Mark Sharwood 1976–1982

The six years that I worked as a full-time UFW volunteer taught me organizing skills and the type of perseverance forced by working in a small team fighting great odds. I also learned about the life of immigrant farmworkers and about the great cities of my own country. I mention some of the many people, a few well-known but more who were not, who guided and accompanied me on this journey.

Between 1976 and 1982, I worked in Los Angeles on Proposition 14; in field offices in Lamont, Coachella, Calexico, Delano, Watsonville, Oxnard, Salinas, and Santa Maria; in La Paz; and in boycott operations in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dallas–Fort Worth, Los Angeles, Detroit, Rockford (Illinois), New York, Denver, and Chicago. My first visit to many of the places named above was when the union sent me to work there.

Much of this essay is a narrative of what I did both individually and as part of a group; when and where I did it; and who was with me at the time. Along the way I include some reflections and comments on my activities, as well as background information to put the events in a wider context. I do not include a lot of deeper philosophical thoughts, leaving that for others. I was not a leader or key person in the union, but I participated in many varied campaigns, and this narrative tries to give the details and "flavor" of that time. Obviously, all opinions and comments are strictly my own.

Life in the United Farm Workers movement was full of action and movement, and highs and lows. As a result, I seem to have 20 years of memories packed into the six years I actually worked there. The UFW's worker organizing campaigns and community boycott campaigns are a very unique chapter in the broader movement for workers' rights in this country …where once there was nothing but brutal exploitation ignored by society, the UFW's "weapons of nonviolence" created a structure to provide safer working conditions, respect from the boss, medical and pension benefits, due process against abuse, and many other advances. I hope that some will find interest in the details of my part in that effort.

The Early Years 1972-1976

Oakland Boycott

I first got involved in 1972, one year after I graduated from U.C. Berkeley, when the union had turned its attention to the lettuce industry after the 1960s grape strike/boycott had helped the union win its first contracts. Discouraged after George McGovern's disastrous defeat, I responded to a call from the Oakland boycott, then directed by Bob Purcell, to volunteer in the lettuce boycott. They sent me to check which brands of lettuce were being sold in local supermarkets. We walked straight into the vegetable cooler to check, not worrying about permission. During this time I met Fred Ross, Sr. and Jr., and was first exposed to Fred Sr.'s no-nonsense approach to community organizing. Other boycott

organizers whom I met (and later ran into on the UFW staff) were Pete Cohen, brother of the famed UFW lawyer Jerry Cohen, and ____ Mata, a veteran activist from the San Joaquin Valley.

While I was a boycott supporter in Oakland, the UFW declared a boycott of Safeway stores that would not remove boycotted products from its shelves—making this a "secondary" boycott, which would have been illegal if farmworkers had been covered under the National Labor Relations Act, which they were not. The boycott attracted many supporters, among them radical community groups like the Black Panthers—founded in Oakland—who picketed a West Oakland store chanting, "I don't know but I've been told, Safeway stores have got to be closed …"

Palo Alto Boycott

The fight returned to San Joaquin and Coachella Valley vineyards, and the grape growers forged their notorious alliance with the Teamsters—as told in the film Fighting for Our Lives—to break the strike. I was one of thousands of volunteers throughout North America who responded with intensified grape/supermarket boycotts. On moving to Menlo Park in 1974, I became an even more active volunteer. Palo Alto boycott organizer Jim Hirsch drew me deeper into the movement—I spent much of my free time at UFW events and socialized mainly with other UFW volunteers. I picketed, helped organize fundraisers, took food donations to Salinas farmworkers, rallied in Modesto against Gallo and in Sacramento for the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA), and produced silkscreen poster to support our campaigns. I learned the words to UFW songs and collected UFW buttons (my favorite: En las Rosas Sí Se Puede, to commemorate rose picker organizing in McFarland, California).

I met movement volunteers who remained as friends and mentors for years. When picketing a liquor store for carrying Gallo wine, I re-met John Brown, who had been my childhood neighbor in Oakland many years before—and who went on to his own intense UFW career. Also during this time, I first met Cesar Chavez when, together with fellow volunteer Jeff Richman, I took copies of Jacques Levy's new book Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa to La Paz to be signed by Cesar for Palo Alto–San Jose boycott supporters. Besides signing, Cesar wrote a little message in each book, and I saw that he was so in tune with the boycott supporters that he wanted to know which individuals were receiving each book, so that he could write a personalized inscription. (We didn't know who would get which book, so Cesar just wrote general inscriptions—I bought the one that said, "In a gentle way you can shake the world.")

San Jose Initiative Campaign

When the growers capitulated in 1975 and agreed to the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, giving farmworkers the collective bargaining rights (in California, at least) that other U.S. workers have had since the 1940s, the UFW began winning representation elections.

Maybe this came as a surprise to the growers—for they exerted pressure on rural legislators to choke off funding for the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB), which enforces the law. The union fought back by qualifying an initiative for the November 1976 ballot to guarantee this funding and make the law even stronger. I took a month's vacation to collect signatures and one day set a record total at the QFC supermarket in Redwood City—having refused a lunch break and solicited every single customer I could. Alberto Escalante, a cartoonist with whom I later worked in Coachella, Delano, and other places, produced a drawing of "Sammy Super-Signature" to celebrate those who did the best.

Los Angeles Proposition 14 Campaign

With the initiative qualified as Proposition 14, the union had to convince California voters to pass it. Now Jim Hirsch, San Jose boycott director Lynn Campbell, and Nancy Carleton (another very active UFW supporter from Palo Alto) pushed me hard to join as a permanent full-time UFW volunteer. I resisted at first because I wasn't sure how I could accommodate myself to being a full-time volunteer, with no wage or salary (other than a small "stipend" for personal expenditures), and housing and food provided by the union. But those I knew who had been doing this for years seemed happy, and I decided I could do it too. I resigned my job at the U.S. Geological Survey—the last "normal" job of my life to date.

To the surprise of my Palo Alto friends, I asked to go to Los Angeles to work and started in the Southeast L.A. area. The director, Conrado Terrazas, had me adopt work habits that wasted not a single minute—running rather than walking between cars when bumper-stickering, and not hanging up the receiver between calls when phoning for volunteers. My assignment was to organize in Pico Rivera, a largely Chicano suburb east of East L.A. I had to learn to work with some supporters who had their own proud history as long-time UFW activists—to lead but not appear condescending. I didn't always get it right at first, and some supporters complained to Conrado about my approach. However, I did adapt well to life as a full-time volunteer.

In the final month, I worked in a large team in greater East L.A. under the direction of Susan Sachen, who years later recruited me into SEIU, where I still work. We were a "brigade"—a street action team to promote Proposition 14 by "human billboarding" (a new term to me—standing with large signs by the side of the street and waving at motorists to get them to honk in support, or at least notice us), leafleting, and other activity. Now we slept in a large group on the floor of a Catholic school gymnasium near L.A.'s Chinatown. A wave of strep throat ran through the team, including me, but we just got medical treatment and kept going.

Farmworker volunteers from around the state came to join in this final phase of the Proposition 14 campaign. Our stay in the gymnasium was enlivened by the visit a group of workers from Blythe, on the Colorado River. They had a very colorful leader, Alfredo Figueroa, who sang farmworker songs and made a great impression on us.

Agribusiness countered us not with a frontal attack on farmworkers and their union—which would have backfired—but by painting Proposition 14 as a misguided power grab by Cesar. Harry Kubo of the Nisei Farmers League was set up as their spokesperson, and his TV commercials said, "Cesar Chavez has done some good things, but this time he has gone too far." No doubt he had to clench his teeth to admit anything good about the UFW—but this approach worked, and Proposition 14 went down to defeat. Even so, we achieved our larger goal, for the growers were alarmed at the increased power that the union would have had if Proposition 14 had passed, and they eased off their pressure on legislators and allowed the ALRA to be funded adequately from then on.

After a break, the California UFW staff regrouped at La Paz to plan what came next. Marshall Ganz, a UFW veteran from the 1960s (and son of a Bakersfield rabbi) who headed the union's organizing department, recruited the brightest stars to organize farmworkers under the re-funded ALRA and led his new team into the nighttime mountain chill outside the La Paz conference room, saying, "If you're afraid of the cold don't bother coming, because you'll be out in the cold a lot." I was still new and returned to the Los Angeles boycott office. Because we had lost the election, we were due for a "shakeup," and the union brought Fred Ross, Sr. and Larry Tramutt (now Larry Tramutola, a Bay Area political consultant) to work with the L.A. staff. We began again to organize supporters and raise funds for the new organizing drives. During this time I also met the Rev. Chris Hartmire of the National Farm Worker Ministry who was working out of the L.A. office and provided great guidance in working with religious leaders.

The shakeup used strong (and from the point of view of the organizers, sometimes harsh) techniques. If a nervous organizer squirmed in his chair when putting the "crunch" on a supporter (the climax of the "rap," in which you get the supporter to promise to do something—give money, hold a house meeting, picket a supermarket)—he had "ants in his pants." If an organizer didn't do the right follow-up, she was judged in front of the whole staff to have "left loose ends all over the place"—the greatest sin, for if you don't ensure something will happen with watertight commitments and frequent reminders, it won't. Organizers who didn't cut it washed out and new ones came on.

