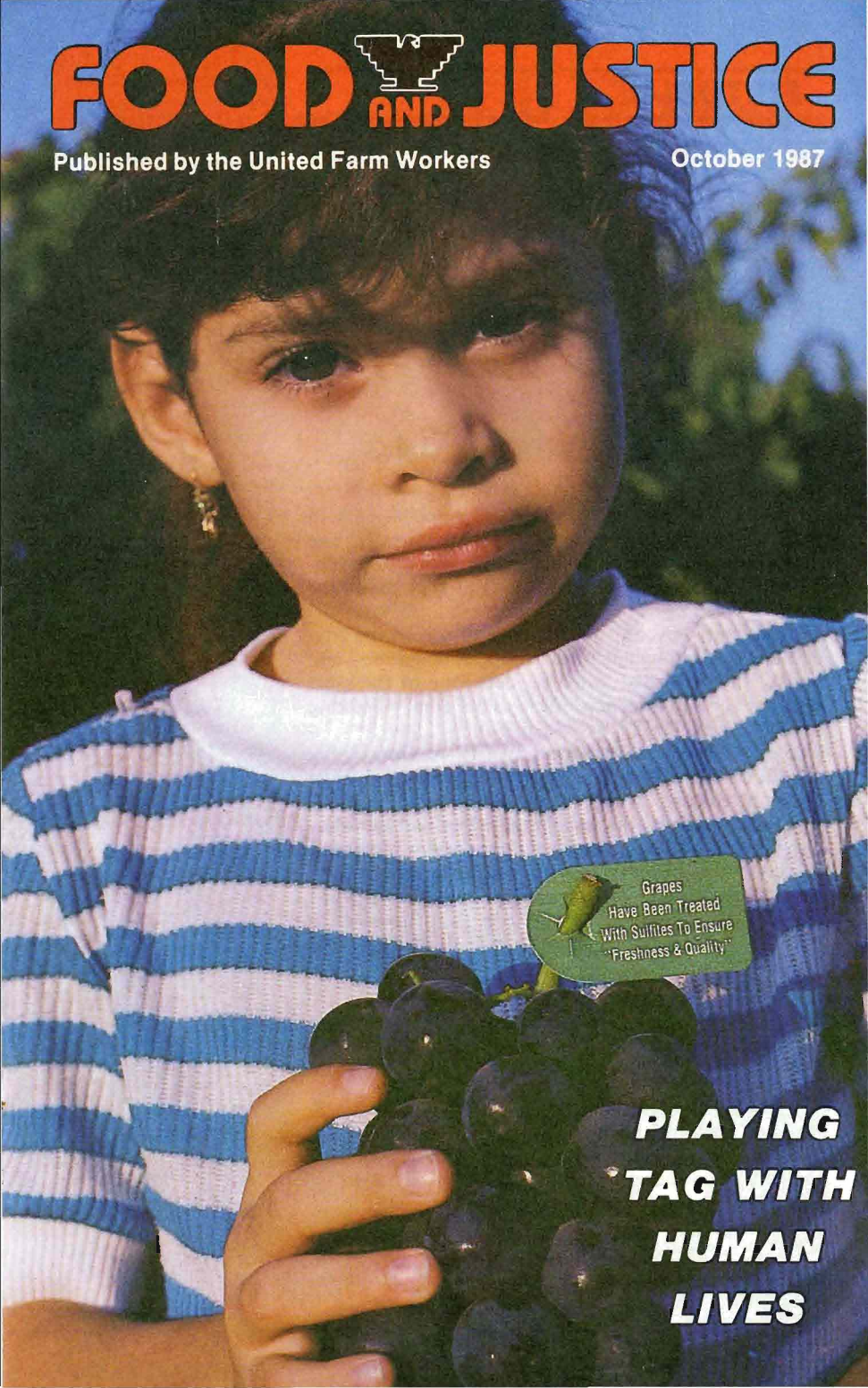


FOOD AND JUSTICE

Published by the United Farm Workers

October 1987



Grapes
Have Been Treated
With Sulfites To Ensure
"Freshness & Quality"

