

Mary Mecartney 1974–1993

How I Ended Up on Staff

I grew up in rural communities in the Midwest. My father was a Methodist minister and college professor. Grapes were my favorite fruit, but they were a luxury item for our family. For several years we were not allowed to eat them, but I could not explain why we couldn't. I just knew it was wrong for some reason.

By the time I was in high school, I knew my father thought Cesar Chavez was a great man and he had a big poster of this labor leader on the wall of his office. I was aware that farmworkers were poor, most were migrants, and their work was hard. I knew Cesar Chavez had something to do with bringing this to our attention. I was under the impression that he was someone from decades ago and was either a very old man or had passed away.¹

I remember my father taking me to an Ohio FLOC meeting in 1967 or 1968 and trying to explain to me while driving about California farmworkers not being allowed to have union elections under federal law. I found his explanation so boring that I kept this memory that something important can be boring.

The fall of 1969 I attended a weekend retreat for students on social justice issues at a Mennonite church camp in Michigan. Some students put on a skit about farmworkers and boycotting. I was a junior in high school and this was the first time I heard of the UFW from someone other than my father.

The summer of 1972 I was a volunteer at the NIH in Bethesda, Maryland. During the July 4 weekend at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, a dark-skinned person who did not speak English handed me a leaflet about boycotting lettuce. A month later, watching the Democratic convention on TV, I was impressed by the many state delegations nominating George McGovern and boycotting lettuce. Back at college I joined some of my friends asking the college cafeteria to support the boycott. When the food service showed us they were getting union lettuce, we stopped our protests. (I sort of wondered why the union

¹ The first time I saw Cesar was August of 1975. We boycotters were getting off buses that we had ridden across country to attend the UFW convention in Fresno. He was there to greet us with a mariachi band. Cesar spent the summer on the 1000-mile march around California explaining the new law to workers. He looked so young it took my breath away. Then he began dancing (maybe with Helen?). He was a good dancer. I was totally awed to realize that this great famous person had a playful side. At his last UFW convention, in 1992, the final job left after the convention before the staff party started was mopping the floor of the hall. I saw four people grab mops and do this work. One of the four was Cesar. After working hard the whole day presiding over the convention, dealing with issues and challenges and teaching, inspiring, and organizing, it again took my breath away to see him mopping the floor at the end of that long day.

label had horse heads instead of the eagle symbol but didn't question this.) Nothing else about the UFW caught my attention until the spring of 1974.²

The Bluffton College student council passed a resolution to donate \$100 to the UFW. A student who came from a northwest Ohio farming family organized opposition to this. One of the outcomes was a forum that featured a debate between a California grower and a UFW organizer.³ I went to this particular forum because I found out this guy I wanted to know better was going and I thought it might give me openers to start talking with him. The grower appeared to be a nice guy, but he annoyed me with his patronizing attitude about "his" farmworkers. In contrast, the UFW organizer presented the clear issue of workers denied the right of choosing for themselves union representation. The most impressive difference between this self-determination social justice issue and others was that the UFW gave us something more to do than write letters to Congress—the boycott.⁴

The summer of 1974 I had a job filing documents at the county courthouse in Cleveland. Before I started the job I walked around the neighborhood and noticed the UFW office. I wanted to eat grapes again so I went in to find out if the boycott was still on. I got such a welcome reception from the office manager that when she asked me to sign up to do volunteer work, I gave her my phone number. My motive was not altruistic, I thought it might be a way to get to know some interesting people like her, plus help me resist the temptation to buy grapes.⁵ I thought volunteer work meant putting labels on newsletters or stuffing envelopes.

A few days later I received a call from Coert Bonthius, the boycott organizer assigned to the area where I was living, telling me where to come to picket the Fazio supermarket. Every Wednesday or Thursday evening, Coert would call to make sure I'd be coming to picket on Saturday. Every Tuesday I started thinking of excuses to not go and hoping he would not call. But he called without fail and, faced with the reality of the situation, I could not voice my feeble excuses and ended up in front of the supermarket another Saturday. For about the first six weeks I refused to do anything more than carry the sign. Finally I was persuaded to try passing out leaflets, and by the end of the summer I was sometimes in charge of the action at that store. Coert also tried to get me to come to some of the citywide meetings, but going into a roomful of people I didn't know was not in my nature as something enjoyable to do. I was glad to get back to school that fall and not to have to spend Saturdays picketing a supermarket.

²The UFW just wasn't on my radar. I completely missed noticing the news about the strikes in the summers of 1970 and 1973.

³A requirement for students was to attend a certain number of evening forums on campus and meet outside speakers and artists.

⁴Years later I was paging through a college yearbook and realized that the grower responsible for my longtime career with the UFW was Harry Kubo, president of the Nisei Farmers League and longtime anti-UFW advocate. The person who debated him was Father John Banks.

⁵The office person who organized me to volunteer was Dorothy Johnson. I consider her attitude toward me that day the model of how people coming into a UFW office should be treated by the office staff.