The Field Office Years, 1977-1978

Lamont

In January of 1977, Lamont field office Director Jim Drake—another early UFW pioneer from Thermal in the Coachella Valley—asked for an additional Spanish-speaking organizer. I had gradually improved my self-taught book Spanish over the years, and I was selected. I packed up an old car and drove over the Tehachapi Mountains to Lamont and began a new period in my time with the UFW. This was actually the second time I had been there—Lamont, a short drive down the mountain from La Paz, was in some ways the "home"

field office (just as L.A. was the "home" boycott office), and the Lamont workers had hosted the Proposition 14 volunteers to a potluck dinner in the office one night during our conference at La Paz.

The Lamont-Arvin area, located in Kern County south of Bakersfield at the end of the San Joaquin Valley, never got the fame of Delano, where the UFW began in the 1960s, but many important events in UFW history took place there. Jim Drake remarked that the further south in the San Joaquin Valley you go, the poorer and more beaten-down the farmworkers seemed, and he contrasted the Lamont-Arvin farmworkers to workers in the "orange belt" east of Visalia in Tulare County, where the workers had greater dignity and respect from the growers. Driving along rural roads, you would pass hundreds of farmworker houses—small wooden shacks, often unpainted, with old cars out front and laundry drying on the line—but every so often you would see the growers' houses—large brick mansions surrounded by palm trees and hedges.

Whether for this or other reasons, the labor-management conflict in the Lamont-Arvin area had a bitter history. Both of the two murdered martyrs from the 1973 grape strike were from this area—Nagi Daifullah and Juan De La Cruz (whose widow I later met in Arvin). One of the most famous scenes from Fighting for Our Lives, of striker Martha Rodriguez screaming as she is shackled by Kern County sheriffs, occurred at the DiGiorgio vineyards just east of Bakersfield on Highway 58. There was a long-established community of Chavistas, many from the state of Nuevo León in Mexico, who called themselves chivollones (derived from chivo, goat) and believed they were stingier and more hard-headed than other Mexicans.

Within a day of arriving in Lamont I participated in my first ALRB election campaign, going with another organizer to visit a freezing-cold carrot field farmed by Yurosek, whose brand was "Bunny Luv" carrots. The election took place in the Imperial Valley and in Lamont, and we won by a big margin. The first campaign where I had an assignment was a giant grape company, Tejon Ranch, at the very end of the San Joaquin Valley below the Grapevine pass, and this one we did not win. As a newcomer, I was sent to organize one of the small grape crews (who were pruning at that time) and also some of the "steadies" (trabajadores de planta—year-round skilled workers such as tractor drivers and mechanics). Some of the steadies in the San Joaquin Valley, who usually earned more than regular harvest workers, were Anglos (English-speaking Americans) or African-Americans, descendants of the "Okies" and other migrants to the valley in the 1930s.

In our staff meetings I learned the finely tuned assessment methods used by labor organizers: daily, we reviewed the status of each worker in each crew and judged them positive, negative, or unknown or undecided. Any worker who is not a strong, open union supporter will convert to a "no" assessment by election day. So the cards were stacked against us and we could only win with a constant aggressive campaign. But why would workers vote against a union that could only improve their situation—as Jim Drake put it, vote against their "enlightened self-interest?" Fear of the unknown, fear of retaliation by

the boss, family, or other personal ties to supervisors—and in some cases, previous negative experiences with the union—all played a role. Especially in areas like Santa Maria, where the UFW did not have strong support, we knew we were in trouble when workers wouldn't declare their union support, saying such things as "Cada cabeza es un mundo" ("every head is a world" or you can't know what someone else is thinking) or worst of all, "Mañana todos vamos a saber" ("We'll all know tomorrow," from a worker who won't say how he or she will vote before the election).

This is where I first heard of the "80 percent" rule for union organizing elections: don't file for an election unless you have at least 80 percent of the unit signed up on authorization cards, even though you could file with less (under NLRB rules, you need only 30 percent), because of the certainty of loss of support in the final days due to the employer's anti-union campaign. Some unions had great trouble learning this—when I worked for the United Furniture Workers (now a division of the International Union of Electrical Workers, or IUE) in 1985, I was twice ordered to file for an election with less than 50 percent signed on—the theory that this would create "momentum" and bring additional support. In fact, what it built were the circumstances for bad election defeats.

Like the NLRB, immediately after each election, the ALRB agents would gather all the ballots together (sometimes this meant a long wait due to travel time) and count them. The counts, especially in close elections, were always tense affairs and sometimes went on for hours in hot, overcrowded rooms. When the staff attended these we kept our own count of the tally so that we could know the moment when either victory or defeat was certain. During one vote count in Coachella, the board agent had read nothing but "No" votes for what seemed like half an hour; suddenly there was a "Yes" vote, and Mario ____, one of the organizers (a long-time UFW veteran, one of the Portuguese-speaking Gallo strikers from the early 1970s whom I had first met in the Oakland boycott), said "¡Eso!" (meaning more or less, "Right on!"). The ALRB agent immediately threatened to remove the UFW staff from the room if there were any more "disruptions."

Tejon Ranch ran a full-fledged anti-union campaign. At the pre-election conference where the ALRB decided details of voting times, voting locations, eligibility lists, and so on, Tejon's arrogant attorney referred to our red UFW flags and campaign activity as "that garbage." When he tried to treat Jim Drake as someone above the level of the farmworkers in the room by asking what Jim had done before working for the UFW, Jim put him in his place by saying he had been "a guerrilla fighter for the Red Chinese." We lost the election badly in most of the crews. The next day, in a clear sign of retaliation, the company ordered one of the pro-UFW "steadies" to personally tear down the hundreds of UFW posters we had placed around the huge ranch.

Besides working in organizing campaigns, I organized an Arvin-Lamont community support committee to prepare for more intensive worker organizing later in the year. Susano "Chano" Garza (who appears as a picket captain in Fighting for Our Lives), his younger brother, Angel, and their large family were among the most prominent Chavistas

in Arvin. In Lamont, Baltazar Saldaña and his son Everardo ("Lalo," who worked as a UFW organizer) were the core group. At one point, we organized a fundraising menudo breakfast (Mexican tripe soup) at the UFW hall; I drew laughs from committee members by my unfamiliarity with the ingredients for menudo, but the event was a success. The Arvin Chavistas believed that they were stronger supporters than those from Lamont, and said it was a good thing that the union hall was in Lamont because Arvin residents would travel there, while Lamont residents would not bother to go to Arvin.

Also during these first few months, I accidentally started on my graphic work in the UFW organizing. Jim asked the staff to draw samples of an organizing cartoon for the Tejon Ranch campaign. I had always drawn and painted since I was young, and my design was judged the best. It portrayed the union as a ship with the names of victorious election campaigns painted on the side (Yurosek, Arakelian, El Toro, etc.) steaming to the rescue of a farmworker in a life preserver on the open sea, surrounded by sharks representing the dangers of working non-union—no grievance procedure, no job security, etc. I began to do drawings for organizing drives, but Jim Drake disapproved of my spending too much time on this and wanted to keep me focused on pure organizing. Eventually, the needs of the organization for massive quantities of graphic campaign material overruled him.

Scott Washburn, another UFW veteran who began his career in Arizona, came to Lamont to run some of these campaigns. Over the years I got to know him well and worked with him on many different campaigns—Lamont and Delano, Santa Maria and other field offices, the organizing school in La Paz, and boycott operations in the San Francisco Bay Area, Ohio, and Texas, as well as several political campaigns after I left the UFW staff. He had a funny, practical way of teaching organizing skills and tactics.

Coachella

In April, as the weather warmed up, I traveled to the Coachella Valley with Wes Fulton, another UFW staffer in Lamont, to participate in a kickoff march for the grape organizing campaign there. It was a great, inspiring march with hundreds of workers and led by Cesar. A marcher sang a corrido composed for the occasion, to the tune of Carabina Treinta-Treinta, an old Mexican revolutionary song: "Voy a cantar un corrido/que en la historia va quedando/la lucha del campesino/ hoy victorias va ganando. A Coachella vino Chávez/en un día de primavera/la gente quedó admirada/los de aquí y los de afuera… los rancheros siguen necios, y los vamos esforzando …" ("I'm going to sing… to Coachella came Chavez, on a spring day… the growers remain stubborn, and we are forcing them along"). Carabina Treinta-Treinta means 30-30 carbine, and when I sung this song later for farmworker friends in Arvin, they joked that I supported violence. In fact, all of the farmworker songs that I learned were adapted versions of earlier songs.

We returned to Lamont after the march, but within a month I was back in Coachella for the grape organizing campaign. Coachella is the earliest grape harvest of the year. With the changing seasons the harvest moves north to Arvin-Lamont, then Delano, then Fresno.

This campaign was top priority; Eliseo Medina, another of the original UFW leaders out of the ranks, was the director for the Coachella Valley (also for Oxnard), but Marshall Ganz was the organizing director and ran the day-to-day campaign. David Bacon was an organizer in Coachella whom I had known in childhood. To Spanish-speaking workers, he called himself "David Tocino" by translating the literal meaning of his last name … the kind of cultural accommodation that was common among the staff (to Spanish-speaking workers, I would introduce myself as "Marcos" and in fact still do so). Other organizers I met during that campaign with whom I worked in later years were Ruth Shy and Meta Mendel Reyes.

