

## Daniel Boone 1974–1978

### First Day on the Job

Deborah Wiener (then Deborah Peyton) and I met Jerry and Mandy Cohen in La Paz for a briefing in January of 1974—we were to be the first lawyers “permanently assigned” to Imperial County.

We then both drove by way of Barstow and San Bernardino to Indio to meet with Sandy Nathan and Tom Dalzell and to pick up files and get more specific information about the work ahead. Deborah had been in Livingston with the Gallo fight since the previous summer.

On the evening of January 15, 1974, we received a phone call from La Paz while still in Indio. A labor contractor bus had crashed in Blythe on its way from Calexico/Mexicali to fields along the Arizona border that morning. Workers had been killed and injured.

There was a criminal court appearance the next morning, so Deborah left early for Calexico and I drove to Blythe to find out what happened. From the newspapers, from the less-than-cooperative sheriff's department, from the Mexican Consulate office, and from a visit behind the fence of the vehicle impound yard (with a camera), I learned the truth.

I don't remember the name of the labor contractor. High and Mighty Farms was the grower who contracted for workers to be picked up in Mexicali at 3 a.m., to be returned each day at 7 p.m. The driver made a 90 degree right turn at 55 mph. The “school bus” went off the road and into a large irrigation ditch, overturned onto its side, overfilled with workers. The bench seats in the bus were attached to the metal floor with 5/8-inch screws. The force of the crash tore the seats off the floor, piling workers and tangled benches in a mass in the front and on the side of the bus in the ditch. Scores of men and women were seriously injured. Nineteen workers drowned in 28 inches of water, unable to escape.

My efforts to find witnesses immediately were unsuccessful. I went to the mortuary to discover names and addresses of the dead. The Mexican Consulate office was lining up families to sign retainers with “friendly lawyers,” and reports that the driver was drunk were discounted by the authorities.

I didn't arrive in Calexico until well after dark on the evening of January 16. The field office was filled (and surrounded) with people. Emotion ran high—anger mixed with anticipation, because Cesar was expected that night.

I was led into a small office off the main hall. The lights were low. I was told that I was to report to Cesar about what I had discovered. I believe Manuel Chavez and Gilbert Rodriguez were present when I reported having been to the place where the bus crashed

and having been inside the bus at the yard to see the seats torn from the floor. I showed one of the short screws that I picked up at the bus yard. Very little was said in my presence as I finished. After a word of thanks, Cesar immediately started giving directions about the continuing efforts to contact families and plan a march. A cross-border march from Mexicali to Calexico was held a few days later.

While preparing this paper, I found written testimony given to some commission investigating labor contractors in agriculture, which provides more detail.

At about 3 a.m. on January 15, 1974, in Calexico, California, 47 men and women climbed on a 1955 GMC labor contractor bus owned by Jesus Ayala. Most of these workers lived across the border in Mexicali, and came to the United States each day as green-carders. Their destination was a lettuce field owned by the High and Mighty Company in Blythe, California, some 95 miles away. The workers were not told where they were to be taken, and only knew that they would be paid \$16 for their eight hours work and nothing for the four or five hours travel. The driver of the bus, Pablo Navarro Arelanes, had returned home from work the previous day at 7 p.m. He had gone to bed at about 9:00 in the evening and had gotten up at midnight. He was required by labor contractor Ayala to drive the bus to and from the fields, gas and service the bus, and also to work a full eight-hour day in the fields with the crew he picked up. His workday was therefore approximately 19 hours.

Sometime about 6 a.m. on January 15, the bus plunged into a drainage canal about a mile from the High and Mighty fields, killing 19 and injuring the remaining 28 workers. The bus failed to make a right-angle turn, and flew some 56 feet in the air at an estimated speed of 55 mph before crashing headfirst into the bank of the canal and coming to rest on its left side, straddling the bank of the canal. All the windows of the left side broke, allowing water to flow freely into the bus.

Growers and labor contractors would say of the deaths and injuries, “Well, accidents happen sometimes. It’s one of those things. The guy was just driving too fast. It wasn’t anybody else’s fault.” Farmworkers know that these and other deaths and injuries result from criminal actions on the part of growers and labor contractors, that the deaths *could* have been prevented, but that the present grower-labor contractor system has and would continue to lead inevitably to the kind of violence and death that occurred in Blythe on January 15, 1974.

