

Kate Munger 1966

It's funny, but I don't have much memory of that time, the summer I turned 16. I have pictures, isolated and individual. And those are what I would like to describe.

The most pervasive memory is the smell of grapes growing. It is a musty, dusty kind of smell. To this day, the smell evokes images from that time.

Since I do have a photo of myself from this period, I can say I remember working long hot days in a tract home in Delano, finding people to bring back for union elections. I had never encountered such heat before and staying focused was a challenge. But I remember feeling a very strong devotion to the work, which I attribute partly to all the other folks doing the same work as I was.

For much of that summer, I lived in a house with very little furniture on a shady street in Delano with a large, very special mulberry tree growing alongside the house. I found my sleeping place on the roof of that house, among the deep green rustling leaves. We had a record player and one album. Nina Simone singing "I Loves You Porgy" and "Wild as the Wind" is my strongest memory of that time. I also remember idolizing a woman who used brown ink and wrote the return address along the left margin of envelopes in lovely calligraphy. I wish I could remember her name.

I have strong memories of drinking beer and dancing in the bar. I remember dancing with Cesar to "Strangers in the Night." I remember noting even then that everyone came into greater focus and seemed more real and vital when he was around. I didn't see him often, but was delighted when I did. I worked on the DiGiorgio boycott in the Bay Area, living in San Francisco and Berkeley. A fantastic paint job was the highlight of the Berkeley time. In the living room, we painted the ceiling a strong red with a 10-foot-black thunderbird in a white circle. We were so proud of that.

I went back to Delano for the voting at the end of the summer. I got heatstroke on the picket line and then food poisoning and was very ill for a week or so. I was living with a family in Earlimart. I didn't know them and I didn't know where I was. I knew only that they left me a delicious cold lemonade when they left every morning to go to work.

It felt wonderful to have such freedom at an early age. It felt wonderful to feel a part of something so vital, so necessary. There is one person from that time whom I would love to find: Roger Sensor.

I thank you for this opportunity.