We used cartoon leaflets as effective organizing tools, partly because of Mexican cultural practices and because we could communicate ideas graphically that didn't translate into words. This was an old UFW tradition dating back to Andy Zermeño, who drew a famous early cartoon of a huelguista (striker) for El Malcriado during the first grape strike. Abusive macho supervisors screaming obscenities, fat bosses with money-bulging pockets trembling in fright at the arrival of the UFW eagle, workers sweating in the fields and dreaming of a better future—these and many other characters appeared on organizing leaflets. The official cartoonist (or "propagandist") of this campaign was Alberto Escalante, a disciple of Marshall Ganz (when Alberto arrived in Coachella to work in this campaign, Marshall called for applause when he walked into the staff meeting to be introduced). I began my "apprenticeship," helping him produce leaflets and cartoons. After the Coachella campaign ended, I had finished my "apprenticeship" and was mostly working on my own, although I later collaborated with Alberto in the Giumarra campaign and the UFW convention in 1977 (see below).

Daily, we worked into the night preparing leaflets and copying them on old Gestetner mimeograph machines to have them ready for the organizers' crew visits around 5 a.m. the following morning. The campaign at each ranch had its own dynamic and issues, and often required its own daily cartoon. The grape crews started early to avoid the incredible heat; when Alberto and I came out of the union office at 1 or 2 a.m., the temperature was still above 100 degrees.

The cartoons and leaflets we produced criticized non-union working conditions and highlighted the advantage of working under a union contract. There were a few set types often used in election campaigns. The "Open Letter" showed the signatures of as many workers who would sign, pledging their commitment to their coworkers to vote for the UFW and not be afraid, and was often distributed the day before the election (leafleting on election day itself was prohibited by the ALRB). It only worked if a strong majority signed, as we always assumed that a careful count was made of the published signatures; in a few cases, the organizers were under pressure to find additional signatures at the last minute because the number was deemed too small. The "Open Letter" has passed into wider use, often including photos of those who signed, at organizing campaigns of other unions using the NLRB election method of organizing.

Immediately before elections we usually produced Vote UFW or Vota Asi (Vote this way) posters, usually on paper of bright red or other vivid colors, showing the UFW eagle and a checkmark in a box. Late at night before an election, the organizers and other staffers often visited labor camps or other areas where the voting would take place to stick these posters on walls where workers would see them. The archetype of this piece was the famous "La Bruce Church Es Chavez" (literally, "the Bruce Church is Chavez," which was shorthand for "the workers of the Bruce Church company support the UFW") used before the victorious Bruce Church Inc. election in 1976.

The favorites were always those caricaturing specific bosses and supervisors. Even the way we reported their names could be a weapon, by adding "El or "La" in front of names (for example, a grower named Frank would be "The Frank"), denoting that the person was more like a cartoon character than an individual. Once I was going to show the name of a notorious supervisor without the "El"; Alberto said, only partly joking, that he would have to get Marshall's permission to leave off the "El."

As propagandists or graphic artists, we did not have direct responsibility for signing up or organizing workers. But we always made sure to go along on some visits to field crews at work, as well as visits to labor camps, ALRB proceedings such as pre-election conferences and vote counts, and other locations that organizers visited—to keep "close to the ground" so we would know the issues and the atmosphere, and also so we could see and accurately depict individual supervisors, labor camps, vineyards, citrus orchards, and other day-to-day facets of farmworker life. And we did help with direct organizing when there was a need. Once during the Sam Andrews election in Lamont in June of 1977, I gave a ride to a key worker from his house in Lamont to the voting site at the far south end of the valley and got him there to vote just before the voting closed.

The Coachella campaign was a rough one. The Riverside County sheriffs intimidated us whenever the organizers encroached on the growers' "property rights." For example, David Bacon was arrested right in front of a largely Filipino crew at Mel-Pak—the sheriffs refused his request to let him walk out of sight of the workers before being arrested, to lessen their feeling of intimidation.

David and certain other organizers were thought to be particularly skillful in dealing with Filipino immigrant workers, a group with whom the UFW's relationship was sometimes strained in spite of the historic alliance between Filipino and Mexican farmworkers that launched the modern farmworkers' movement in the 1960s. The relationship that developed between Cesar and the government of Philippine leader Ferdinand Marcos was no doubt intended as a sign of respect for the union's Filipino members, but it did not play well with many of our members and supporters.

To reach out to the Filipino workers at Mel-Pak, we produced a drawing of the UFW eagle enclosing idyllic scenes from the Philippines such as a water buffalo and thatched houses,

with the slogan "Mel-Pak workers for the UFW" in the two major languages of the workers: "Daguiti Agtar-Trabaho iti Mel-Pak quet adda da iti UFW" in Ilocano, the language of older Filipino immigrants, and "Ang mga Trabahadores ng Mel-Pak ay para sa UFW" in Tagalog.

In fact, during the Coachella campaign there was tension within the UFW staff over this issue. Meta Mendel Reyes was one of the organizers who complained that other organizers did not sufficiently take Filipino workers seriously. She was married to Rudy Reyes, one of the younger Filipino farmworker leaders, who helped me with translations into Tagalog. On one occasion, Alberto took me to the Freeman camp, which had long been union (David Freeman was that extreme rarity, a pro-UFW grape grower who had signed one of the first UFW contracts), and we heard one of the veteran Filipino leaders deliver a long emotional monologue about the horrors of field work before the union began. At the end, Alberto looked at me and said, "Now you know." Ernie Barrientos, another young Filipino activist, later gave me a photo (which I still have) of Cesar visiting workers at the Freeman camp.

The major problem in Coachella was not ethnic but our continued fight against two "independent unions," remnants of the grower-Teamster sweetheart deals of 1973: the Independent Union of Agricultural Workers and the even more ridiculously named International Union of Agricultural Workers (both IUAW). The Teamsters, ostracized in many labor circles because of their cooperation with the growers in trying to break the UFW, had mostly stopped competing in ALRB elections by early 1977, but a number of individual Teamster organizers, steeped in years of anti-UFW bias, formed their own sham "unions." These small organizations, supported by the growers as docile alternatives to the UFW, competed successfully in many elections in Coachella, Salinas, Santa Maria, and elsewhere.

During the UFW grape campaign, the representatives of both IUAWs had a reputation for being thugs. Marshall Ganz had tires slashed and a car windshield broken, and in one case an IUAW organizer put a bullhorn right up to Jim Drake's ear and turned the siren on full blast. Jim, who had come to Coachella for this campaign, later said he had closed his eyes, gritted his teeth, and repeated "nonviolence, nonviolence" to himself—but his hearing had been damaged. Once we had an unfair labor practice charge (commonly referred to as a "ULP") to deliver to one of the "independent unions"—we had seen some of the union's representatives eating lunch in a local restaurant, so I went with two or three other staffers to deliver the charge. One of us dropped the charge on the IUAW rep's plate of food, and he immediately jumped up, turned around, and grabbed at me (I was standing the closest) and tried to stuff the ULP charge down my shirt. We left and the charge was delivered—nobody was hurt, but this was typical of the behavior of the "Independent" and "International" unions.

This competition is the reason for the Una Sola Union slogan appearing in many of the leaflets in this essay—Only One (True) Union for farmworkers.

Calexico Field Office

Faced with these obstacles, plus the growers' fierce resistance, we lost most of the elections during the Coachella campaign except at some smaller ranches. The grape season ended and the organizers moved away to other campaigns. Before returning to Lamont, I went for a few weeks to work in the Calexico field office on the Mexican border in the Imperial Valley and I returned there the following year.

The Imperial Valley is separated from the Coachella Valley by the Salton Sea, by the Riverside-Imperial county line, and by a stark difference in atmosphere and attitude. The lettuce workers (lechugueros) and vegetable workers of the Imperial Valley at that time were strong union supporters and the growers couldn't easily intimidate them. Lupe Cordova, a lettuce worker and UFW organizer I worked with later in Calexico, used to perform a little skit contrasting the "brave" lettuce worker with the "timid" grape worker. On the other hand, Scott Washburn thought that supporting the union for the lechugueros was a "business" or practical decision as a way to earn better wages rather than out of a sense of belonging to a movement as in the San Joaquin Valley. Who really knows a person's motives? Also, the industrial nature of lettuce production—with giant lettuce packing platforms traversing the fields and many specialized jobs in each crew—probably fostered an atmosphere ripe for organizing.

This difference between the grape and vegetable industries was mirrored in the names of the companies. In the grape and tree fruit industry, the company names were famous for reflecting the varied ethnic origins of the men who founded the firms, mostly from wine-growing regions of southern Europe such as Italy (Giumarra, DiGiorgio), Croatia/Yugoslavia (Malovich, Zaninovich) and Armenia (Karahedian, Mosesian). In the lettuce and vegetable industry, company names reflected Anglo-Saxon ownership (Bruce Church, Inc., the Garin Co.), some Japanese-American ("Nisei") ownership (Sakata, Oshita), or simply impersonal corporate America (Inter-Harvest, Holtville Farms).

Whatever the reasons, during my time in the UFW we were much more successful in organizing lettuce and vegetable workers than grape workers, and in the Imperial Valley, we won every election. But what nobody can take away from the grape workers is that they were brave enough to found the union in the first place.