**PLAYING
TAG WITH
HUMAN
LIVES**

Magazine of the United
Farm Workers of
America, AFL-CIO
La Paz, Keene, CA 93570



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The Games EPA Plays

If the rules of baseball were no better enforced than the way the Environmental Protection Agency recently handled grape growers and their use of illegal sulfur dioxide residues on table grapes, Joe Niekro could have his choice of emery boards, fingernail files, or butcher knives and could strike out batters with scuffed-up baseballs to his heart's content.

The final result of a game the EPA played with table grape growers the past several months is: *grape growers can market table grapes that contain illegally high sulfite residues — with EPA approval.*

Here's the incredible play-by-play account.

In July 1986, the Food and Drug Administration removed sulfites from its lists of chemicals "generally recognized as safe" and ordered grocers and restaurants to stop preserving food with sulfite compounds. The FDA took action after sulfite residues were linked to 16

deaths and 800 allergic reactions among sulfite-sensitive consumers, an estimated one million in the U.S.

However, since that regulation did not apply to the use of sulfur dioxide as a gas sprayed on table grapes during long storage periods, the EPA took charge. So last December the EPA ordered grape growers to certify that 75% of their grapes contain sulfite residues of less than 10 parts per million.

Grape growers immediately called time out. Certifying their grapes to meet even that weak EPA standard would cost too much, they said. "That's a typical response," said farm labor leader Cesar Chavez. "They have millions for everything else but can never spare a penny when it comes to farm worker or consumer safety. If we had to fight tooth and nail to get them to stop spraying pesticides on workers while they are working in the fields, you can see why they wouldn't lose any sleep over consumer safety either."

California table grape growers insult consumers with their lies-in-advertising promotion — calling table grapes with sulfite residues "the natural snack."



Seeing is believing.

Just as we did in our previous table grape boycotts in 1965-70 and 1973-76, we rely heavily on that truth as one of the best ways to reach millions of good people to support the farm worker struggle today as they did in the past.

In our first boycott, we were able to spread the boycott message through pictures in papers, magazines, and books. In the second grape boycott, one of the most effective tools to inform people was our film, "Fighting for Our Lives."


In our current table grape boycott, we are keeping abreast of the times with a 14-minute video called "The Wrath of Grapes," which dramatically verifies, in a way that words cannot, the unbelievable free-and-fair election abuses (including the murder of a farm worker) and the equally unbelievable death and agony caused by pesticide poisoning. You have to see it to believe it.

In conjunction with our continuing video campaign in major U.S. and Canadian cities (see pages 6-11), we invite you to write us and obtain a free copy of "The Wrath of Grapes." See it yourself — and then show it to your friends, invite church groups and classes to view it, or even take it to your local TV station and ask them to program it. You have our permission to reproduce it, too.

Often people tell us that, besides not buying grapes, they can't help the boycott as concretely as they would like to — they don't have money to contribute or they find it hard to picket or talk to supermarket owners.

Here's an easy way for anyone to be a big help. Easy as show and tell.

Get a free copy from us, show it, tell others about it, and pass it on.

Thanks! 



In spite of the EPA Tag-the-Bunch game, all California table grapes contain sulfur dioxide pesticide residues.

Predictably, the EPA had no sooner issued its order before grape growers were demanding that the EPA waive its rule.

EPA Caves In

Just as predictably, the EPA caved in to growers' demands and changed its decision. Reacting to an intense publicity campaign by both the California Table Grape Commission and the California Grape and Tree Fruit League, the EPA prepared regulations more to growers' liking.

In mid-August, the EPA gave growers three options and granted each individual grape grower — approximately 1,000 in California alone — the privilege of choosing the option he liked best.