The fall of 1974 I realized I had fulfilled the requirements for a humanities major.⁶ Most of my friends had graduated and it was time to move on. I knew I did not want to be a waitress or a teacher and had no idea what I did want to do. The Peace Corps and church-related volunteer services required a two-year commitment plus some practical skills. Around Thanksgiving time my father mentioned the UFW was recruiting full-time volunteers for six-month commitments on the boycott and there would be a weeklong training session in January. I wrote to the Toledo office and was provided an application. No other job opportunities developed so I decided if I was trained I could probably do what I was obligated to do; that even if it meant six months of picketing, at least I'd have a place to live and food to eat; and I'd probably make contacts that would help me decide what I wanted to do next.

I heard there were boycott staff openings in both Dayton and Toledo. I mailed my application to Toledo figuring I'd have a better chance of getting accepted there because Toledo is less attractive than Dayton, and assuming too many people more qualified than I would be applying to work in Dayton. After I mailed in the application and was told I was tentatively accepted (pending letters of recommendation and a DMV report), a feature article appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* titled "Is Chavez Beaten?" The conclusion was yes. However, I had just finished an independent study of Don Quixote, and the fact that I was going to work for a lost cause did not bother me because it was a good cause and the right thing to do. I expected it would all fold up after I had been on staff for about four months and I'd be looking for other work.

The First Days on Staff

I began the day after Christmas in 1974. My first assignment was developing a brochure to use with liquor retailers about the Gallo boycott. I learned so much going through the office files (lots of newspaper article copies) and developing something that was simple yet could counter the anticipated arguments of the Gallo sales reps. We had rub-on letters and a typewriter with two different balls for fonts but ran out of scotch tape. There was no money for office supplies so our director, Robin Seer, kept calling around until she found a union office that was open during the holidays and got a roll of tape donated. (I soon learned that whenever we met with anyone with access to office supplies, even if they refused to do anything else, at a minimum we had to get a ream of paper donated.) I understood it was union policy that each boycott city had to raise funds equal to twice the amount of its operating budget to support field offices in California, and all offices were run frugally to stretch the money.

On New Year's Eve, Robin and I went up to Detroit for a party at the boycott house. I met Sylvia and Lu in the kitchen and was introduced to tamale making (and tamales). I also heard Lu announce that she was pregnant. Later there was dancing in the living room. I remember seeing one of the boycott organizers and thinking he must be around 16 or 17

⁶ Combination of courses in history, literature, religion, and philosophy, and quite a few were independent studies.

years old but a good dancer. (Eventually I found out he was Lu's husband, Artie Rodriguez.) George Delgado, Sylvia's husband, got me involved in the dancing. Sylvia's four-year-old daughter, Teresa, had more energy than anyone else at the party. After midnight Sam Baca brought out the guitar and the kids asked for *De Colores*. That was the first time I heard this song and I assumed it was a children's classic. It was a great party and I was impressed at how welcomed they made me feel.

The Monday after the New Year's party, the training began at Antioch College in Yellow Springs for the new Ohio and Michigan boycott staff. My father is a very enthusiastic and outgoing person.⁷ I had told him not to go around boasting to people that I was working for the UFW because he'd be embarrassing me (because I joined staff since I found nothing better to do, not because I was dedicated to this "great cause" like he'd portray me). Two days into the training and I knew as soon as I talked to my father again I'd tell him I wanted him to let everyone know what I was doing and help publicize *La Causa* and the boycott.

The above was written from memory. There was a tradition in La Paz for birthdays that after blowing out the candles, the staff person has to tell their story about how they came to join the union. I always enjoyed hearing these stories. My coming to join the union was from different factors, so I told different stories when I was caught in La Paz on my birthday. That is why some of the above remains fresh in my memory.

From the age of 16 until I became immersed working for the UFW, I kept a journal. Below are excerpts from some of the entries made around the time I joined the union.

December 21, 1974

Wednesday at lunch the conspicuous attraction of teaching was revealed: "three months to lie around and do what you want." And I started thinking how sane that sounded. Now that dream has developed into this: Masters of Arts and Teaching in American Studies. Position in a Friends school with students 16-18 (old enough to start thinking but not time to attain a much better background than me—thus I would have more confidence before them than a college classroom). ... American Studies—not pure history, for that tends to get dull, but never grad school in literature nor teaching literature because preparation of reading literary criticism would be a drag. Next few years in pursuit of this goal. Eight months with UFW (study Chicano lit, union history etc. etc.) work for a year and try to attain a semblance of a background ... My purpose would be to inspire, to start young people questioning critically. They have the talents, the abilities. I have none to develop but perhaps I could be useful with my enthusiasm.

For example, when driving in a city seeing people picketing or demonstrating, my father is one who'd be honking the horn and waiving, while me and my sisters would be so embarrassed with the commotion he was making. Needless to say, since joining the union my perspective has completely changed.