In summer, the Imperial Valley is, if anything, even hotter than the Coachella Valley. Much of it is below sea level, an ancient desert depression made fertile by Colorado River water. Across the border is the bustling city of Mexicali, capital of Baja California state and home of most of the valley's farmworkers, who cross the border daily with legal permits to work. The workers' militancy plus the lively border atmosphere made the Calexico field office a fascinating place to work; I spent more time there than in any other field office and it made the greatest impression on me. The Calexico staff could cross into Mexicali at any time to visit workers, get cheap automotive services like body work, and relax off-duty in

inexpensive restaurants and clubs. North through Mexicali flowed the sewage-filled New River, an "accidental" river formed by the same canal overflow that created the Salton Sea, into which the river flows.

I worked on a few projects during those weeks. Summer is the tomato season—but the work is at night under giant floodlights to avoid the brutal heat. I went to the vote count for the election at Hubbard Tomatoes at around 1 a.m. and witnessed a 95 to 26 UFW victory. Driving home at around 3 a.m. and up since early the previous day, I fell asleep at the wheel and came within inches of smashing head-on into a telephone pole at 40 miles per hour—a mistake I have never repeated, but this was an occupational hazard of UFW organizers, and I knew of cases of cars being "totaled" but luckily no serious injuries. For about a week I worked with another staffer named Mario on a giant banner advertising the upcoming UFW constitutional convention in Fresno. The UFW practice was to hold constitutional (i.e., union officer election) conventions in odd years and political conventions (to endorse candidates) in even years. When we hung the banner outside the union hall, all of the UFW staff gathered under it to have a group portrait taken, including Calexico office director Oscar Mondragon, whom I first met during that time, and many other organizers who went on to work in many different campaigns.

At that time I also met Arturo Rodriguez (Cesar's son-in-law), who took over as UFW president upon Cesar's death in 1993. I later worked extensively with Arturo ("Artie" as he called himself then, particularly with English-speaking volunteers), providing support for a traveling organizing brigade, and later in the organizing school and boycott operations.

Lamont Field Office

By July of 1977 I returned to Lamont and provided graphic support for several more grape elections, mostly successful. During one of these campaigns, at Ranch Number One, I visited the ranch during the pre-election conference held by the ALRB and produced a cartoon of the scene showing each of the supervisors and owners. They were shown angry at several ALRB decisions during the conference that were considered hostile to the grower's interests; we ended up winning Ranch Number One by a huge margin (203 to 24).

We got a boost in Lamont among another ethnic group represented among the grape workers in the San Joaquin Valley as well as Coachella—Arabic-speaking farmworkers from Yemen. The Yemeni farmworkers were well-organized in Lamont (as in other areas), and we got word that they had met as a community and voted to support the UFW in the organizing elections. Filipino farmworkers also worked the Lamont vineyards, so for some campaigns we produced materials in Spanish, Arabic, Tagalog, and Ilocano. We got help in our Arabic translations by a local doctor in the Lamont medical clinic. We got to know one of the young Yemeni farmworker leaders, Hamid Nasser, who (I believe) worked as a UFW organizer during some of the campaigns in Coachella. Once, while I was stationed in Lamont, Hamid invited some of the staff to his apartment where he prepared a Yemeni meal for us, seasoned by lots of black pepper.

Nagi Daifullah, killed by Lamont police during the 1973 grape strike, was the martyr of the Yemeni farmworkers. One of the memorable scenes from Fighting for Our Lives shows his funeral procession, with a local religious leader chanting Islamic verses. Unfortunately, controversy over Middle East politics intruded: the original cut of the film showed the Yemeni workers carrying a large portrait of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian president who was a political hero in the Arab world. But here Nasser was unpopular for his confrontation with the West and support for the Soviet Union; later versions of Fighting for Our Lives did not show the Nasser portrait.

Giumarra Campaign

Now the San Joaquin Valley grape harvest was approaching its peak, and the union plunged into an ambitious new campaign: Giumarra vineyards. This Kern County company was the biggest table grape grower and a legendary old UFW adversary dating back to the 1960s. Like the Coachella drive, this was a massive campaign that pulled in a lot of the union's resources. Many important leaders came to participate, with Jim Drake in overall charge. Even Fred Ross, Sr., who had concentrated on training boycott organizers for many years, went along on some visits to grape crews to sign up workers. Support for the Giumarra fight was the focus of the UFW convention in Fresno at the end of August. Yet given our recent history in the grape industry, we all knew this would be a very tough campaign to win.

The Giumarra campaign gave me the opportunity to live and work in the union's historic heart in Delano. I stayed in Agbayani Village, a retirement compound originally started for Filipino farmworkers, located in Forty Acres, where the UFW began as the United Farm Worker Organizing Committee (UFWOC) in the 1960s. This is where Cesar conducted his early protest fasts that won him worldwide fame and where Robert Kennedy and Walter Reuther came to show their support. Although not as exciting in later days as the Imperial Valley, it felt like a great honor to be able to live and work there, even if only briefly.

Giumarra fought against our campaign with the usual intimidation, anti-union propaganda, and personal pressure from supervisors. In the non-union ranches, unless the grower used a labor contractor, the supervisors in charge of crews did the hiring and sometimes also provided transportation, food and/or housing to the workers during the harvest season. So a worker who went against the interest of the supervisor—supporting the union—felt he or she was jeopardizing his or her job and ride to work. The ALRA stipulated penalties for unfair labor practices modeled after the National Labor Relations Act (which excludes farmworkers), but abuses still occurred constantly during organizing.

There were some bright moments. One day I went with some organizers to visit a new grape crew. In many of the well-established vineyards, the grape vines top out very high off the ground, and when the grape leaves are thick in summer, walking through the vineyard feels like exploring a hedge maze. We turned the corner on one row and started down the

next row and ran right into a familiar UFW activist from the Coachella campaign—now working for Giumarra—who had been fired for wearing a UFW button and reinstated on orders of the ALRB. He immediately joined the campaign and agreed to sign up his coworkers.

Just as we were producing leaflets and graphics as part of our organizing campaign, Giumarra countered us with sophisticated cartoons playing on the workers' fears about the union. Typical anti-union themes were the union robbing workers of their money, the union firing workers for violating "union work rules," and cartoons making fun of union organizers, their tactics, and their motives. Some cartoons satirized individual UFW organizers just as we satirized individual supervisors or bosses. Arturo Mendoza, later a member of the UFW executive board, was portrayed taking a worker's money for "dues, fines, and my salary." Victor Garcia and, later in Salinas, John Brown, were also targets of such cartoons. A series of cartoon panels showed a young woman organizer seducing workers to get them to support the union. Another leaflet quoted a worker complaining about "El dos porciento que es un dolor de cabeza, y el despacho que es un dolor de estómago"—"The 2 percent [i.e. UFW union dues, which were a fixed 2 percent of income] which is a headache and the dispatch [i.e. the hiring hall], which is a stomach ache."

That these attacks did resonate with some workers showed how hard it had been to build this union out of nothing in the hostile environment of agriculture. The UFW could not have survived without a steady dues income to support organizing and representation activities, and even so was forced to constantly seek outside donations and not pay its staff a salary like other unions but only a stipend for basic living expenses. Similarly, the hiring hall was necessary to break the power of the labor contractors and other abusive hiring methods—unfortunately, we did hear some complaints of past abuses and favoritism in handing out "dispatches" (work referrals). When I came to work in the field offices, I believe the union's leadership was aware of these past abuses—which had been the exception, not the norm—and had worked to eliminate them. But no matter how bad a potential hiring hall abuse could be, it could not compare to the ingrained abuse of some labor contractors or growers who took bribes in return for jobs, transported workers in unsafe vehicles, housed them in substandard housing, and fed them with substandard food—and then to top it off, charged workers for these services, so they sometimes ended up owing the boss rather than receiving any wage at all.

As many organizers observed, the hand that gave the worker the anti-union leaflet was the same hand that gave him his paycheck—so it was bound to be taken seriously. Giumarra's campaign of intimidation and propaganda defeated us by a vote of 900 to 673, with 191 striker or other votes that were not counted since they would not have changed the result. The next day in the Lamont office, Jim Drake had us remove all vestiges of the Giumarra campaign—leaflets, signs, banners, and anything else connected to Giumarra, so that we could move on.

Calexico Field Office

Giumarra was the last of the grape organizing campaigns that I worked in. In November or December 1977, I moved to Calexico to work providing support for the organizing team that Arturo Rodriguez was putting together.

Shortly after I arrived back in Calexico, we got great news. On December 13, 1977, the ALRB certified the UFW as the official winner of the representation election at Bruce Church Inc. (BCI). Lettuce grower Bruce Church (called la Brocha by workers in the Imperial Valley and Salinas) was like Giumarra in the grape industry, a fiercely anti-union industry giant. On November 30, 1976, in the first great organizing wave after the Proposition 14 defeat, the UFW had beaten the Teamsters by 462 to 311, plus 17 "No Union" votes. The challenged and void ballots totaled 113, so the result was a clear UFW victory; predictably, BCI filed objections to the election, stating that such activities as UFW organizing activities had intimidated the workers and "tainted" the result. Almost a year later, after an intensive investigation, the ALRB dismissed the objections and ordered BCI to negotiate a contract with the UFW. This decision obviously boosted our spirits, vindicated our organizing tactics, and set the stage for the many election victories in 1978. As stated above, the Teamsters mostly pulled out of agricultural organizing after that, although Teamsters Local 890 in Salinas still represents workers at lettuce/vegetable growers like Bud Antle, as well as associated businesses like Basic Vegetable Products, a packinghouse in King City where the workers won a celebrated 25-month-long strike in 2001.