Many safety violations subject to criminal prosecution were found on the 19-year-old bus:

1. The bus was overloaded, the capacity being 45.
2. The emergency braking system of the bus was inoperative.

3. The voltage regulator was defectively installed, and the wiring in the vicinity of the lights and ignition was in very poor condition.
4. Exhaust from the engine was released from under the bus, allowing it to escape into the bus.
5. There were holes as large as 3 by 4 inches in the firewall separating the engine from the passenger section, allowing carbon monoxide and any other engine gases to pour directly onto the driver and passengers.
6. Ayala was transporting four minors without work permits.
7. When the bus came to rest, it lay on its left side, straddling the canal. All but 28 inches of the bus were above the water level. Why did so many people drown in 28 inches of water? Every single seat in the bus tore loose from the floor upon impact. As a result of the momentum, seats and workers were packed into the front and left of the bus; those who were drowned were buried under seats and other passengers, unable to move in the tangle.

These bus seats were held to the 1/8-inch sheet metal floor by three or four screws either 5/16 or 3/8 of an inch long. No plates, bolts, or reinforcements kept the seats from pulling out of the floor.

California law requires that the bus seats be securely fastened to the floor. No one disputes the obvious fact that the horror of these drownings would not have occurred if the seats had remained in place. Those who were not buried by the seats were able to escape through the right side of the bus.

There have been no criminal charges filed against the labor contractor Ayala. The only charge presently even contemplated by the Imperial County district attorney's office is for violation of the education code involving the minors without permits. When asked why other charges had not been brought, the deputy responsible for filing charges said, "The laws are generally not enforced against labor contractors, and it would be unfair to prosecute Ayala now. He will have enough trouble as a result of this."

When asked about the accident, the High and Mighty Company said they didn't know anything about it. The company foreman had just asked Ayala to bring up a "Mexicali bunch" to meet his day's need for labor. The company, by the use of the contractor, had insulated itself from any responsibility for the actual payment of workers, withholding of Social Security, disability or unemployment insurance, or for the safety of the workers at the workplace or in transit. The labor contractor or his foreman had the task of hiring, firing, and directing the actions of the workers. The reality that all work is in fact under the control and direction of the grower on his property is not recognized by the law.

Calexico, California Early Morning Organizing: February 5, 1974

## Going Out to the Buses

Hundreds of people are standing around outside of buses scattered in lots and open areas within five blocks of the border. Others are sleeping on the buses, waiting to leave for the fields. This is the scene in the darkness of 4:30 a.m. Groups of people move slowly from one grouping to another, asking for work, and then moving on. Most of the people at this time know that they will have a job with one contractor or grower whose buses are found at prearranged locations, mostly at *El Hoya*, the hole. A few radios are playing, but for the most part the area is quiet—still sleepy, or just numbed by the prospect of long bus rides and hours in the sun. The talk is soft, without much laughter, and without anger or tension.

Heads turn as a group of 25 to 30 UFW organizers and members move to the area of the Sahara Packing Company buses. There is a certain swagger at the head of the group, in the walk of the leaders. Ricardo (Villapondo) approaches a car parked in front of a café, filled with waiting workers, and tears off a sticker of the Mexican flag. The driver gets out and is engaged in conversation, told that the Teamsters have adopted these colors as their own, falsely. There is banter, a crowd gathers, and the exchange is lively and at times humorous. Ricardo plays with his kerchief on his fist, wrapping and unwrapping it around his clenched knuckles.

The Sahara crew have been told that they will all be fired if they do not sign Teamster authorization cards. Ricardo raps about the Teamsters, encouraging the workers to stand together and not be coerced into signing up, having \$8 taken from their checks and then receiving nothing. A few men say that no one is being forced—that people have a choice. They are bantered with, and it is suggested that they are foremen or in the pay of the Teamsters. A few men voice complaints about the Teamsters, but most stand silently and listen. UFW people go onto the waiting buses and soapbox. No one tries to stop us, and the response is for the most part impassive. This is repeated on many buses and along the streets for two hours, until the buses leave for Brawley or Calipatria.

Several times workers from one crew or another come up to Ricardo or Gilberto (Rodriguez) to report that a crew is holding fast or to describe a particular practice by which workers are tricked or coerced into signing authorizations. There are no tangible results from the morning rounds. Ricardo says that more people must move in groups to have greater impact; more UFW supporters will be called to come out at 4 a.m. tomorrow.