December 27, 1974

One afternoon/evening (on UFW staff) that night my dreams already placed in working for the UFW context ... I like what I'm doing and I like the people I'm with. Item: use of every piece of paper front and back—very waste conscious. Economic and ecological reasons. Item: warmth/friendliness. Item: religion (?) Tom Catholic, Robin Jew. Item: intellectual and activism. Robin well aware of unions, power hierarchies, organizing, etc. ... It's late and too tired to write more.

January 1, 1975

Up to the Detroit Boycott house for tamales and tequila and celebration. Around 1 a.m. the party really started with dancing and crazy conversations and feeling really at ease. Slept till noon, then “dinner” of eggs (green peppers and onions), mashed beans and cheese, and homemade bread toasted. Mostly I just watched and listened the entire evening/morning. But I do like the people and look forward to becoming more acquainted with them. Community is the best word to describe how I felt about them.

January 5, 1975

Antioch ... human billboarding this afternoon along main streets in Dayton. Response from drivers is encouraging (as I remember how embarrassed we were when Daddy honks and shouts at picketers). I like the participants thus far in the seminar—friendly, knowledgeable and good storytellers ... a schedule of 12 hours a day in session. A vacation it will seem after 14 to 16 hours devoted to working [the first week on staff].

January 7, 1975

Becoming more and more committed/dedicated to the farmworker movement. The more I learn, the more it makes sense. The half-truths and criticisms are being put in proper perspective. It is a real hope, still existing and growing—of people not dominated/manipulated by the corporate technological state. And it is concrete, not abstract. I believe in the ideals. And I love the people involved. That in itself is good enough reason to join their cause. The importance of spirit. The balance of hard times with humor. And the quickness ... the talking to people, convincing people, artist: one who communicates through creating vivid imagery. Arturo [sic] is one such beautiful person.

January 8, 1975

Robin and I talked late into the night. Calculated that I haven't even been with the UFW for two weeks yet! I am still learning, but feel already that I am a part. And come August, will only take a temporary leave of absence to pay off debt⁸

January 9, 1975

Those dull hot hours picketing Fazio's this summer in Cleveland—worked! Little did I ever dream that I would hear the news of their agreement to remove all grapes and reduce Gallo, let alone be in the circumstances I am. If this happens often I might lose hold of my skepticism ... the Cause is thrilling/awesome. Every time I hear an effective presentation I am impressed deeper ... and I am involved. I can almost say "us." Today's [role play] presentation—told by Arturo that I speak with my eyes, my face, and I must be sure to use it fully when speaking to a group of persons.

January 10, 1975

Yesterday heard some talking about the UFW boycott as a love-hate relationship ... I am in a great life novel—and they never end.

January 12, 1975

Coordinators sensitive—end of training session. It itself it is a great example of how people can learn and change. I feel so solid now. The deeper I become involved the closer it draws my abstract educational foundation into practice. It is an actual incorporation of my ideals. I "never" believed that in reality such a movement could actually exist.

January 16, 1975

Yesterday scanned *Sal Si Puedes* [by Peter Matthiesen]. I cared not for its style—casual conversational. Little organization—no chapter titles, no chronology and no index. However, it did satisfy some of my searching for religious background, e.g. Virgin of Guadalupe—appeared to a poor man, concept of suffering/penitence in Mexican/Spanish Catholicism, role of poverty, Franciscan missions, Indian heritage also in Chicanos. And of Cesar himself—how he did have to sacrifice his family and personal life, his reaction upon reading Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* (very different)—and his personality; warm, unassuming, humor, and—well to me he appears human but more than merely human for he has been blessed with the inspiration of an idea and a flame of courage and persistence to realize it.

January 21, 1975

⁸ A \$1000 educational loan due that August. But so I could continue working full time, the union picked up making this time payment of \$16 a month in addition to room and board and \$5 a week for spending money.

So Shall Ye Reap-Joan London and Henry Anderson. History of the farm labor struggle from the 19th century to 1970, investigates this as a social movement, examines myths, emphasis on biography, methods ... an excellent book, very interesting to read. Includes twists of irony and vivid words for description. Highly recommend for anyone's understanding of farmworker background, esp. California.

January 25, 1975

Something wrong. Spinning on ice getting nowhere. Perhaps the flu, perhaps lack of vegetables ...

January 28, 1975

.... I am confident in my UFW knowledge but must learn how to fit it in, how to relate it to ... I had a lot of illusions about starting in the community ... there is a different starting approach to use in the Mexican American community—more of appeal for help and action programs than in the [Anglo] Westmoreland community where need to start with basic education of who farmworkers are ... Tuesday evening another h.m. [house meeting] bombed.

January 29, 1975

Doubts and tensions ... am I abandoning the house meeting campaign for political tete-a-tete? ... Is my purpose to become part of the Toledo community or to organize a strong support for the UFW boycott?

February 3, 1975

Had my first meal at a supporters house—fried chicken! ... I am beginning to get a feel for my area. A lot of potential support. Need more visibility. Responses growing with picketing at Foodtown.

March 31, 1975

A lousy month...Balde spoke of organizing as a lifestyle. That perspective made me realize what I lack—structure/organization. Must learn a pattern so I will be effective instead of loose ... inadequacy. But people do learn and the UFW is bigger than myself. As a representative of the UFW I am important ... note what occurs when I speak about the union, how a fire, the inspiration carries myself away.