The Bruce Church story did not end there. Despite the ALRB decision, BCI still refused to negotiate fairly, and ultimately, Bruce Church and its flagship brand Red Coach lettuce was our main target during my years in the boycott, starting in 1978. The battle with Bruce Church lasted for many years: When Cesar died in Yuma, Arizona, in April of 1993, he was there to defend the union against a multimillion dollar lawsuit brought by BCI against the Red Coach boycott. Finally in 1995, UFW president Arturo Rodriguez reached a contract settlement with the new president of Bruce Church, Steve Taylor. Predictably, news reports personalized this victory by saying it had only become possible once the original antagonists (Cesar and previous BCI president Ted Taylor, Steve's father) were gone from the scene.

Besides brief visits to Mexicali, the Calexico staff had the opportunity to make longer excursions into other destinations in Baja California such as Ensenada and San Felipe, a beach resort on the coast of the Gulf of California (also known as the Sea of Cortez) south of Mexicali. During the Christmas-New Year break in 1977, my former boycott organizer from Palo Alto, Jim Hirsch, came to visit and we spent a weekend at San Felipe together with another Calexico staffer.

Watsonville Field Office

Unlike 1977, 1978 was a year of steady victories rather than glorious defeats for the campaigns that I worked in—particularly in the Imperial Valley, Oxnard, and the initial phase of the Salinas campaign. Most memorably, the Oxnard campaign among the limoneros, which built off the workers' strike at Coastal Growers, was close to a spontaneous worker revolt against abusive bosses in an industry that the UFW had not done much work in before.

The first Calexico election was Desert Seed in December 1977, which we won by 95 to 26. In January 1978, we took a brief excursion to Watsonville. In Watsonville the office administrator was Lisa Feldberg, with whom I later worked in Calexico and, after leaving the UFW, on Central America solidarity work in San Jose. At Miranda-Ariel mushrooms in Watsonville, we faced yet another independent "union," the California Independent Union (CIU), which seemed to have been created by this grower specifically to defeat the UFW. Oscar Mondragon, the office director of Watsonville as well as Calexico and a great source of Mexican folklore, suggested one of our organizing leaflet titles: Río revuelto—ganancia de pesacadores (essentially, "Troubled waters—fishermen's luck," which was intended to mean that only the boss wins when workers or unions fight among themselves). Ultimately, as so often happens when workers understood that one of these phony "unions" was the boss's choice, the CIU defeated us. At Miranda-Ariel and later at nearby Monterey Mushrooms, which the union organized successfully, I was able to visit the mushroom production areas, which are like nothing else in agriculture: cool, dark caverns where workers tend the fungus with plentiful applications of fertilizer.

Calexico Field Office

Returning to Calexico from Watsonville, Arturo's organizing team won five straight election victories. At Holtville Farms, a small carrot grower located in Holtville, the "carrot capital of California," the workers complained about an unusually abusive supervisor, nicknamed El Búfalo (The Buffalo), a big man who swore continually and pushed the workers beyond endurance. Based on the workers' description at a meeting, I produced a drawing of El Búfalo, which was a big hit. In all of our campaigns, workers loved to see supervisors or growers—over whom they had no power at all as individual workers—personally caricatured and ridiculed in our leaflets. In a typical development, once the UFW campaign began El Búfalo magically changed his character, gave out new caps, and started paying "show-up pay" that had been denied before. We won that election by 20 to 7.

Like grapes, the lettuce season in California moves from place to place during the year. The major winter season is in the Imperial Valley, with smaller harvests in two outlying oases on the Colorado River, where the UFW maintained "branch offices" under the general jurisdiction of Calexico—Yuma (in Arizona) and Blythe (in California, mentioned above in the Proposition 14 section). From there the harvest moves north to several small areas in the San Joaquin Valley, including Lamont (where lettuce is only a minor crop) and Huron, on the west edge of the valley in Fresno County. Finally in the summer, the Salinas Valley

has largest lettuce season of all, with some production in nearby areas like Watsonville. Organizers focused on the lettuce-vegetable industry followed this "lettuce circuit."

Arturo's organizing team and much of the other Calexico staff followed this circuit. Almost entirely out of the farmworker rank-and-file, this group included many strong personalities. Lupe Cordova (from San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora—mentioned above), Hector Perez, and Gilberto Rodriguez (from the tough town of Brawley in the northern Imperial Valley) were all experienced, if sometimes cynical, organizers, and taught me lessons that helped me in my own work as a "propagandist." Gilberto also teamed up frequently with two other organizers who had a super-tough, macho image—Lupe Bautista and Calacas (skeleton figure), who was known universally by this nickname derived from his tall, thin frame and scarred face. Once when Gilberto, Lupe, and Calacas had gone to organize a melon (cantaloupe) grower, I produced a drawing of the melons jumping off the ground in terror at their approach—although some questioned this, saying they were no more or less successful than other UFW organizers of the time. Other staffers working the lettuce circuit (on the member representation side) were Ken Fujimoto and Ramon Medina Medina from Mexicali. "Medina Medina" had a coincidental Latin American double last name (from the last name of each parent's father) but it sounded odd, and some jokingly called him "Ramon Ramon."

Several top-level UFW leaders were also in the Imperial Valley that winter, including Marshall Ganz, Jessica Govea, who was working to initiate Proyecto Mexicali, an extension of the UFW medical plan to provide medical services on the Mexican side of the border, and Roberto Garcia, one of the most prominent rank-and-file leaders from the Salinas.

Working in Calexico also gave me the opportunity to explore Mexicali in the course of my work. Once, on some mission, I was driving to the Colonia Independencia, a large new district on the eastern edge of Mexicali where the streets were unpaved, when I got stuck in thick mud during a heavy rainstorm and had to enlist the help of the neighborhood residents in pushing my car out of the mud. Later, hearing about this incident, Arturo Mendoza commented that places like Colonia Independencia were "off limits" during the rain—but sometimes we had to go there anyway. On another occasion, I visited a worker in Mexicali to invite him to a meeting; while sitting in his living room, I glanced around at a portrait of Cesar and other UFW posters he had on his wall. He reacted angrily, thinking I was seeking to verify his UFW loyalty, but that wasn't my intent at all.

The UFW was not strong everywhere in the Imperial Valley: lettuce grower Royal Packing had resisted being organized but sparked a revolt by its workers that winter when it tried to reintroduce la burra—a low, portable lettuce-packing platform that caused severe back problems. Roberto Garcia got a big kick out of a cartoon he asked me to do about this protest at Royal Packing, complete with supervisors ordering the workers back to work at gunpoint (I was told this had happened—I didn't witness it). But this was the exception.
Mario Saikhon owned a lettuce company of the same name that had been organized the previous year; at the contract ratification meeting I attended at a local college campus,

Saikhon drew cheers when he put on a UFW cap after the workers voted to ratify the contract. Also at this meeting, UFW negotiator Ann Smith impressed the UFW volunteers present by showing a diagram of the union contract divided into sections such as Worker Rights, Union Rights and Economics – an analysis that I have seen widely used since then.

Oxnard Field Office

By March, the Imperial Valley season had ended, and the organizing team relocated to Salinas to begin working on campaigns there and in Watsonville. Soon after arriving, however, I was told on short notice to pack up for a brief assignment in the Oxnard field office in Ventura County.

The coastal areas of Ventura County, immediately west of Los Angeles, have what many would think an almost perfect climate—warmer than coastal areas farther north like Salinas and Watsonville, but without the heat of inland areas like the San Joaquin, Coachella, and Imperial valleys. Sensitive agricultural products like the climate just as much—lemons and avocado thrived here, as well as strawberries, mushrooms and other high-value crops. Lemons, more sensitive to cold than other citrus fruits such as oranges, dominated the Santa Clara River valley from Saticoy near the coast through the farming towns of Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru. Ventura is the county seat, but the UFW office was in the larger city of Oxnard to the south—in the Mexican-Chicano district known as La Colonia.

Citrus fruit had not been a principal focus of the UFW, except in Florida where the union had a long-standing presence with Minute Maid and other orange producers. But this industry had its own abuses: the fruit is heavy and carrying a full bag is backbreaking work; faces, necks, hands, and arms get scratched by the branches; and in fact the failure of some growers to provide high-quality gloves was an organizing issue in our campaigns. (I knew a little about this firsthand as I had worked for one day in the late 1960s with two college friends picking lemons near Goleta in Santa Barbara County.)

Coastal Growers (actually an association of citrus growers) was the dominant employer in the lemon industry; it gave out free postcards for employees to send to family members and attract new workers, showing a long line of yellow farm labor buses with the driver standing in front of each bus, and a message on the back extolling the company's superior working conditions. Nevertheless, workers at Coastal Growers had voted for the UFW by an incredible 897 to 42 in March of 1978 and quickly went on strike to demand a quick contract, which broke out before I went to Oxnard. The Coastal Growers strike became a local legend complete with corridos (ballads, Mexican folk songs) commemorating it. The workers stayed on strike until they won an acceptable contract.

Seeing an opportunity to quickly organize the whole industry, the UFW rushed in organizers and other staff, and the campaign was in full swing when I arrived in April. Eliseo Medina was the director of the Oxnard office (and of Coachella, as stated above) and the star of one of the corridos, which featured a verse rhyming Eliseo with desempleo

(unemployment), noting that the strikers had gone to apply for unemployment insurance. Arturo Rodriguez came with some of his team; Jim Drake came briefly, along with Scott Washburn and Roberto (Bobby) De La Cruz, another UFW leader.