The first option was to "continue" certifying that 75% of the grapes were below the 10 ppm tolerance level. Growers were universal in rejecting that option. Under their present marketing procedures, they couldn't do it if they wanted to. Why? Because many grapes are stored for long periods of time, sometimes for months. The grapes are

gassed with sulfur dioxide every seven to 10 days, and after the third or fourth gassing, the residue level already exceeds the 10 ppm EPA standard.

The second option was to place placards in supermarkets warning consumers that the table grapes have been treated with sulfites. Growers preferred this method because it is cheap, but retailers strenuously objected. The growers quickly backed down. They need good relations with store owners.

Grapes treated with sulfites . . . "to ensure freshness and quality"!

The third option was to tag 40% of the grapes — two out of five bunches in the 20 to 30 bunches in a box — carrying the words, "Grapes treated with sulfites," with an additional phrase, "to ensure freshness and quality," if growers wish. This is the option growers chose.

As of September 1, therefore, growers could sell all their grapes, *regardless of how high the sulfite residues are*, as long as some are tagged.

Little Protection, Little Urgency

The EPA's willingness to please grape growers at the cost of consumer protection was criticized by Karen Brown, vice-president of communications for the Food Marketing Institute of Washington, D.C. "We are disappointed that EPA was unwilling to bite the bullet and go with the certification [regulation], which would have assured that grapes unsafe to sulfite-sensitive consumers would be kept off the market," she said.

Grape growers, not surprisingly, said that was not enough time. Bruce Obbink, president of the California Table Grape Commission, said growers need "two or three years to find alternatives to treating grapes with sulfur dioxide."

Neither the EPA nor the grape growers showed much urgency about the matter. Grape growers can utilize the two-out-of-five bunch tagging option until December 31, 1987, said Rick

Tinsworth, director of the EPA registration division.

The EPA . . . "playing games — as usual."

And Melissa Hansen, public and government relations director for the Grape and Tree Fruit League, said the bunch-tagging option "gives the industry breathing time to gather data to set tolerances for the use of sulfur dioxide." Asthmatics and others allergic to sulfite residues on grapes would probably appreciate a little more tolerance for their breathing times.

While the EPA plays Tag-the-Bunches with grape growers, they continue to market grapes with illegally high sulfite residues. Business as usual.

And the EPA, instead of just saying no to growers for a change, keeps playing games — as usual.

Table grape spokesman Obbink: Grape growers need "two or three years to find alternatives to treating table grapes with sulfur dioxide."



UFW Puts "Wrath of Grapes" on the Line

La Paz, the United Farm Worker headquarters situated in the foothills of the Tehachapi Mountains near Bakersfield, was more peaceful than usual in mid-August after 45 of its volunteer staff left for a nationwide telephone campaign to promote the boycott video, "The Wrath of Grapes."

For two weeks, in more than 35 cities in 16 states and Canada, boycotters were on the telephone all day long inviting unions, churches, teachers, minority leaders, and directors of groups involved in various worthy causes to sign up for the film and show it to their members.

The response was heartwarming. Thousands of free copies of the dramatic 14-minute video depicting the terrible abuses leading up to the current table grape boycott were accepted, have already been mailed out, and are now being shown.

Jesse Ramos, one of the weary volunteers who returned to La Paz buoyed up by pledges of support, said, "For every person who yelled 'Commie!' or 'Go back to California!' before slamming down the phone, there were a hundred who answered, 'Yes, we heard about the boycott. Send us the film. We'll use it. Keep up the good work.'"

At a meeting in La Paz at the end of the telephone campaign in late August, one volunteer after the other rose to tell touching stories of people who helped them find housing, offered meals, provided unlimited telephone use, and were generous in many other ways. "It was almost as if they themselves had been migrant farm workers once — and never forgot," one staff member said. "It was beautiful!"

The following pages contain pictures of UFW volunteers with brief comments about the cities they worked in and some of the people who helped them. Unfortunately, much had to be omitted because of a lack of space. This month's issue would have to have been the size of the new unabridged Random House dictionary to include all the people whose acts of kindness and generosity made "The Wrath of Grapes" telephone campaign so successful.