The last entry in this journal is a quote (sourced as 189 Loaves and Fishes, Father Rory) "Use your common sense as far as it will take you, and when you realize you can do nothing, bow your head to the storm and pray—pray without ceasing. If that fails, rejoice

that you, too, are accounted worthy to suffer and to realize your weakness and keep on praying like the importunate widow.”

Spring 1975

Back to highlights of memories from those first months as a full time volunteer in Toledo, Ohio.

We’d get sheets of newspaper articles about the union, print reduced to minuscule. That was the main source of information we had about what was going on in California (and the Arizona lemon strike). The most exciting source of news was the reports (along with new directions/programs) Eliseo Medina gave at regional staff meetings after he came back from a NEB meeting. I felt the NEB leading this organization was made up of the wisest people in the country and I trusted the decisions they made 100 percent.

One day in late winter of 1975 we received a flyer/small poster in the mail from the San Francisco boycott about a march on Gallo from San Francisco to Modesto. We taped it to the wall. It was years later in California before I found out about the success of that march and what it set in motion.

In May we were advised that legislation for a California farmworker law was in process and we needed to get mailgrams from supporters to Gov. Brown to support the bill. We’d phone supporters, explain the issue, ask if we could send a mailogram in their name, which would be charged to their phone number, then we’d call in five or 10 at a time to Western Union. After the first few calls, we’d get Western Union operators who’d tell us the rest of Governor Brown’s address and that they had just transmitted mailgrams from Birmingham, Atlanta, Ithaca---various cities where I didn’t realize we had support. That was the first time I felt I was really part of a tremendous movement—it was magnificent.

After the law was passed in June we traveled to Indianapolis for a regional meeting. Some of us sat on the floor in the back of the van and read aloud the text of the entire ALRA. Our city directors (in the front of the van) cautioned us that how it worked in reality would be up to the attorneys and we should not make any conclusions or interpretations on our own. In the meeting and subsequent ones, it was stressed “the bill gives us representation; the boycott—contracts.”

Summary

My journal/notebook from this time period mostly contains detailed notes on union history provided at the training session, reports given to staff about California and other cities including news, tactics,⁹ financial and budget issues. The information I received and

⁹ For example, some of the Cleveland “Burma Shaves” (e.g. “Happy Spring/Feelin’ Fine/Please Don’t Drink/No Gallo Wine”; “Feeling Sickly/Pale & Sallow?/Our Suggestion/Don’t Buy Gallo”)

recorded was close to the source. I am often irritated to read history or see documentaries about the UFW after 1975 because I notice the inaccuracies.

Reviewing the notebook after spending 29 years working full time for the union, I am amazed at how much was introduced to us in those first few months. The foundation was laid for decades of work to be done. I feel so rich with connections and having the opportunity to be part of making history. The union has got me involved with doing things I never would have imagined in those first few months. (e.g., becoming a UFW attorney and representing the union in the ALRB hearing on Gallo's objections to the 1994 UFW election in Sonoma; finding out at an event last night (12/5/03) that the wife of the Monterey County supervisor who represents Salinas was a 1973 Coachella striker; spending hours the past few weeks using legal and research tools constructing campaigns against D'Arrigo, where one of the first ALRB elections was won by the UFW in 1975 and this powerful company with 1600 farmworkers has *still* not negotiated a contract).

It is frustrating and fascinating being on staff with the UFW. There is still so very much work to be done. I hope this documentation project encourages folks to continue the struggle and contribute in many different ways.

VIVA LA CAUSA!

Bob Chavez was a friend I made at the Jan. 1975 UFW boycott training session. He was a supporter from the Akron area who joined staff full time. We corresponded for a while, providing each other support and commiseration. Below are excerpts from his letters. Sometime after the last letter, I heard he left staff and I haven't heard of him since.

January of 1975

I'm sitting here in my car getting ready to go into the house meeting (I'm about 10 minutes early) A little nervous, this will make my third H.M. I've had one every night this week with five scheduled for next week. I don't want to have more than one a night if I can help it. I know that will just burn me out too soon ... I'm back. This was the largest H.M. I've ever had! There were over 12 people there! Richies too! Got of lot of \$\$ out of it.

Fazios I'm afraid is going back on their word. I just checked out two of our Fazios and found that they both have been ordering grapes. One store I counted over 1000 bottles of Gallo! This has really got me down, I mean, after 1 1/2 years of picketing in the cold, the rain, etc. It's just really a blow, it makes you feel like all of your hours of picketing were meaningless!

Thanks for writing, it really gave me a lift that was very much needed. Incidentally, Akron happens to have the record for having the fewest days of sunshine in the U.S. of A. If you think Toledo is depressing (which is probably true) just think of us here living in a world without a sun!

2/23/75 Sun.