No workers express any allegiance to the Teamsters throughout the morning. No workers even express interest in the Teamsters. Except for personal salutations and friendly banter, there are no strong indications of UFW support. The impression I have this morning is that the economic necessity is overriding. No question but that the workers want some union to fight on their behalf against the bosses, but there is not the spark to indicate that massive numbers will give up days of work and large amounts of pay to force the issue. Unless there is some larger encouragement or pressure not present today. Maybe a group of 300 moving through the streets would be that push.

There are clearly more workers than jobs. By 7 a.m. streams of men and women are walking back across the border, unable to find work. The threat of no work if you don't sign is real.

In less than two weeks, by February 18, the hard work of those early mornings resulted in a strike.

#### Imperial County Crowd Control

On Thursday, February 21, 1974, there was a police riot in Calexico. A strike had been called for on Monday the 18th and had spread during the week. The growers quickly obtained injunctions severely limiting picketing at the fields and at the pickup points for workers who crossed the border from Mexicali to Calexico (no pickets within 100 yards of the assembly points).

The strike was brief but effective, because asparagus cannot wait to be picked. The strike resulted in temporary pay increases, but was called by Manuel Chavez mainly as a show of strength to the growers and a rejection of the Teamsters as a legitimate union for farmworkers.

By Thursday, February 21, asparagus was flowering, the growers were mad, and tensions were high. There had been about 45 arrests.

I don't claim that what happened that afternoon was extraordinary or different than the experience of many others. However, because I wrote down the details of the events that same day, because that writing became a declaration presented to and reviewed with the FBI agents supposedly carrying out a Justice Department Civil Rights investigation, my memory of less than one hour, now 30 years ago, remains very clear.

#### Declaration of W. Daniel Boone

I, William Daniel Boone, voluntarily make this statement to \_\_\_\_\_, who have identified themselves to me as special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I am aware that this statement can be used in a court of law.

I was born on March 9, 1943, in Boston, Massachusetts. I am an attorney with the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, working in Calexico, California.

On Thursday, February 21, 1974, at approximately 4:15 p.m., Deborah Peyton (the second UFW attorney in Calexico) received a telephone call from Gilbert Rodriguez from the UFW field office located at Second and Imperial Avenues in Calexico. She was told that

people were being arrested at “El Hoyo,” a large parking lot and assembly point for farmworkers about two blocks from the field office.

Within five minutes of receiving the call, Ms. Peyton and I arrived at “El Hoyo.” A group of farmworkers was standing in the parking area adjacent to the state employment office located south of Second Street and west of Railroad Boulevard. The group was approximately 300 to 350 persons, about one third were women. A distance of approximately 100 feet separated this group from a line of Imperial County sheriffs (about 35 in number), and Calexico police (approximately 5). The people were doing nothing more than standing quietly in loose groups.

The Calexico chief of police, A.D. Goff, and the Imperial County sheriff, Oren Fox, together with other superior uniformed officers, were standing across Second Street to the north. To the northwest of the sheriff and chief of police, some 150 feet away, and at least 300 feet from the group of people on the south side of Second Street, were approximately 50 other farmworkers. There were many other people in the area, as “El Hoyo” is the central point of assembly for farmworkers at the beginning and end of the workday. Many buses discharge workers between 3 and 4:30 in the afternoon.

Ms. Peyton and I first approached the group of farmworkers standing in the large parking lot, as we recognized some of them as United Farm Workers Union members. Many appeared not to be members, but people who had just returned from work and were waiting to get to their cars or to go home across the border. We were told that Manuel Chavez and several others had been arrested some minutes before our arrival. We were told that the group had been standing along the south side of Second Street and Manuel Chavez had spoken through a bullhorn to the farm workers to the northwest. The people standing in the parking area were being prohibited from moving west in the parking lot toward the sheriffs and the sheriffs began to charge if they moved any distance to the west. In fact, when we arrived Ms. Peyton observed that the line of sheriffs was advancing but stopped when we approached the group. At this time the second group of workers was to the north at least 100 yards away, and movement to the west would not have affected them.

We told the people to do nothing until we talked with the Chief of Police and Sheriff to discover more about what was going on.

Ms. Peyton and I then walked across the road to speak with the law enforcement officials. Chief Goff stood in the background, and with other officers close by we spoke with Sheriff Fox. He informed us that Mr. Chavez and others had been arrested for violating the *Jackson v. Chavez* temporary restraining order prohibiting more than 10 pickets within 100 yards of a pickup place of any of the named plaintiffs, and that the workers to the north were Jackson Company employees. He told us that the arrests had been entirely peaceful, orderly, and without resistance or incident; that Manuel Chavez and the others had been taken to county jail in El Centro; and that because of the peaceful nature of the arrest,

those in custody would be released on their own recognizance later in the day after being booked.