From all the UFW phoners now back in La Paz safe and sound, with flattened ears and numb posteriors but with hearts full of gratitude: "Thanks for all your help!"



*Ben and Maria Maddock
and Ismael Pallares*

Florida. Mr. and Mrs. Marlin Hackett, parents of former UFW staffer Dena Hackett, opened their home to Ben and Maria and their brother-in-law Ismael when they promoted the video in Florida. Among the other generous people like the Hacketts, who, Ben said, "helped us in so many ways," were TWA Local #291, Miami; the law office of Kaplan, Sickling, and Bloom, West Palm Beach; and, in Fort Lauderdale, Jay Kowalski of the Methodist Church and Local #355 of the Hotel and Bartenders Union.



*Socorro and Paul Chavez
and their son Anthony*



*Anthony and Anna Chavez
and their children (left
to right): Nicole,
Cesar, Robert*

Washington, D.C. Paul and Socorro were overwhelmed with the support they found in the nation's capital. "People really opened their hearts to us — and their homes and offices," Paul said. Homes were opened by Rod and Stephanie Bowers and Pablo and Lucy Sanchez. "They couldn't have been kinder," Socorro said. Just as generously, two AFL-CIO leaders opened their organizations' offices for phoning: President Ken Blaylock of the American Federation of Government Employees and President Joslyn Williams of the Metropolitan Washington Council.

New Jersey. Anthony and Anna concentrated most of their video promotion in Newark but also spent several days in Lyndhurst and Trenton. They were able to go right to work because the New York boycott office had housing and phoning resources all ready for them. Anthony said, "Labor leaders let us use everything we needed, no questions asked — the National Teachers Association in Newark, the state AFL-CIO office in Trenton, and the ILGWU in Lyndhurst." "And almost always hearing people say, 'God bless you and keep up the good work' made our stay in New Jersey a wonderful experience," Anna said.

Florida. The other Florida team was able to cover four cities — St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Tampa, and Jacksonville — "because we're 'baaaaaad'," they said. Marvin was enthusiastic about the people who made a lot of sacrifices for him in Clearwater and St. Petersburg: Bill and Lee McKenna, Mrs. Andree Philips, the Linda Mason family, Pat and Sheila Farmer, Esther Lang, and Mary Crawford. And in Tampa and Jacksonville, Esmeralda and Adela found the people "super generous," especially Sister Barbara Gerwe, Connie Caldwell of the National Farm Worker Ministry, and Rev. Bruce and Brenda Cardwell of the Episcopal House of Prayer.



*Adela Perezchica, Marvin
Cortner, Esmeralda Flores*



*Eugene (Winnie) Arballo
and Kent Winterrowd*



*Shannon Fernandez and
Jose Morales*



*John Theilen and
Tammy Dodd*



*Marshelle Valila and
Veronica Arballo*

Seattle. Open doors and open hearts were the order of the day for Kent and Eugene in Seattle. They stayed at the home of a generous family, Gary and Nancy Trujillo. And Karen Keiser, public information director, was tireless in helping them at the Washington State Labor Council office. "She made sure we had everything we needed to get the job done," Kent said. "And best of all," Eugene added, "She said she thought she could get 'The Wrath of Grapes' shown on the public TV channel, which 80,000 people in the Seattle area watch."

Canada. Jose and Shannon had their hands full covering Ottawa, the capital of Canada, with short stays in St. Catherine's and Hamilton. "Yes, we had plenty to do, but the spirit of support for the boycott made the work seem easy," Jose said. "Ken Clavette, president of the Ottawa Labour and District Council, personally saw to it that we had everything we needed, and both the Canadian Labour Congress and the Public Service Alliance of Canada helped us a lot, too." "We stayed with Julie White and Alan Moscovitch for a week," Shannon said, "and then Fr. John Wells took care of us at the Springhurst Oblate House. Talk about kindness to strangers — they were so good to us. We'll never forget it!"