... My H.M. campaign has slowed to a crawl (five cancellations in two weeks) but I'm sure I can get it going again. ... We won another victory in Akron! Co-op (Cooperative Enterprises), which has five big stores in Akron, gave in Friday. No more grapes and phasing out the Gallo. Speaking of Gallo, next Saturday, March 1, we're going to have a March in conjunction with the Gallo workers March, from St. John's Lutheran Church to Hoban Catholic High School, which is next to the expressway. We are going to erect a big sign—BOYCOTT GALLO WINES—facing the expressway where 50,000 people will see it daily ... Please take care of yourself, eat well and take your Mondays off!

3/8/75

Hi, How are you? I hope that you are in good health. Luckily I have been sick only one day this winter. I try to get up at 8 every morning, wash, exercise and eat something substantial, like raisin bran with bananas ... My H.M. campaign has ground itself to a standstill. Everyone seems to have gotten the flu all of a sudden. This one woman I was talking to on the telephone sounded fine over the phone until she found out it was me, then her voice suddenly got weak and she told me she had the flu and so did her child. I told her that I hope she gets well soon.

I've been doing a lot with the churches in my area. The First Methodist Church will be having a Mexican Fiesta on May 3. Featured will be a piñata, tacos, *Fighting for Our Lives*. Latest victories in Akron: Stop N Go supermarkets 21 stores will not reorder Gallo ... Within three weeks we've lost two full-time staff ... things are really strange here staffwise, too complicated to explain by letter. I'll tell you all about it at the victory celebration in California, whenever that is! ... Take care of your self, eat regular (no meat), sleep well (at least 6 hours), exercise, and take your Mondays off.

3/16/75

It was good hearing from you. I was really surprised to hear that you had "lost" four staff ... Anyway, here in Sunny Akron we almost tied you all, we've lost three in a month, just me and Nancy left now.

My area now includes Akron, Kent, Stony Barberton, Fairlawn, and Silver Lake. I've been busy lately. We had a gate collection at a factory in Barberton Friday 14 with about 4,000 workers. We also had the worst snowstorm (six deaths) in a long time. Because of this weather and for other reasons we only collected \$312. Nancy is going to ask them if we can have another one there next month.

Last night the most beautiful thing happened that has happened in a long time. We went out in the morning from 9:30 to 11:30 with 16 picketers to a local wine store and the manager went berserk! He ran out of his store (he was supposed to be on vacation,

according to store clerk) and started screaming at us. I couldn't hear exactly what he was saying because we were chanting "Bachkman sells Gallo, Gallo is Scab." But he came out later and told me that we were trying to put him out of business and he asked me how I would be able to sleep with a clean conscience after he's gone out of business. At first I said very well. Then I asked him how could he sleep knowingly oppressing farmworkers by selling Gallo. He also thought it was terrible that we were "using" children (there were two 14-year-olds picketing). I asked him if it bothered him as much that the Gallo Winery was using children in the fields. No comment. He called the policia, a detective came and we told him that we were definitely not harassing customers, because we are trying to convey an idea to them so would it make sense for us to hassle them? He understood this, and then asked us, "Does this mean I have to stop drinking Strawberry Hill?" We went back there at 7 to 9:30 p.m. with 10 people. He freaked and told me that he would talk with me when they closed. I went in at 9:30 and he said that he did not agree with our picketing and that he was going to *stop ordering Gallo!* Viva La Causa! It makes me so happy! (He had 300 bottles of Gallo) Victory is sweet.

Notes: House Meeting Training¹⁰
Yellow Springs, Ohio, January 1975

Most notes on union history, current programs, and reports not included in below transcription. Focus of these notes are the nuts and bolts of house meeting campaign structure/training.¹¹

How say—impression—as important in conveying message as content
Techniques—how to start building organization
(shortcuts usually end up to be detours)

Mass meetings not method of organization 1) no base 2) not lead to discussion

Coalition of organizations fail (like building on quicksand) 1) lots of chiefs, few Indians 2) really not own organization—people have other priorities of own organization
Use as much as can but don't think they'll do the work
Need people whose only loyalty is farmworkers

Phone call

Contacts—churches, unions, schools (faculty), community organizations
First establish rapport—intro call, then visit
Purpose of call—convince to let come over and see them—initial contact
Easier to turn down over phone than in person
Where got name

¹⁰ More detailed notes from 1977 HM training by Fred Ross in Brooklyn, New York, are in a notebook that was given to Fred and may be among his papers, which are archived at Stanford.

