

Susan Due Percy 1972–1975

I moved with my husband, Glen Percy, from Albany, Georgia, to work with the United Farm Workers at the central headquarters in La Paz, California. I remember Glen receiving a call from Richard Cook inviting us to consider joining the movement—Glen as a photographer for the *El Malcriado*, and my own involvement unclear. We made a special trip to La Paz before making a decision as we thought the work might be too similar to what we were doing in the civil rights movement and we were seeking a change. We were introduced to quesadillas by the cooks upon our arrival and after several days' visit decided to make the move.

I soon found that I could also be useful on the *El Malcriado* staff as a graphic artist—designing woodblock and linocut prints for the paper and creating drawings for use on buttons, bumper strips, and in the newspaper. Some of my favorite designs were “Nixon Drinks Ripple” and a head of lettuce as a skull. I recall we sent large bottles of Gallo wine to relatives for Christmas gifts after a contract was signed, and of course most of them didn't make it through the mail! One questionable tradition of union practice was that artists created anonymously, so that I never had a credit attached to my work.

My time with the union had a tremendous impact on my understanding of both the beauty and difficulty of working in community. We were so focused on our work that much of what was happening in the rest of the world went unnoticed. We alienated many of our family members, who found it difficult to accept what we were doing. Glen had a battle to be recognized by the local United Church of Christ in Tehachapi to keep his ministerial standing for his work with the union.

On the other hand, we learned to rise to a task and do what was needed. We learned to work communally, whether in a garden or sharing tools, cars, or childcare, so we discovered new skills. Our children (son Noah, daughter Rebecca) were well cared for in Jim and Charlene Nicholai's Casa de Nana. I was able to work in the print shop with my infant daughter in a crib beside me, and then when she was at Casa de Nana, I would be called when she needed to be nursed. It was a healthy way to be a nuclear family. “It takes a village,” and this was our village.

We learned to do without and realized most things were “wants” and not “needs.” We were rich with purpose and a sense of doing the right thing. It has been difficult to replicate that experience in following years. I do believe it gave our marriage a firm foundation—forming a shared value system to rely on in later years.

We were enriched by being a part of a different culture, language, and religion during our years with the UFW. I fondly recall the music and prayers at our meetings; it was truly a religious experience to be with Cesar during his fast in Arizona. Our children's lullaby was *De Colores*. Glen's work continues to be primarily film and video production for labor unions.

Cesar kindly visited our trailer after our daughter was born, and I have a signed note from Cesar thanking me for my work, which Susan Drake suggested I keep, as that was a rarity.

We returned to La Paz for a visit several years ago and I was touched to see the flags surrounding Cesar's grave had my eagle design imprinted on them. *Si Se Puede!*