Minneapolis/St. Paul. Tammy spoke eloquently about the wonderful hospitality she and John received in the Twin Cities. She better have — they stayed at her parents' home in St. Paul. They received most of their phoning resources from the Attucks Brooks American Legion in St. Paul and MPIRG (Minnesota Public Interest Research Group) in Minneapolis. "The response to the video campaign was terrific," Tammy said. "People have heard about the boycott and are looking for ways to help."

Oregon. Three cities in Oregon — Portland, Salem, and Eugene — kept Marshelle and Veronica from wondering what to do next. In Eugene they stayed with a generous couple, Will Doolittle and Misa Joo, and in Portland Marshelle's mother, Beth Fernandez, took care of their every need. "There just aren't enough words to describe how good the Northwest Labor Council was to us in Portland," Marshelle said. "The president, Ron Fortune, gave us his office to use, and Gloria Schiewe and Judy James couldn't do enough for us, either." Veronica said they also received help from the Clergy and Laity Concerned in Eugene and from President Irv Fletcher and the Oregon State AFL-CIO in Salem.

Boston. Helen and Jessie also found family faces to greet them in Boston. Helen stayed with her daughter, Anna, and Jessie with her son, Roberto, UFW boycott director in Boston. Both had high praise for the response of Bostonians to "The Wrath of Grapes" video. "The people were beautiful," Helen said. "We didn't have to do much convincing." Jessie agreed: "Most of the people knew about the boycott and signed up for the video right away." Much of the help with the phoning came from Fr. Wendell Verrill, director of the archdiocesan communications office, and Joe Bonavita, executive director of the AFSCME District Council #93.

Philadelphia. For Chris and Pudge, finding housing was no problem — in fact, it was a joy. Both of their families live in Philly. A sort of working vacation for them. The phone responses were a joy, too. "What a wonderful feeling it was to learn how many people support the grape boycott and how willing they were to sign up for a video and spread the word," Chris said. Pudge said they also got the family treatment from President Ed Toohey and the Council of the AFL-CIO. "They gave us absolutely everything to get our job done; believe me, when it comes to helping farm workers, those folks mean it when they say 'brother' and 'sister'!"

Hartford. Cecilia and Emmy said they found Connecticut full of people who made them feel right at home, where they stayed and where they worked. "Roberta and Jim McLaughlin were so kind — they made a home away from home for us and introduced us to a lot of people," Cecilia said. "And that's the way it was where we did our phoning, too," Emmy said. "The folks at the state AFL-CIO office were so friendly and helpful — from the receptionist right up to the president." Those "folks" were Betty L. Tianti, president; Roger Clayman, regional field rep.; Matt Bates, publications editor; and receptionist Carmel Sullivan.

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Frank and Ailsa said the boycott support is strong in Canada. Most people they called knew about and supported the boycott, and a Safeway produce manager told them his grape sales were down 25% this year. They stayed in Vancouver with Ailsa's sister, Jean. "She deserves a medal — she took some vacation time off, fed us, looked after the kids, and helped us with phone lists," Ailsa said. Frank attributed much of the success of the video campaign in Canada to the help they received from Raj Chouhan of the Hospital Employees Union and from the British Columbia Federation of Labour.