¹¹ Notes taken by Mary Mecartney for personal use

Information to show, new information—excited
Specific what come over for—not “chitchat”—give definite times and alternative when
“Ring around”—come back, circumvent excuses (never get person on defensive)
Positive assumption—believe will get house meeting
Talk to husband and wife together—ideal situation
Single person—suggestion of public place as coffeehouse
Not give person an opening for excuse
Must eventually say yes or no, either a supporter or not
Introduce—how doing? “build new organization”
Excuse: too busy to explain on phone, not enough time
Beware of rhetorical arguments, give positive action, concrete
Time when will be out that way

Workshop

Importance—initial contact
Persistence selling UFW, don’t be shy, hesitant, if going to say no might as well be sooner than later, right away
Avoid “maybe”
Involve everyone in family
Don’t say “got your name” but “mentioned/referred you,” personalize not list
Voice urgent, serious
Avoid “help,” qualifying words, don’t use “tactic”
Let person feel that you really want to talk with them
Can’t rely on others, must build own organization
Another excuse—one phone, can’t tie up
Make sure address is the same
Suggest pick up at house
Don’t let them know what time you’re busy (unavailable)
Say name at end, personal
(Introduce self, new, starting in area, meet supporters, and (urgency) start new campaign—interesting and exciting developments and try here—response to ideas)
If get introduction by president, pastor etc. more legitimacy appearance
Don’t be satisfied with a list of names
Don’t agree to a return phone call (“difficult to get hold of me”)
Build ego
Mention time and “immediate alternative”
Beware of introduction questions- problems of take up, lose control
Voice inflection- variation
Involve spouse
Pressure—separate union (need) and self (personal)
They are getting information, chance to get involved, “first on block” concept

Personal Visit

Goal: convince person that they want to hold a house meeting. Provide enough information that they get excited, highlights. Win by what telling and how saying—to part-time organizer

1) communicate sense of urgency 2) dramatic presentation

Leading to this relate to their background

Explain what is going on—anger

House meeting campaign—hope

Nail them—commitment

Tape of personal visit—Fred Ross

(most desperate period in entire history¹², collusion ... lost nearly all contacts, been through it, can do it again with your help and thousands like you in state, U.S., and world. As one person can't do it alone, need your help in this area—invite few friends over to house to talk, eventually thousands know about it ... tell about hell farmworkers gone through last 100 years (illustrations with key word “how”) then want to tell how one man and a woman and another man entered stinking mess—able to turn situation around, stand up like men, how workers try to get back power)

Planting seeds, introducing house meeting after laying out general situation

Then what going to do at house meeting, clear

Take care not to insult knowledgeable person

Graphically describe (drink rusty beer can, bathroom behind vines) images

House meeting like ripples in ocean, part of larger movement

Positive- going to win with your help

Establish who up against- underdog vs. huge monster

Choice phrases, convinced, can never overstate truth

Anger to hope not despair

Change union brought to workers

Entire case presented without being bogged by specific details

1) be specific not generalities 2) get excited 3) nail down

We have no doubts

Get across in pictures, not numbers

Must give person something exciting to get people to come to meeting

Excuses

Must have time to think about it

Time—farmworkers longer without contract, each day important

All need is to call 4 people, bet could get 2 people now

Time crucial

Reassuring—lots of others doing it, just friends

What need time for? Don't think farmworkers right?

¹² Summer 1973 lost all but one table grape contract 200-30-1... goon beatings 200 hospitalized, 17 shot, 2 murdered

Only 4 people, not a huge meeting
If done before, Juan De La Cruz would be alive today
My friends not interested, not political
People not involved must be involved—reason
Eat? Smash guilty bones—concerned where food comes from
Care about people, not politics
Because people not interested farmworkers in condition they are
Too dark
Afternoon
Pick up people
Don't have friends
Chance to get to know neighbors, issue to invite them over
How about church
Be sensitive to feeble excuses, mean not done convincing job
Try to do probing, find out what problem is
Be aware of distinction whether want to or getting off back, must have a convincing yes,
not a cancellation
Plan on a 10-minute spiel, after that too long

Example Arturo Rodriguez
(very different from Fred Ross tape but impact as effective)
Key phrase “I want to talk about”, a lot of eye contact and name
Call next night to “see how you're doing”

Use “I” (we mediator term)
Contracts boring, picture of conditions vivid
Visit people—summary of outline, vivid examples
Try to bring in personal data and observations, tell stories
Slow down talking
Keep flowing, interesting, happening
Drag person from objective seat to farmworker place, empathy
Five farmworkers a face
Rabbi's “food picked by oppressed labor is not fit for a dignified human being”

Rest dependent on effectiveness of p.v., if convince, pitch for house meeting
Come in, know routine, be able to deal with questions aptly and get back on track
Include these 4 parts
1. criticalness of situation¹³
2. conditions working under
3. bloody summer of 1973
4. pitch: getting house meeting
Approximately 10-minute presentation
Paint farmworkers as underdog

¹³ Teamster rampage

For more technical information, as corp stats, know where to refer
Just need to give enough to get person excited
Give name, involve rather than lecture
Contrast of things we take for granted
Offer leaflet¹⁴
This nutshell, house meeting more depth
Don't use "story," implies fiction and it happened
Weave example but thunderbird, not whole blanket¹⁵
Pitch –stress how they are being special, given opportunity to be involved
"I'll take care of it—you just get them over here"
Meetings not publicized