Another organizer who arrived was Lupe Murguia (who later moved with us to Cleveland with his wife, Kathy, and children, to work on the boycott there), about whom it was said that he could walk into a room full of farmworkers and immediately identify the natural leaders of the group—but that he could be hard to work with. And Oxnard is where I also first met one of the more senior organizers, Frank Ortiz, later on the UFW executive board and the head of the Red Coach lettuce boycott, to whom I and other boycott organizers reported.

In the wake of Coastal Growers, the union quickly won overwhelming victories at four other lemon companies—Limoneira, Rancho Sespe, L&O and MOD. At L&O the workers voted 162 to 14 for UFW representation—the highest UFW vote percentage in any of the campaigns I worked in, except at much smaller N.A. Pricola in Calexico, where we won by 27 to 1. Cesar visited Oxnard for a big rally with the limoneros at the height of the campaign.

My most vivid memory of that campaign was at the third election, Rancho Sespe. On the evening before the election we held a big rally at the Rancho Sespe labor camp in the hills behind Fillmore. Arturo Rodriguez came to speak to the workers, and we played Luchando por Nuestras Vidas (the Spanish-language version of Fighting for Our Lives). At that moment, we "owned" the camp. Almost every worker attended, and if some did not support the union (as clearly was the case based on the vote results), they kept it quiet during the rally. Red UFW flags and posters (stuck on buildings or light posts in those days with "wheat paste," a mixture of water and flour that was very difficult to remove when dried) surrounded the central area where the rally occurred, and the workers pledged their determination to fight for justice and a fair contract.

Santa Maria Field Office

After our quick victories in Oxnard, I returned briefly to Salinas, but in June I was once again headed south on Highway 101, this time to Santa Maria at the northern edge of Santa Barbara County. At Santa Maria, the coastline faces west, instead of south-southwest as in Oxnard and Santa Barbara on the other side of Point Concepcion, so the climate is cool and often overcast, as in Watsonville and other areas to the north.

Santa Maria had a mid-sized agricultural industry based on crops that thrived in this climate, such as celery and broccoli. The UFW office in Santa Maria was very cozy and featured a full kitchen in the meeting hall. The local office director was Pete Cohen, whom I hadn't seen for a number of years. He had married a woman from the community and settled down there. The situation for the union was not so good. In Santa Maria the Teamsters had been organizing farmworkers under a local leader named Bart Coto. Before

we arrived, the Teamsters had reached a truce with the UFW, and the local newspaper had featured a photo of Bart Coto walking and chatting amiably with Cesar. As elsewhere, some of the Teamster organizers did not accept the truce and continued opposing the UFW under the banner of one of the IUAWs (mentioned above in the Coachella section).

The organizing team, including Scott and Rob Everts, with whom I worked in Salinas later that year, participated in elections at two celery growers, Phelan & Taylor and Point Sal. We lost both of those elections to the IUAW; at Phelan & Taylor, we were able to get the ALRB to "set aside" the first Phelan & Taylor election (throw out the results due to an atmosphere of coercion and order a new election). Then we lost the second election also. The holdover influence of the Teamsters/IUAW was still strong. For example, one of the elections took place shortly after Father's Day (June 18, 1978). On that day the local IUAW organizer came upon us while we were busily driving around a small town visiting workers. He taunted us, saying "You're working? It's Father's Day! I'm going to the beach with my kids!"

The farm labor force in Santa Maria included a lot of Filipino farmworkers. As discussed above in the Coachella section, the UFW had trouble winning the support of some Filipino workers during this time based on an incorrect reputation as a union for Mexicans. I did a house visit to one worker to urge his support for the UFW; he roomed in a house with an Anglo family, and during my visit in the family's living room, the wife interjected herself by telling the worker he should get his supervisor's advice on whether to vote for the union. Obviously, this was not the advice I was giving. A more troubling incident involved UFW executive board member Pete Velasco (of the older, Ilocano-speaking generation), who came to help out with the Filipino crews. In a visit to one of the labor camps, a worker ran up to Pete Velasco and hit him. Keeping his cool, Pete asked the worker, "Do you think this will make him (the boss) love you?" Also in Santa Maria I heard the unique use of the word "compound" by the Filipino crews, as in "taking compound" (meaning, taking a lunch break).

Salinas Field Office

In July of 1978, after the Santa Maria losses, the organizing team plunged into the Salinas summer organizing campaign—the biggest with which I was involved that year. The Salinas Valley stretches some 60 miles from Castroville on the coast, the "artichoke capital of the world," through Salinas (Monterey County seat) and Gonzales ("salad bowl of America," a name also applied to the region as a whole) to King City at the southern end. The major national lettuce growers like Bruce Church and Interharvest (la Inter as the farmworkers called it, the largest UFW-affiliated lettuce company at that time, later bought by citrus giant Sun-World) were headquartered in Salinas. Without the added border atmosphere of the Imperial Valley, the Salinas Valley was simply a giant agricultural factory producing lettuce, broccoli, strawberries, nursery products, sugar beets, and other crops (increasingly in recent years including wine grapes). Very little of the valley land was wasted

on non-production; the Salinas Valley labor camps always seemed (to me, at least), particularly bleak, treeless, and utilitarian compared to those in other parts of the state.

Many of the Salinas staff had also worked in Calexico during the winter, and I met new people as well, including two Anglo organizers with whom I kept in touch in later years, Rob Everts and Gretchen Laue. John Brown, who had spent years working in the Bay Area boycott offices (where he acquired the universal nickname "JB"), came to work as an organizer; Hector Perez (who had his home in nearby Castroville), Ramon Medina Medina, and Lupe Cordova came north to work in these campaigns.

Jessica Govea and Bill Granfield held leadership positions on the contract administration side of the Salinas operation. Roberto Garcia had his base in Salinas and held a leadership position in the Salinas office. Often after a successful organizing victory or other event, he would take the staff to eat a lavish seafood dinner at the Gutierrez restaurant in Salinas, a favorite local hangout that is still in business.

Another young new staffer, Saul ____, quickly became a star organizer and formed a friendship with John Brown. He had a vivid way of talking to workers and using his body language. I clearly remember the first time I saw him speak to workers in one of the labor camps: at the high point of his "rap," he suddenly bent forward at the waist while raising his voice, and grabbed everyone's attention. The following year, in the organizing school at La Paz, he continued his colorful image and was given the nickname "Boulevard Nights" after a movie that came out that year about the Chicano youth culture in East L.A.

Also that summer, in a visit to another labor camp, I met Salvador (Chava) Bustamante, a rank-and-file leader who later joined the UFW staff and who works with me now in SEIU Local 1877. Chava had an intense but quiet way of dealing with people that eventually made him a very effective labor leader. Chava's brother Mario was also a leader of the workers, but I did not get to know him at that time and got better acquainted with him in later years after he, along with some other leaders of the lettuce and vegetable workers, had a falling-out with the UFW leadership and ceased being active.

I had visited the Salinas UFW office on South Wood Street before as a boycott volunteer. The Salinas office—which oversaw "branch" operations in Watsonville, Hollister/San Juan Bautista, and King City, as well as the UFW Clinic in Salinas—was always full of activity and full of farmworkers and other members of the community. The UFW legal department, which had always attracted brilliant lawyers like Jerry Cohen and Tom Dalzell (who delivered one of the memorable lines in Fighting for Our Lives: "We have to be 50 feet from this property and 50 feet from that property line, which puts us somewhere up in the air."), was also located in Salinas rather than in La Paz like other UFW central departments, and its offices were sometimes available for staff meetings. It was said that the UFW attorneys were so essential that they had the "clout" to insist on working in the more pleasant and less "supervised" environment of Salinas rather than La Paz—and

Salinas was a very pleasant place to live and work, with the beach, Monterey and Carmel, and mountain parks all close by for excursions on days off.

The proximity of the Salinas office to the Bay Area also attracted outside visitors more than was the case in remoter towns like Calexico or Lamont. Among such visitors were those followers of left-wing parties who preferred to attack progressive organizations (e.g., the UFW) for not being good enough, rather than attack the much worse enemies (e.g., the growers) that those organizations were fighting. A particularly obnoxious organizer for one of these parties was Bruce ____, who had gone to work as a farmworker so as to be able to influence the UFW "from within." He repeatedly cornered me outside the Salinas office in an effort to prove that as an Anglo UFW staffer I was out of touch with farmworker concerns and couldn't speak Spanish (he was wrong on both counts). On one occasion I was assigned to take two students from Scandinavia who were researching the farmworker movement to one of the labor camps, where they took photos and interviewed the workers using me as an interpreter; I didn't mind this assignment except for the somewhat cold, scientific way in which (so it seemed to me) the students regarded the workers they were studying.

The militant lechuguero spirit from the Imperial Valley was present in Salinas as well, and our organizing drive started with several election wins, the two largest of which were lettuce producer Oshita, and Arrow, a producer of broccoli and other vegetables. The Arrow campaign was also notable for having been led by a strong and determined woman leader (rare in the lettuce-vegetable industry) named Bertha (?) ____ , whom some of the organizers called La Flaca de Arrow (the thin woman of Arrow).