*Helen Chavez and
Jessie de la Cruz*



*Rev. Wayne (Chris) and
Jane (Pudge) Hartmire*



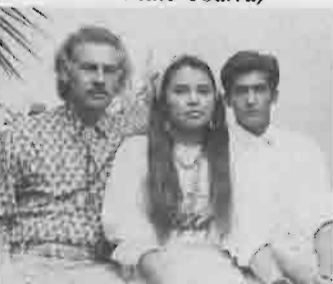
*Emmy Lopez and
Cecilia Ruiz*



*Ailsa Rands and
Frank Curiel*



*Raquel Villegas and
Maria Ybarra (not pictured,
Mike Ybarra)*



*Victor Aleman, Sharon
Torda, and Jimi Santini*



*Felipe Ferrer and
Jim Sugarek*



*Cynthia Bell and
Aracelli Garcia*

San Antonio. The San Antonio team couldn't rave enough about the enthusiastic response they got to their phone calls and the help and hospitality they received. "The folks at AFSCME [American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees] bent over backwards to help us — Linda Chavez Thompson, the president; Roberto Rendon, her assistant; organizers Margie Quezada and Ted Olveras; and receptionist Terry Ramos," Mike said. "And Sister Veronica Cahill and the rest of the Sisters at the Holy Ghost Convent, where we stayed, were so good to us — they treated us like we were family," Raquel added.

Dallas. "They only thing warmer than the hospitality we got from Michael Marek and Duane Ediger at The Catholic Worker in Dallas was the 100-degree weather," Sharon said. "Some people warned us that Dallas would be conservative, but we found the response to our 'Wrath of Grapes' message very positive." Victor said the same about the people he phoned and expressed particular thanks to Jim McCaslin, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, and attorneys Domingo Garcia, Albert Garcia, Juan Lasso, and Roberto Alonso for the use of their office and phones. "They went out of their way to help us," he said.

Houston. Jim and Felipe said they felt right at home in Houston. They were given free housing and warm hospitality at Casa Juan Diego, a refugee center run by The Catholic Worker. "A perfect place for us refugees from California," Felipe said. "No more grapes will be served there until the boycott is over, they promised." Most of the telephoning resources were provided by the Texas Triangle Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO, whose director, Gary Horton, reminisced about being a UFW volunteer during "the non-violent summer of 1973." "Luis Mendoza, a University of Houston student, was also a big help to us," Jim said.

Michigan. Cynthia and Aracelli worked with the Detroit boycott staff a few days but spent most of the time in Grand Rapids and Lansing. "We got so much help in Grand Rapids from Cathy Lee at the St. James Catholic Church and from two great friends of farm workers, Richard and Maria Kessler," Aracelli said. "Bob Smith of the Lansing diocesan peace and justice commission and Renee Turner made our work in Lansing a snap," Cynthia said. "It was gratifying to find out how many people knew about the boycott and wanted to see the video; they're really mad about what pesticides are doing to farm workers and themselves."

Baltimore. "Practically all the organizations we called couldn't thank us enough for our concern about the pesticide residues on their food and promised to show 'The Wrath of Grapes' and support our grape boycott," Marcos said. And Marcos and Lucia had people they couldn't thank enough, either. "We stayed the whole time at St. Ann's Rectory, and Fr. Muth was so good to us," Lucia said. Both also had glowing words of gratitude for the help they got from Ernie Greco, president of the Baltimore Metropolitan AFL-CIO Council, and from the staff at the office of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

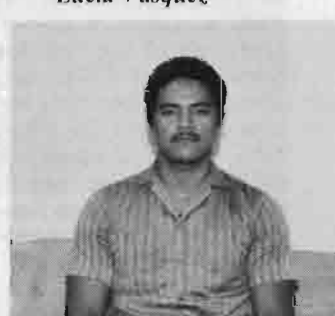
Providence. Marcelino, accompanied by Chris Lee of the Boston boycott office, found the phoning experience in Providence heartwarming. "This was the first time I was ever out of California, and it made me feel good to find so many strangers willing to help us." Two of the many willing who helped them were George Nee of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO and Mary Ann Donahue Lynch of the diocesan community affairs office. They stayed at St. Michael's Rectory, where, Fr. Ray Tetrault said, "farm workers are always welcome." "He took us to a Peter, Paul and Mary concert and we met them afterward," Marcelino said. "They've been good UFW supporters for many years — signed up for a video right away, too."