Sheriff Fox informed us that the group of people in the parking area near the employment office were not violating the law or the injunction, and the sheriff's line was set up to prevent the group from crossing Second Street to the south toward the Jackson Company employees.

Ms. Peyton and I returned to the group on the north side of Second Street, passed on the information we had received from Sheriff Fox, and advised the group that they were not acting illegally, and could go to their cars or go home. It was decided that the group would leave the area, and walk back east on Second Street toward the center of Calexico. As this discussion was taking place, the line of sheriffs and police moved south across Second Street.

As the group was beginning to move, several buses passed going east on Second Street. I heard either two or three objects strike the side or roof of the vehicles as they passed. I did not see any objects in the air, and the group of people were still standing or just beginning to walk east out of the asphalt area toward the sidewalk along the south side of Second Street. I did not see any persons in that group throw anything at the buses.

Within five seconds of hearing the impact of objects on the empty buses, sheriff's deputies charged at the group. I would estimate that there were 30 to 40. They charged into the group of people, literally yelling, snarling, and growling, waving their 4-foot clubs as they ran. It was clear to me the way the sheriffs came at us that they wanted people to run, and many of the people scattered to the east up Second Street. Others began walking east. The uniformed officers in charge, after some time of chasing around, attempted to regroup their men, and were to my observation largely successful after a period of approximately 30 seconds. When the regrouping was accomplished, a line of sheriffs was created, pushing people out of the parking area and to the east.

I did not run when the first charge came, but yelled to the people not to run, to walk calmly away. As the line of sheriffs moved across the asphalt, I was closest to them, being pushed along with approximately 50 to 75 others who had not run.

The sheriffs who came behind us appeared frantic and angry. At the beginning of the pushing I observed many officers holding their clubs in both hands, out from their chest. They pushed many people with such force that men and women were knocked to the ground. The farmworkers were walking away from the sheriffs, but not fast enough for them. I heard many rough orders and cursing, such as "Move, you son of a bitch."

Persons who turned their back to the oncoming officers were roughly pushed from behind, causing them to lose their balance and go to the ground. Those who turned around as they moved to protest the treatment or to say "I *am* moving" were ordered to get going faster. After approximately 50 feet of this pushing and slow walking, necessitated by there being

others ahead and in the way, the sheriffs became considerably more brutal. They began jabbing and thrusting the ends of their clubs into the backs and ribs of men and women with great force. At one point a chain at the entrance of the lot crossed our path. As people approached, half turned around to avoid the clubs, and not seeing the chain, officers rushed on with more force, causing people to fall over the chain.

I tried to identify officers who were particularly brutal, but very few of them had any nametags on their chest, or any identification that I could distinguish.

I saw no person strike, threaten, or offer any resistance. At one point I was walking next to a man named Ruben Martinez. He was being pushed and jabbed by the clubs, and he was turning toward his aggressors to verbally protest their actions. When he was pushed over the chain and onto the ground, officers yelled, "Get him." I saw him get up briefly and be forced to the ground a second time, held down by several officers. I was then pushed past him, and only later learned that he was arrested and charged with disturbing the peace, failure to disperse, violating a court order and resisting arrest. These are totally groundless charges, as Mr. Martinez was walking away from the sheriffs when attacked.

After approximately five minutes of pushing, violent and forceful use of the clubs, many women were crying and being comforted by others. I spotted a superior, I believe his name was Captain Ramirez. I yelled to him that couldn't he see that his men were out of control, and that the people were leaving. After some effort, he regrouped his men in a stationary line across the sidewalk and part of the street east of the employment center. The people continued to move east.

At this time I was standing approximately 30 feet from the line of sheriffs. Only three or four other stragglers were between me and the sheriffs, moving toward me. A single dirt clod hit on the sidewalk about five to ten feet from me, and at least 20 feet from the nearest sheriff. Immediately one of the officers yelled, "Let's get 'em." My distinct impression was that the sheriffs were waiting for this signal, that they were standing poised for this charge. The tone of the call to action was like the rallying cry at a football game.