Not talking about small growers but huge corporations as Dow Chemical—largest lettuce grower, Purex, Tenneco Oil (more land than state of Rhode Island), Bank of America
While take boycott to cities, bad transportation, accident 3-year-old baby killed, another tragedy
Didn't stop, strike too dangerous, took picket lines to cities
180 table grape contracts at peak (most in 1971 and 1972), 2 left (Freedman and Smeds), Strawberry, Interharvest, Minute Maid and wine companies, total of 12 contracts left, covering 10,000—once had 60,000.
Talk about Teamsters, gigantic, richest in world
Only place Teamsters come in agriculture—where UFW was
Growers have control of food supply
Real fight with growers, not Teamsters

Need (people like) you, not have millions of dollars to advertise
Foes—huge agribusiness conglomerate and Teamsters—crush
Ranch kingdom-feudal analogy
Not only boycott but understand how crucial it is, background

If wages doubled, dozen oranges increase 1 to 2 cents, head of lettuce 1 cent (Dept. of Agriculture)
Because low pay, farmworkers subsidizing both grower and consumer
Show wine—remain competitive
Farmworkers paid 1/2 to 3/4 cents per head of lettuce
Another reason high—fields rot to raise prices
FTC six months ago lettuce indicted fixing prices

¹⁴ Definition of farmworkers food on table

¹⁵ Houses burned, people kidnapped, Hell's Angels—chains, sticks with nails

67 Deaderin, fingernails breaking, skin, vomiting, know something wrong. U.S. government few months ago banned cancer-causing pesticides—build up in body, cut years off life. Organophosphates—one drop concentrate on finger instant death. In rural area to be elected or appointed need support of grower—thus take sides per grower

Delivery and imagery

Briefer outline, more natural, index card size

Criticalness, conditions (gut level), summer 1973, pitch (education, anger, hope, appeal)

Do

Vary voice inflection

Deal briefly with questions then tie it in
and move on—ring around

Have confidence & be positive

Bring them in; build dialog

Paint vivid pictures

Prepare beforehand

Keep it precise

Keep goal in mind (house meeting)

Describe yourself

Make objective known early

Tickle pride bone

Eye contact

Use person's name

Put persons in situation

Use examples familiar to persons

Hand gestures, facial

“animo”

Don't

Cram

Inflate for effect

Lose control

Get sidetracked

Get lost in mannerisms

Say things you can't back

Use slang, colloquial jargon

Be negative or defensive

Avoid qualifiers

Posture

Emotions: urgency, anger, hope, shock and anger (Teamsters), hope, conviction, insistence

Stress people, not big whips

Massive campaign, millions of people involved

Call a day after—find out if started. If haven't, try again later

(Six semi-solid contacts—three for sure)

If hasn't gotten commitments enough, discouraged

1. Suggest call more, don't make it sound like failure

2. Suggest visit people
3. Try to remotivate
4. Encouraging examples of recent house meeting
5. Sympathy and give example of how someone else dealt with excuses—more ammunition, prop up
6. Return and watch call
7. Suggestions of who to call

Cancellation

Person's fault—???

1. Stung by first one
2. Problem with spouse
3. Doesn't feel urgency, not pushing
4. Something else comes up
5. Personal reason
6. Wrong pitch

At some point WE didn't do job right.

Counseling on how to give phone pitch, Example: Hour of your time today talked with UFW organizer, important, come over to listen to what say

Analyze what you did first before what person did, learning process

Follow up real problem, how to deal, must have groundwork done

Emphasis on pv

Follow-up call twice—three days before then one day before¹⁶

Personal relationship—sense of obligation

Stress informality, “gathering”

Once know problem better deal with it

Pay visit and give literature (as *El Malcriado*), and check on house meeting

Part of routine, phone call then personal visit—reassure

Ask for 8 or 9 to be sure for full house—accounts for “I'll try”

House meeting situation

1. If no one there. Suggest call five or so then to remind. Sense of urgency, so important that house meeting comes off—spend time analyzing, spend time with supporter, make calls then
2. Want to reschedule—but hm IMPORTANT, try to discourage and reiterate sense of time urgency, but better to delay than not at all. Communicate delay let down
3. People drinking beforehand. Prevent this. At pv impress gravity of things, afterwards but main essence meeting not party. Suggest coffee to host, put back first until after meeting. On call before meeting find out plan—anything want to serve fine but afterwards, tends to disrupt, give personal examples of coffee distraction (host role important, not turn into cook.)

¹⁶ in later HM trainings, follow-up calls more frequent, sometimes daily

Content: Hour and a half entire including questions and pitch. Time on sections: 20 minutes apiece, 10 minutes info and 10 minutes questions

Concise-major issues

Intro: Let know what do, structure four major areas 10 minutes each, then break for questions after presentation but if use term don't recognize, interrupt

Get there 15 minutes early

Often host gives cue when to start

Give personal intro while paper passed around

Need not large group, small for appeal and zero in on all.

Components—history, nature of problem, what doing to change, what person can do

Must turn on and channel

House meeting

Specifically ask by name when can hold house meeting. But must be sure first person will agree, positive precedent. During hm observe responses and be aware of most interested person. Don't let go till have something definite. If hassle, wait till coffee.

