

Helmut Zingsem-Eick 1974–1975

I worked for the farmworkers for 15 months in 1974 and 1975. I started working in La Paz as a carpenter.

I was a 22-year-old German from a country with a terrible background (1933-1945), and I was fascinated with the United States. Through a German organization, Action Reconciliation/Peace Service (www.asf-ev.de/english), I was offered the chance to come to the United States, and I took it.

Some other Germans were already working for the farmworkers when I came to Washington, D.C., so I got involved with my first picket line. I was fascinated by the people and their work in the Washington, D.C. boycott office. Unfortunately, I've forgotten all their names. I asked for work and suddenly there came a call from La Paz. I was happy to start working in the "big U.S."

Ramon Romero picked me up from the airport and I began to learn a new language and a new culture. I was so impressed with the nice people I met. Lynn Anderson and Jim Lynch were two that I remember, and of course, Ramon Romero.

Even though I was interested in politics at that time, because of my minimal English, I did not understand what was going on in the union, so I learned English and a new culture.

One day, Ramon told me about the Agbayani Village, and I immediately knew I would like to work there. So I started working at the Agbayani Village. I will never forget the people I met there: David, Philip, Clyde, Martha, Cheryl, Edie, and all the others. It was a great experience for me. We built a beautiful building for beautiful old men, the Filipinos.

So I got to know the Forty Acres and a new side of the UFW movement. It was fantastic. Since that time, Mexicanos have a special place in my heart. At the time we built the building, we also supported the strike in the fields.

It was at this time that I got to know Philip Vera Cruz, the man with the camera. Through this life at the Forty Acres I learned the meaning of solidarity, friendship, hope, and struggle. I received more than I could give. Thank you, Chicanos.

At the end of the work at the Agbayani Village, I went to the San Jose boycott and from there to the San Francisco boycott. It was always interesting, great, and exhausting, but after a while, I realized that I work better with my hands.

With all this experience and having learned a lot about *La Causa*, I had to go back to Germany. We tried to create a boycott in Germany, but we have different roles, and the boycott was not possible there. Also, the German people are too far away.

It has been my pleasure to tell you this little UFW story.

(Edited by LeRoy Chatfield)