In response to the call, another wave of sheriffs swept past me toward the railroad tracks, the officers knocking people down and striking out with their clubs. This again was a wild charge, the faces of the men ferocious and contorted, although they were in no way endangered. I saw in these actions a seemingly desperate drive to intimidate and injure, no matter what age or sex of the victim. I was later told that a train was crossing the path of exit on Second Street, and that people had to jump between the cars to escape.

The force used by the officers was excessive and unnecessary. The persons in the group were not violating any law by being present in the area which serves as an employment center and place of loading and unloading workers. Although not violating any law, they were ordered to leave, and were doing so without resistance. The sheriffs nonetheless attacked and struck them with their clubs, with an amount of force calculated to intimidate

and cause bodily injury. The sheriffs were acting in a hateful and violent way against unarmed men and women who were following their orders to begin with.

Deborah Peyton and I walked back west to where Sheriff Fox had looked on. I said to Sheriff Fox, "Your men are maniacs. There was no need to do what they did." He said, "I have no comment."

I have read this statement of this page and seven others, and it is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Dated: February 28, 1974

W. Daniel Boone

Nothing came of the Justice Department investigation.

June 1974: Imperial Valley Strike

On June 6, workers harvesting cantaloupes and watermelons in the Imperial Valley went out on strike. Their demands were for more pay and less exploitation from the growers and for representation by the United Farm Workers of America.

The cantaloupe workers demanded that they be paid by the foot (*por pie*) rather than by the box (*por la caja*). The difference is crucial: the boxes are the products of the packing shed, loaded and counted out of sight of the workers; and the boxes include at best only three-fourths of the melons picked, after unmarketable melons are discarded. The workers' demand is that they be paid \$6 per foot of truck bed filled with melons, measured from front to back. This would yield \$120 for a 20-foot truck, divided among the 13 crew members, with each receiving \$9. The usual rate now for a box is \$54, and a truckload yields only slightly more than one box.

Melon harvesting is considered one of the most backbreaking types of farm labor. The workers fill large sacks on their backs with cantaloupes, walk up a plank onto the bed of the truck, dump their load, and walk back into the field for more. Only those with strong backs and agility can do such work all day at high speed. Back and shoulder injuries are frequent. In the Imperial Valley, these workers have no union benefits. Even those who are forced to pay dues to the Teamsters report that they receive little or no help from the Teamsters when they need it. Instead, they apply to the Farm Workers' Service Center for help.

On Thursday, June 6, 130 *meloneros* walked out of a Havalan Farms field when the UFW picketers arrived. The next day, even before the pickets arrived, 78 Colace Brothers workers went out on strike when their demands were not met. On Saturday, 130 other Havalan workers walked out of the field, and half the Colace workers refused even to

board the buses bound for the fields. On Sunday, 78 Colace workers walked out of the first field picketed. At a second Colace Field, a crew leader jumped down from a truck, grabbed a flag from one of the pickets, and led 52 coworkers off the field. Later that day, 90 Saikhon workers struck.

On June 7, Havalan Farms filed for a temporary restraining order to limit picketing activities, alleging that all those workers had walked out because they were intimidated by the UFW picketers. For proof, the company presented Imperial County Superior Court Judge George Kirk one hearsay declaration from a labor contractor. We had gathered sworn declarations signed by 60 striking workers that no threats had been made to anyone and that they had walked out to demand a union contract. Judge Kirk granted the injunction. His reasoning was recorded in the official transcript:

I think if they're going out there they ought to be required to go out there to work ... I just can't believe that they don't want to work just because the United Farm Workers are out there picketing ... I'm getting tired of this stuff. As far as I'm concerned, this just isn't right and I'm going to sign the order ... These people should be allowed to harvest these cantaloupes. It's just a disaster, that's what it is, to these farmers when they lose this much crop, all these cantaloupes ... I'm going to lunch.

Colace Brothers obtained the same injunction. Most other growers still had injunctions in effect from the asparagus strike in February.

In spite of the growers, the contractors, the Teamsters, the police, and Judge Kirk, the strike went forward. On Thursday, June 13, 100 workers walked out of a Jackson field and signed declarations calling for union representation. Later that day, 50 walked out of an Abatti field. Hundreds more walked out in the succeeding days. Those workers who went to the fields often walked out when the picket line and the flag appeared.

Judge Kirk's fear of the strike's bringing "disaster" to the growers was well founded. In the 115 degree heat of the Imperial Valley, the cantaloupes must be harvested on the very day they are ripe or they will be ruined. At night, with a breeze, we could smell the rotting melons.