“Think about” great “I'm glad your're going to, will call in 2 days” be positive

Person holding hm is ally, make it seem easy, bring host in, you and host are a team

Action program (follow-up, when come ask to do small task as bring coffee in thermos, give a ride)

Hand out boycotting leaflet

Make it sound exciting, built in victories,—positive accomplishment, learn to recognize small pluses, ignore bickers

Billboarding

Picket line metaphor: pilgrimage for justice, every step stomping on injustice of farmworkers.

Erase “would you” from vocabulary

Arrest: constitutional right to be there, rights established by Supreme Court Logan Valley case (NJ), 1968 right to picket in shopping center, public property, new Nixon appointees—restrictions, activities must be directly related to activities of shopping center (not anti-war, etc.)

Money

For basic needs, food, roof over heads, no base strike fund

Money not go to organizers but directly to California

1. Pledge cards—hand out and suggest at least \$5 a month as “sponsor your organizer,” constant reminder, sign check

2. First month tonight, collection

(\$260 total per organizer per month)

Deal—*El Malcriado* send in reminder of pledge

Throw way

Asking people to work full time, chance to refuse something

Videotape—ideas

Spectators to participants

La hoya—the pit

Old man at age 35

Role-playing labor contractor

Use examples instead of facts and stats

Hands can be as expressive as words

Biography

Just beginning when won contract—responsibility

Organize all over again

Corporations, farming not main interest, no concern for farm worker, purpose: super profits

Growers access to poor of world (Mexico)

Transition, wondering how finance with strikes, etc. we don't—without you

Workshop suggestions

Chavez recruited at house meeting

(If bring in political history) “These were the Nixon years”

Unique organization, have purpose, goal in mind and can put personal ego aside

Effectiveness of pauses, chance for people to feel, silence a powerful force

Ranch kingdom into ranch democracy

Clear simple explanation of jurisdictional dispute—growers smart, Teamsters dirty work, pr campaign

Bad eye in public view, lettuce issue, not time to consolidate grape gains

Pledges, contrast \$5 with frivolities

Cut “these people,” use “farmworkers”

Preparation, know steps

Memorize first sentence, rest will flow

Friends, not classroom

Use pauses

Cut out philosophy

Descriptive phrases

End of section, remind transition

Concentrate on key things people heard about

Conscious of nervous habits

Prune out verbiage

Get inside house meeting—become it, not manipulate

After Nagi's death—organization, people not scattered but drawn together. Main motivation of farmworkers—not struggle for money but dignity. Takes years of time and thinking to understand nonviolence (people basically non-violent if understand what about, differences can be resolved, society conditions to violence)

Must have basic foundation for real involvement, build in steps, not jump
People can learn anything, but must have courage and conviction

Daily meetings—reports, strategy
Taller Grafico: to create art for the people interpreting the movement
Phone sheet, by location (around stores)
Wednesday good time to call for weekend, old regulars call Thursday
Discipline—comprehend importance of forms
8:15 promptly (basic respect) staff meeting—10:30
Have a plan organized for rest of day
Include phone calling, pvs, hms, administrating
4:30-6:00 phone calls
Coordinator sit in at first but no involvement
Establish an office in the community
Suggest strange meal times like 4 p.m.

Political questions, b.s. reform, “hidden agendas” is out, future of where union is going up to farmworkers themselves, we [staff] can get another job
Any questions about policy raise and have explained etc. but not subvert if disagree
“If we're not right give us a chance to make our own mistakes”
Issue of self-determination

Why is someone going to ask for endorsement? Difference between helping and using

Represent union: what say is all people will know, don't misrepresent cause, truth is strong enough

Personal image/appearance: recognize other people's hang-ups but not degrade self. Best face forward for union. Poor but not slobs.

Area-wide organization: quasi-official arm of UFW
Function: to help farmworkers win strike and boycott
No elected officials, not independent organization
Organizer center, close dedicated supporters steering committee, to help decide what to do in area, ideas, etc. meet every 1 1/2 to 2 weeks
E.g. picket captains, fund raising, publicity, etc.
Next layer—those not as committed, not leadership but troops, muscle, regular picketers
Next: letter writers, telephone calls, good for delegations, one shot deals/special occasions

Next group: give money but nothing else
Never turn people away, levels of commitment grows
Bring along—gauge and accept commitment, tomorrow maybe more, accept help at level
people willing to give.

50 to 100 people in organization, membership involvement
If have more—real power, mobilization, not dead weight

How build?

Activities, billboarding, picketing, money

House meeting approach campaign, grass roots level

More informal, organized, educational

Organizer bricklayer, must find material and put together, when leave it stays built

Organize around issues, causes

Move from focal point to supervisor

Big meeting: birth of organization: goal (everyone likes to be part of something big)

Has to be fun, people have to enjoy selves and work

Committee help plan, make exciting (music, film, guerilla theatre)

Someone at door taking attendance of who comes

Name they chose

Discuss what done, what do, reports, interesting, lively

Monthly big meetings

Have in mind what decisions to be made

Solidarity spirit