Missouri. "I wish we had a couple pages to talk about all the support we got in St. Louis and Kansas City, both for the video and housing," Ken said. Heading the list of impressive labor support were Paul Winslow, regional director, and Alice Senturia, regional counsel, of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in St. Louis; Bob Kelly, president of the St. Louis Labor Council; and Harry Spring, secretary-treasurer of the Greater Kansas City, Missouri Labor Council. Others who befriended Ken and Roberto were Charlie and Virginia Nesmith and Tony Wippold in St. Louis and, from the Guadalupe Center in Kansas City, Chris Medina, director, and Gilbert Guerrero.

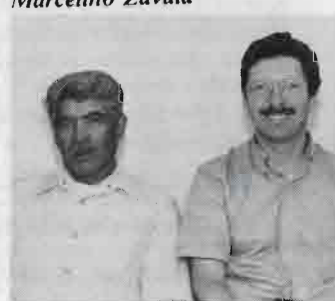
Ohio. Dean and Jesse divided up their time between Cleveland and Cincinnati and were impressed with the strong boycott awareness and support in both cities. "In Cincinnati, Mike Lacinak housed us and arranged office space for us at the AFL-CIO headquarters," Dean said. "And we couldn't have asked for a warmer reception than we got in Cleveland, either," Jesse said. "Jim McCue at The Catholic Worker and Ted Feliciano and Fr. Thomas at the diocesan chancery office were terrific — farm workers have some fantastic friends in Ohio."



*Marcos Camacho and
Lucia Vasquez*



Marcelino Zavala



*Roberto Escutia and
Ken Schroeder*



Dean Beer and Jesse Ramos

McFarland: Death and Deceit

Dr. Thomas Lazar, the newly hired consultant and researcher for the National Farm Workers Health Group, is no stranger to the death of the innocent or the deceit of authorities.

Like a page out of the past, Lazar encountered both during his two-year experience with the Kern County Health Department after his return from Beirut in 1985. At KCHD, he coordinated the study of cancer in children in McFarland, one of the San Joaquin Valley towns designated as a "cancer cluster," where 14 children have been diagnosed with cancer and seven have died since 1975. The latest victim was seven-year-old Mayra Sanchez, who died of a cancerous brain tumor on September 2 (See *Food and Justice*, November 1986).

In July 1985, the KCHD, under pressure from parents and legislators, launched a study of the abnormally high rate of cancer among McFarland children. Some health authorities are convinced the cancer is being caused by pesticides draining into the city water wells from the agricultural fields that surround McFarland.

"That was deceit, pure and simple, and I resigned rather than take part in his cover-up."

Alejandro Sanchez with his daughter, Mayra, the latest child to die of cancer in McFarland.

Lazar, who drafted the department's report of the first phase of the investigation, said Leon Hebertson, KCHD director, altered his (Lazar's) conclusions to make it appear the environment in McFarland was safe. "That was deceit, pure and simple, and I resigned rather than take part in his cover-up," Lazar said.

Lazar also criticized the KCHD for ignoring both the data on pesticide applications from the agricultural commissioner and citizens' complaints about pesticide drift from crop-dusting planes spraying around McFarland. "Worse yet, several other towns in the county have abnormally high cancer rates among children, but Hebertson refused to let me expand the investigation," he said. "He told me, 'I already have one McFarland too many.'"

Lazar's proven capacity for thorough research and his drive to alleviate the suffering of the innocent mesh perfectly with the goals of the NFWHG. "It's quite a change from the cover-up atmosphere of Kern County politics," he said.



Dr. Thomas F. Lazar

Thomas Frank Lazar, 54, is highly qualified in both experience and education for his new position as consultant and researcher for the National Farm Workers Health Group.

A native of Hungary, Lazar came to the United States in 1957 and went to work in Los Angeles. Unable to speak English, he began going to night school while doing menial work during the day. "It was pure hell for a while," he said, "but little by little I became adjusted to my new surroundings and soon mastered English."

Master it he did. In 1974, he obtained an associate of arts degree in English literature at Los Angeles City College. He continued his studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he received a bachelor's degree in anthropology, a master's degree in public health, and both a master's and doctorate in medical anthropology.