The growers fought back with their usual bag of dirty tricks. D'Arrigo used a sound truck to try to keep the workers from hearing the union's sound truck and the shouts of "Huelga!" The workers were given beer while they worked. John Jackson, Jr. and other growers personally supervised the sheriff's deputies in their use of the injunctions to muffle the pickets' voices. Jackson also used an airplane to cover the voices and a water truck to muddy the feet of the picket line. In a D'Arrigo field, two foremen informed members of the picket line, including an old man and a young woman, that they would catch them later in Mexicali and beat them up. They worked for the same contractor, Luis Avila, who told

Judge Kirk that the picketers' rights should be curtailed because they were frightening the workers out of the fields.

The growers and contractors left most of their dirty work to the 12 to 15 sheriff's deputies who accompanied the picketers everywhere. Under the terms of the injunctions, picketers at most fields had to be 50 feet apart, within 3 feet of the pavement, and with no more than 25 picketers to a field. The immediate effect was to turn a shouting crowd into 25 quiet individuals. It also gave the deputies an excuse to harass, as when one man was threatened with arrest for walking by another to get a drink of water. There were 16 arrests for "trespassing" in two incidents, although the fields involved were not posted, and a California statute exempts farm labor organizers from trespassing laws. The deputies and growers made it a habit to park their cars on the field side of the road. The workers then saw a lot of police cars, a lot of policemen, and a few picketers—50 feet apart.

The growers have the money, the racism, and the police. Small wonder that the Judge Kirks of the world cannot believe the power of the UFW. They forget one thing: the union of Chavez has the people.

#### Personal Notes

Thirty years later, my memories are clear about these and many other events. Intense experiences animated by compelling urgency. I can call up the sensation of having arrived in Stockton in August of 1974 for the early days of a violent strike in the tomatoes. Three days later, the exaggerated subjective feeling was that of having been immersed in the turmoil for a lifetime. My perception of time passage was never the same before or after this work. There was a unique density to time. Three days seemed like forever, because there was so much going on. If richness of experience is a measure of being fully alive, then these years provided a unique treasure that will never be depleted.

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The Agricultural Labor Relations Act went into effect September of 1975. This law granted farmworkers the right to vote for a union in a secret ballot election. The power of the state supported the union's right to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement on behalf of those workers. The ALRA was more progressive than federal labor law (make whole, secondary boycott), based on the Wagner Act model, without Taft-Hartley amendments. Those who worked at the ALRB were ready and able to enforce the law.

There was a unique window of opportunity during the five to seven years following 1975. There should have been 50,000 to 100,000 farmworkers under contract by 1982. With that base, with that opportunity seized, the reality of present-day farmworkers' lives would be much different.

That didn't happen. By 1980, Eliseo Medina, Marshall Ganz, and Mack Lyons were gone. Except for Dianne Lyons, the entire legal department (16 lawyers), including Jerry Cohen, was gone. Organizing in the fields was sporadic, at best.

What happened? Was the passage of the ALRA the explanation? Was the spontaneity and doggedness of strikes and boycott enervated by bureaucratic and legalistic entanglements? Were resources that should have been focused on field organizing incorrectly diverted to continuing boycotts? What about the Game? What about the many scores who left or who were forced out?

What is the actual history? What becomes of the truth? As I have reflected many times during the past 25 years, I seriously question whether an accurate history will ever be written, because those who know the truth (or think they know some truth) will not talk honestly to an "outsider." Continuing loyalty runs deep. The only way this can or will change is with a historian who is known and trusted to treat the truth with the respect and subtle understanding it deserves. Otherwise, future generations will be left with mythology or an overly simplistic (defeatist) explanation.

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I have worked as a union lawyer for all 25 years since leaving the UFW. I work for a law firm that represents hundreds of local unions and labor organizations throughout the western United States. As years pass, the service with the UFW legal department becomes a smaller percentage of my life-experience. Nonetheless, the privilege of being able to work with selfless, creative, and courageous organizers was special. By example and leadership they instilled values that I try to make an integral part of my practice and state of mind.

Simply stated, the lawyer's task is to serve workers and their institutions, the union. The lawyer's role is to advise and enable the union to accomplish what it must to survive, thrive, and empower workers economically and politically in our society. The law can be and frequently is an enemy of militancy. The union lawyer should not be an expert separate from the union whose main function is to say, "you can't do that," but one who uses knowledge and skills to figure out a way for the union to do what has to be done.