The organizing issues we used were similar to those in other areas: the fight for better wages, abusive supervisors, the advantages of the UFW medical plan over non-union plans, the "join the bandwagon" spirit of mounting UFW victories at other companies. At one company (I believe Sakata Farms), the portable bathrooms for the workers were placed very far from the fields were the crews worked, and workers were given only very short breaks, so (they complained), they literally had to run to the bathroom and back while the supervisor looked at his watch … a scene I commemorated in a cartoon.

In the Garin campaign, we focused on a notorious supervisor named Frank Vargas, who was also said to be the owner of several labor camps. In one cartoon I showed him conspiring in a back room with one of the IUAWs (they were present in Salinas) to trick the workers into forgetting about the UFW, then fainting in shock when the workers pointed accusatory fingers at him when they found out. A letter from a worker complaining about being cheated by Vargas was published in ¡Alarma!, a Mexican magazine specializing in sensationalist news, and I reproduced the letter in a leaflet with the title "Hasta en México se oye de los malos tratos de Vargas" ("Even in Mexico they have heard about Vargas's abuses"). In spite of (or maybe because of) Vargas's abusive style, we lost the Garin campaign.

My time working in Salinas also brought my first exposure to the darker currents of the internal politics of the UFW. One involved the political contributions from union members, called the CPD, which were facilitated by payroll deductions in many of the UFW contracts and were equivalent to the voluntary "COPE contributions" that other unions collect in the United States. I am not sure now of the details, but during this time the CPD contributions were considered mandatory (which could not have been the case under NLRB rules). The union held hearings on members who did not want to pay the CPD; the left-wing parties mentioned above attacked us for this, probably because the contributions were going to labor-friendly Democratic politicians. I witnessed California Lieutenant Governor Mervyn Dymally when he came to the UFW hall in Salinas once to accept a contribution check in a small ceremony. This provided additional fodder for the growers' anti-UFW propaganda; on the other hand, the UFW had survived and grown partly due to strong political support around the country, and building a political fund is a necessity for any union.

In a similar vein, I attended one hearing at the union hall to judge the head doctor at that time of the Salinas UFW clinic, Dr. Marc Sapir, who was accused of encouraging workers to resist the CPD and in other ways undermining the UFW's unity. This constant demand for loyalty was the ugly "flip side" of the cohesive spirit of fighting against the odds that all UFW staffers shared.

Here also I was first inducted into "the Game," a technique the union had adopted from Synanon, a narcotics-rehabilitation program with which it was allied at that time. The Game was a session where UFW staff members would sit in a circle for several hours and hurl accusations at each other … of shoddy work, of personal failings, or of anything else that the accuser wished to bring up. In the drug rehabilitation setting it was a valuable way to get addicts to admit and face their addictions. In the setting of the UFW staff, many saw it as a way to root out disloyalty and discover things that might not come to light otherwise. Staffers used the word "game" as a verb, as in "I'm going to game you on that," meaning "I'm going to bring that up against you in the Game."

I was not as bothered by the Game as some other ex-UFW staffers who spoke about it with great bitterness. Ideally, it could be a way to improve relations among coworkers and openly resolve hidden causes of conflict, but it often seemed like a waste of time where those who didn't have an "axe to grind" against another person had to think hard to come up with something to say.

Two years later in the L.A. boycott, I participated in numerous "Games." In Salinas that year, I only played once, in the library of the UFW legal department. I chiefly remember that occasion for accusations directed at a gay staff person in the Salinas office—that he was causing problems (which were never specified) for the union just because of who he was. Although this was "liberal" Northern California, it was before gay rights began to be as widely accepted in this country. Giving the lie to the stereotype of the "macho" Mexican

culture, I thought there was much more tolerance among the farmworker members. For example, in Salinas there was a more or less openly gay rank-and-file leader who seemed to be well-like and respected by his peers.

The Salinas organizing campaign ended with election defeats at two large lettuce/vegetable growers, The Garin company (mentioned above) and Merrill Farms. John Brown was one of the organizers in these campaigns and suffered the indignity of being personally lampooned in an anti-UFW cartoon. I had earlier drawn a cartoon celebrating a court victory against one of the Salinas growers, showing a judge banging his gavel and gesturing angrily at a (typically) trembling grower. The anti-UFW leaflet turned this on its head, showing "JB" being accused by a judge of lying, with the caption "Ya ves, Café, lo que te pasa por mentiroso!" ("Now you see, Brown, what happens to you for lying!"). Like David Bacon in the Coachella campaign, John had translated his entire name as "Juan Café" for the benefit of Spanish-speaking workers.

As in all of the organizing drives, growers like Garin and Merrill routinely committed unfair labor practices in their efforts to defeat the UFW organizing drives: isolating, threatening, or firing union supporters; threatening or blocking access for union organizers (the ALRA was particularly strong in ensuring access for organizers to visit the fields to talk to workers); giving pay increases immediately before elections; threatening to close down operations if the union won; favoring one union (for example, the IUAWs or the Teamsters over the UFW); and many others.

Management tactics like these led to my final memory of the Salinas campaign, when I was visiting one of the Garin camps with the organizers shortly before the Garin election, during the final week of August. The Merrill Farms election was scheduled for that day, and suddenly at around 8 p.m. a pickup truck full of anti-UFW Merrill workers drove into the middle of the Garin camp shouting "¡Ganamos! No union!" ("We won! No union!") and other slogans celebrating the UFW defeat. This was a classic example of the growers turning our own tactics of mobilization of workers and building ánimo against us.

At Merrill Farms, the union returned the following year (1979) for another organizing drive, which manager Tom Merrill tried to thwart by personally visiting the lettuce crews (something he had never done before) to announce a 50 cent wage increase.

By September the Salinas campaign was winding down. We had held about 10 elections and won about half of them. Now it was time to prepare for a great challenge that we knew was coming: the fight to renegotiate the lettuce and vegetable contracts, starting with the Imperial Valley. The first UFW contracts with these growers were signed in early 1976 on the heels of the first wave of Imperial Valley organizing victories. Like most labor contracts in the United States, these were three-year agreements and due to expire at the beginning of 1979. We knew the industry would put up a fierce resistance and that a strike was likely, and the union began moving its forces back to Calexico to prepare for this fight.

Calexico Field Office

I arrived back at the Calexico office in the fall of 1978. In preparation for the strike and contract fight, the staff was now much larger. The staffers without families lived in a large apartment complex in El Centro, the county seat, rather than crowded into a single house in Calexico as had been the case previously. Arturo's organizing team had been merged into the overall Calexico operation. I was assigned to do office administrative support under the direction of Oscar Mondragon, and it was expected that I would be providing other support during the upcoming strike, such as assistance in legal work with the ARLB. I had done some work in this area in previous Imperial Valley campaigns, having prepared worker affidavits for ULP charges to help out Anita Morgan, one of the staff paralegals in Calexico.

Until the strike and contract campaign started, this schedule was going to be somewhat less hectic than at the height of the organizing drives, and together with other staffers I was able to find time for excursions into Mexico on days off. Once Saul, Lupe Cordova, and I drove to El Golfo de San Luis, a small town on the eastern (Sonora state) side of the Sea of Cortez where we feasted on shrimp for a fraction of what the cost would have been in the U.S.

In November of 1978, two shocking news reports reached us in the Calexico office, particularly impacting those of us with Northern California roots. On November 18, the followers of the San Francisco-based People's Temple committed mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana. Then on November 28 we heard of the assassination of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk by another supervisor, Dan White, who was upset at the liberal political and cultural changes to the city. Mayor Moscone had been a great supporter of the UFW, and his murder touched me personally because as a boycott supporter in 1976, shortly before joining the UFW staff, I had worked in his campaign in the San Francisco mayoral race.

On Thanksgiving, without a family in the area, I had dinner at the home of the one of the local UFW activists. Around this time I began to feel sick and when I did not get better I went to the local clinic, where the doctor diagnosed me with hepatitis. He said that I had caught it from contaminated food, probably seafood. I thought immediately of a coctel de pulpo, an octopus cocktail, with undercooked octopus that I had eaten recently in Mexicali. He told me that I needed to stop working to recuperate. In December I left Calexico with regrets that I would miss the action of the upcoming strike, and returned to the Bay Area.

That was the end of my two-year career in the UFW field offices, for when I returned next year it was to La Paz and the boycott. Although I may have learned more technical organizing skills in the boycott years that followed, working in the field office campaign took me into the heart of a culture and way of life that, as a native Californian, I had always been surrounded by, but like many, was totally ignorant of. The field office campaigns left

me with the most unique memories from my UFW career, and in the boycott gave me a deeper appreciation of what I was fighting for.

The Boycott Years: 1979–1982

La Paz

By the late spring of 1979 I was well enough to return to work on the UFW staff. Some friends questioned why I felt an obligation to go back, but it had never occurred to me not to return. The union had continued paying me my volunteer stipend while I was recuperating, as a kind of "sick leave," and Arturo Rodriguez came to see me once where I was staying in San Jose, to see how I was doing and also to talk to me about a new assignment when I returned, helping in the Fred Ross Organizing School at La Paz. I relocated to La Paz in May of 1979.

Much had happened while I was out. The great strike against the lettuce and vegetable industry had produced a new martyr: Rufino Contreras, who was killed in the Imperial Valley before the strike moved north to Salinas. The union was preparing for a long fight, and training new organizers in a more formal way was part of that preparation.