In 1980-81, Lazar was a Fulbright/Hays Fellow at the International Research Exchange Board and a year later was a post-doctoral scholar at the UCLA School of Public Health.

Lazar's professional affiliations include the American Public Health Association, the American Association for World Health, the American Anthropological Association, and the Western Psychological Association.

Prior to his ill-fated post with the Kern County Health Department, Lazar was a professor at the American University in Beirut and director of health education in Saudi Arabia. He also held teaching and research positions at UCLA and interned at the Center for Disease Control in Hawaii.

Lazar and his wife, Ineke, a native of The Netherlands, make their home in Bakersfield.



Johnnie Rodriguez, four days before he died.

Another Child Dies

Five-and-a-half-year-old Johnny Perez Rodriguez, the only child of Delano, California farm workers Juan and Elia Rodriguez, died this past July after a painful two-year battle with cancer.

"Johnny was pretty scared all through the illness," said Juan. "Doctors diagnosed his cancer when he was only three-and-a-half. We knew something was wrong when he started complaining of stomach pains, headaches and fever."

Juan and Elia believe the cause of Johnny's cancer can be traced to McFarland, a town surrounded by pesticide-flooded fields six miles south

of Delano. McFarland is a cancer cluster and the family often took Johnny there to be baby sat or to visit relatives.

But the cause could be found in Delano, too, which has twice the expected rate of childhood cancer and, like McFarland, is surrounded by agriculture. Also, both of Johnny's parents have worked in area fields for at least 10 years, and Elia worked in the table grapes until her eighth month of pregnancy. Like other farm workers, the Rodriguezes were exposed to pesticides and other agricultural chemicals.

"When Johnny first complained about the pain, we took him to a local doctor who found nothing wrong," said

Juan. "After more complaints, my wife took him to a spiritualist who said he had a stomach lump and advised us to go to a medical doctor.

"I thought the spiritual advisor was crazy, but when Johnny didn't improve, we finally took him to a Bakersfield doctor, who diagnosed cancer."

The couple then took Johnny to the University of California in Los Angeles, where doctors found a neuroblastoma, a rapidly growing cancer that often originates in the adrenal gland and, in Johnny's case, had wrapped itself around his organs. Neuroblastoma is one of the cancers found in McFarland.

Beginning in August 1985, Johnny received radiation and chemotherapy for six months which caused him to lose his hair and fingernails. With the treatments, the tumor shrank enough for doctors to remove it and Johnny then received a bone marrow transplant.

"The doctors gave him a 50 or 60 percent chance of survival with a transplant and a 10 percent without it," said Juan. "Our decision to go ahead with the operation was easy. Without it, we would just have been waiting for Johnny to die."

The boy's luck held for a time — his cancer went into remission. But he again complained of stomach pain in Decem-

ber 1986, and in April an olive-sized growth appeared on his neck. After another biopsy at UCLA, doctors again diagnosed cancer. Johnny now had six months to live.

"The cancer woke up, angrier this time, and spread all over Johnny's body," said Juan. "In early July, he got worse. We took him back to UCLA where doctors gave him two weeks to live. But Johnny had only a few days."

The boy's ordeal of receiving antibiotics and morphine intravenously for 10 hours a day and the 150-mile trips to the hospital ended on July 11.

"He was a real nice boy. He took it strong and lived as long as he could," said Juan. "Once your son has cancer, it's pretty hard to take. You hope it's a mistake, you pray.

"The cancers in McFarland scare us. We want someone else to investigate the problem because we aren't getting any answers now from those doing it and we don't trust them.

"We don't know for sure if pesticides caused Johnny's cancer, but they are always in the fields and around the towns. The children get the chemicals when they play outside, drink the water or when they hug you after you come home from working in sprayed fields."



Juan and Elia Rodriguez (seated, center) mourn the death of their child at funeral mass in Delano.



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