation. He became a welcome ally. Cesar also sent up additional staff, including Mike Krackow. Mike, a mechanic who had walked out on strike from one of the Delano growers, was a genius at getting things to work. He'd sit and contemplate a problem and then use what he had to fix it. Sometimes it took only a string and a paper clip.

Others arrived that first year. Ana, Delores, and Joaquin came after school let out in Delano. Ruben and Daneen Montoya and their family arrived. Venustiano and Kathy Holguin came to set up El Taller Gráfico. Some names I can't remember. We had a young volunteer couple who began cooking at the kitchen. That summer the first group of college students from Minnesota came to work with Lupe on painting and fixing up the hospital rooms. This became a summer routine for this group. It later resulted in Father Ken Irrgang joining the La Paz community. La Paz was becoming a retreat center. As violence escalated in Delano and elsewhere, some members of the union's executive board began to contemplate relocating the leadership to La Paz. In 1973, it became the headquarters for the union. Cesar and later Helen relocated to La Paz. Ultimately, the core of the UFW leadership came to live here. Eventually, the entire executive board of the union moved to the complex.

I continued to live with my family and carry out various work assignments when possible. Lupe periodically left to work on various organizing campaigns. I was the boycott

information director in 1973 and 1974. I worked closely with Cesar to provide information to the boycott directors in the various cities about what was happening in the fields and reporting on events and successes in other boycott areas. Information is power, and the union's expertise in how to use information was formidable. I also worked with other mothers to form a co-op daycare center and later worked as staff under a gifted Montessori teacher, providing daycare for working mothers. I served as director of the health clinic until I recruited Sr. Florence Zweber to replace me. Once Cesar recognized her talents, he placed her in charge of reorganizing the financial systems of the various movement entities. I worked with Freddy Chavez, Richard's son, to set up a curriculum for the paralegal school.

In the summer of 1979, Lupe came from an organizing meeting and told me to prepare to leave for Cleveland, Ohio. We were supposed to leave on Thursday. Given that it was Monday, I had many questions. He had been told it would be for several months and we were targeting Chiquita bananas. Other families were also going and we were to caravan back east.

Talking to the kids was difficult. Ricardo was going into the seventh grade and wanted to bring his dog, Shadow, with us. Maria didn't want to leave her friends Amy and Corey behind. Mundo, Benito, and Sal were troupers. In the end, all the kids warmed up to the plan. We packed what we could into our station wagon. There were seven of us, and we were cramped. By the time we left, we had come to think of this cross-country trip as an adventure. The kids were great as we drove seven to eight hours a day.

The trip to Cleveland and our return 14 months later was the beginning of a turning point for me as it related to my commitment and volunteer status. This experience together with an episode that happened with Ana woke me to the importance of assessing my family's needs and prioritizing what I needed to do to protect the family.

Our problems grew as the summer ended and turned to fall, then winter, and the boycott continued. In the fall we moved to Lyndhurst, east of Cleveland. Then came spring and another summer and we received word we were to return to La Paz. But then it changed. We were to relocate to Detroit. Leaving Cleveland en route to Detroit, I knew there was a rebellion brewing among the children. We arrived and found a house in Dearborn. Trying to make it habitable was another thing. The basement was flooded and an odor permeated the house. We tried to make the best of it, but I began to notice pencils being snapped, pens being broken, and papers and magazines being ripped up. Ricardo came home, his face swollen and bruised from having been in a fight. His explanation didn't make sense. He said the blood on his shirt was from trying to polish his boots. Maria was becoming sullen, stating that we were only supposed to be gone three months. Mundo's artistic talents took bizarre forms. In the end, I told Lupe I was returning to La Paz. I'm not certain what was said to whom, but he returned with us.

We arrived in La Paz in late September. When the kids returned to our house, they discovered their clothes, toys, and other personal items had been rummaged through months earlier. I had received a forewarning that our home had become a drop-in for volunteers visiting La Paz. I had contacted Joaquin, then living in Yucca Valley, to ask him to come and lock up our household valuables in a single room. In spite of this, much had disappeared. It was a troublesome homecoming. Helen, realizing the problem, had done what she could to organize and clean our home. Her kindness softened the anger I felt. We were back home and that was what mattered.

But this, together with an incident that happened with Ana, convinced me that it was my family's time to leave the movement. Ana had returned from San Diego in desperate need of guidance and support. Her situation was serious. Shortly after her arrival, David Martinez visited us at the house and told Lupe and me that Ana had 24 hours to leave our home. I challenged David and later talked to Cesar. She stayed several weeks while we arranged to get her the help she needed. Something had shifted. I was a volunteer and needed to remember what this meant. The time had come when I could no longer be helpful. It took me two years to position myself to leave. During that time I worked for the legal department. In 1983, I requested a leave of absence from the union. I talked with Cesar about my future plan of returning to school. He echoed an earlier reminder: "Don't forget us." I never would or possibly could.

In those 18 years, from the time I had first come to Delano as a volunteer, I had changed, my life had changed, and the union had changed. I had new concerns for the interests and welfare of my family. At the point of leaving La Paz, my goal was to hold together my marriage to Lupe, who saw my concerns differently. His commitment to the union was basic. In spite of having been fired several times by secondary leadership, he never accepted the authority of those who wanted him to go away.

I continue to reflect on my experiences with the movement and the central place it had in my life. Today I work as a forensic mental health specialist. In brief, I do mental health work with the criminally insane. My children have grown and are doing well. I feel challenged by my work.

Lupe currently works for Stoneybrook Corporation doing security work at La Paz, where most of the oak trees remain. The creek still runs in the winter and spring. La Paz maintains a quiet beauty. I visit Helen and Esther Uranday from time to time and stay in touch with others. Cesar is buried in front of the administration building, which has been converted to a large plaza honoring his memory. As volunteers we all have many memories. Each of my children did well when it came to picket lines, marches, and manning tables. They also sacrificed a part of their lives and became eligible for the \$5 weekly stipend in their own time. Joaquin and Ana gave many years of their early adult life to serving La Causa. Ricardo rose early to milk goats and worked for the La Paz service center. Maria was active in helping me keep the house together and also worked for the service center. Mundo and Benito, after graduating from Casa, took their turn working

with the La Paz garbage and landscaping crews. Sal was young, but a real huelgista when it came to marches and other union events. We all had many good years as volunteers with the union and carry many meaningful memories.

Thank you, LeRoy, for organizing this documentation project and creating the opportunity for me to recall and record these memories. I'd like also to offer a note of gratitude to Liza Hirsch Medina. She came to the movement as a young volunteer and continues, along with her husband Eliseo, to be an inspiration for dedication to the spirit of *La Causa*.

.