Arturo Rodriguez and Scott Washburn were the instructors at the school, and with a few exceptions the students were mostly new recruits that I hadn't known before. The students were all young men from the ranks, including Patricio Rodriguez, Paul David, Rafael Morales (whom I later knew in San Jose), Saul ____, the Duran brothers from around Fresno, and others whose names I don't recall. In the UFW, the job of organizer at that time was an almost all-male preserve, and the wives of the married students were attending a different school to run the Caja Popular (credit union). Some other veteran organizers I had known in the field offices, like Gilberto Rodriguez, were also in La Paz during that time.

The school attempted to give the students a complete training in organizing techniques as well as an understanding of the industry. As an assistant in the school, among other projects, I researched and produced a complete overview of California agriculture, showing the growing seasons, geographic areas and commercial value of each major crop.

Life as a UFW staffer in La Paz involved hard work but was still not as hectic as in the field offices. We worked a fairly regular schedule of full days Monday through Friday plus a shorter day on Saturday. I got a relatively choice living assignment, sharing a small house near the UFW administration building with Danny Ybarra, son of a prominent family of UFW activists; many other single staffers were housed in large dormitory-type buildings.

In addition to our regular work we were expected to help on extra projects such as working on the security detail, resurrecting an old swimming pool, and tending the La Paz garden. The garden was overseen by ____Mata, whom I had met years before as an Oakland

boycott supporter. On free days the La Paz staff could travel uphill to Tehachapi or downhill to Bakersfield for recreation such as restaurant meals, movies, and dances. Once I traveled to Mount Whitney in the Sierra Nevada with Pat Bonner, a former priest on the UFW staff, and some friends of his, and we hiked most of the way to the summit.

La Paz (short for Nuestra Señora de la Paz, Our Lady of Peace) was an abandoned tuberculosis sanatorium in the Tehachapi Mountains above Bakersfield, on Highway 58 near the tiny settlement of Keene. The union had bought it in the 1960s with the help of a prominent union supporter and had moved its headquarters there from Delano amid accusations that the UFW leadership was trying to distance itself from its farmworker base. I didn't see the problem in having the headquarters at La Paz. Given the enemies that the UFW had made (including occasional personal threats against Cesar and other leaders), La Paz was easier to keep secure than a wide-open location like Forty Acres. And because the union's mission was to organize all farmworkers, not only grape workers, being situated in La Paz provided a more balanced perspective than remaining in the heart of the Delano vineyards.

Being at La Paz gave me the opportunity to see more of Cesar (whom I had seen infrequently in the field offices), other leaders like UFW co-founder Dolores Huerta, and members of Cesar's family, including his wife, Helen, and son Paul. The staff had contact with the leaders during their visits to the organizing school classes, at "community" (meaning the La Paz volunteer community) meetings and meals, and on other occasions. Here I also met the wives of some organizers and leaders I worked with in the organizing campaigns, such as Arturo Rodriguez's wife, Linda, and Lupe Murguia's wife, Kathy.

The internal divisions within the union surfaced here as well. While I was at La Paz, unfavorable publicity about Synanon (mentioned above in the Salinas section) surfaced, including allegations that Synanon head Chuck Diederich had ordered live rattlesnakes placed in the mailboxes of Synanon opponents. Synanon had moved its headquarters to Badger in the Sierra Nevada foothills east of Fresno, and there was regular contact between the leaders of the two organizations. The UFW declared a boycott of Time magazine, which had published the allegations, and the staff was urged to write letters in support of this effort (the Time boycott never really took off). I believe that some on the La Paz staff also played the "Game," although I personally was not called to participate while I was there.

It was also around this time that we began to hear of firings and resignations of UFW staff (which some referred to as "purges," although this was too harsh a word), especially Anglo staff in the boycott offices who were deemed to have "separate"—usually meaning leftist—agendas. The first names I recall in this connection were Nick Jones (whom I did not know but later met while working in the Chicago boycott) and his wife, Virginia. I was not personally exposed to most of these internal struggles, which continued off and on for years and culminated, in the opinion of many of my closest friends from the UFW, with

the resignation of Marshall Ganz in the early 1980s and the subsequent veiled attacks on him and his followers as fuerzas malignas (malignant forces.").

The debate on these developments is usually framed as a conflict between the union's need to maintain control of a widely dispersed organization and prevent opportunistic staffers from utilizing the UFW's reputation and supporters to promote their personal political ideas, and the increasingly desperate need of the UFW leaders—and Cesar in particular—to maintain tight personal control over all aspects of the union's operations and stifle any challenges to the leadership's "orthodoxy."

My purpose in bringing up these events is not to reopen painful wounds but to honestly show the environment in which we worked as full-time UFW volunteers. I don't intend to take sides in the debate here, and I think it is a tragedy that these internal developments to some extent diverted the union from its mission.

With respect to Cesar personally, I believe that he was a great man who founded a unique movement, taught by his own example the value of self-sacrifice, and so carried on the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., and helped move the U.S. labor movement toward being the "people's movement" that it never should have stopped being. It is entirely appropriate that he has been honored by a new holiday (in California, at least) and most recently a U.S. postage stamp. However, Cesar was also the "manager" of a large organization and could not have achieved his goals on his own. I do not favor "cults of personality." Possibly the personal adulation that was showered on Cesar led him in the later years to be too ready to view differences of opinion as threats to his authority.

By August of 1979 it was clear that the strike had not brought the growers "to their knees" and that the union would have to reach out again to its vast nationwide network of supporters through the boycott. The organizing department, now housed in the organizing school, went to San Francisco to organize a supporters' march from the Bay Area to Salinas, where the strike raged on. Here we were guests of the Delancey Street Foundation, another drug-rehabilitation program headed by UFW supporter John Maher, which did not have the sinister reputation of Synanon. Fred Ross, Sr. helped with the organization of this march, and I now got along with him better than when I had been a "green" organizer in the L.A. boycott three years earlier.

Cleveland Boycott

The march was a success. During the UFW convention that followed the march (held this year in Salinas rather than Fresno as in other years), breakthrough settlements were announced with several of the struck growers; the name I recall was O.P. Murphy, a tomato grower in Soledad. We returned to La Paz for our deployment in the big boycott effort to come. The organizing school students were divided into two teams: one team was to be sent to Detroit with Arturo (who was familiar with the area because he had been a student at the University of Michigan), and the other team to Cleveland with Scott as

director. I was put into the Cleveland team, along with Patricio Rodriguez, Paul David, Lupe Murguia, Pedro Duran, and possibly some others.

We prepared for the long journey east to our boycott cities, following in the path of the original grape strikers in the 1960s who went east to promote the first boycotts. The two teams would travel together as far as Indiana and there would split up to their respective cities. Arturo and Scott went ahead to get the boycott operations set up and find housing for the staff, and I was assigned to do "advance" work for the rest of the staff. This included determining the best route to take and, once that was set, finding places to stay at each stop along the way. Having access to records of UFW supporters throughout the country, I lined up donated housing and food at a Laborers' union hall in Flagstaff, and Catholic schools in Albuquerque and Oklahoma City. In St. Louis, Richard Cook of the National Farm Worker Ministry was arranging housing. The drivers had directions on how to arrive at each stopping point.

We set out in September, and I tried to drive half a day ahead of the rest so as to arrive at each stopping point first. The rest of the staff were supposed to drive in a "car caravan," one of the practical techniques developed by UFW staff over the years. In a car caravan one driver took the lead, and the other cars followed the lead driver exactly, shifting lanes when necessary so that no intervening cars were allowed to come between the cars in the caravan. This togetherness was a necessity since we were mostly all driving old cars that could break down and strand drivers who were on their own—many from the famous fleet of Plymouth Valiants that were the standard-issue UFW staff vehicle. We were a large group because many of the organizers were married and bringing children of various ages.

Scott had appointed Patricio as the leader of the Cleveland team on the road, and I got into a conflict with him on the first day's trip from La Paz to Flagstaff. Although I left La Paz early, I couldn't resist the temptation to take a brief detour to the Grand Canyon, which I had never visited. As a result, I arrived at the Flagstaff stopping point just after the rest of the team. Patricio said that if I didn't arrive first, "De nada sirve el avance" ("The advance is useless"), but I felt he was wrong and that the major work of the advance had been to set up the free housing and food. Later, in Ohio and Texas, we got along very well.

The Flagstaff Laborers—with many Navajo members—were strong UFW supporters, like all of those who provided housing along the way. We had heard of the powerful Laborers Union (LIUNA) in Arizona before through its colorful leader Bill Soltero, who was a frequent speaker at UFW conventions and always aroused the crowed by his use of Spanish profanity in public, which at that time was unheard of. "En Arizona nos están chingando," he would shout ("In Arizona they are screwing us badly").

Once we headed out from Albuquerque, I was entering new territory because I had never been farther east than El Paso. When we arrived in St. Louis, we were cheered by hearing from Richard Cook of the defeat of an attempt to pass "right to work" in Missouri (a law outlawing "union security clauses" in labor contracts, which require all the workers to be

members of the union that represents them). We allowed ourselves a brief excursion to the Gateway Arch on the banks of the Mississippi River, and the following morning drove the final day to our boycott cities.

We arrived in Cleveland in warm, humid weather that I wasn't used to, moved into our housing, and began learning how to put together a boycott operation. I shared an apartment in the west side of Cleveland with the other single staffers. Scott, his wife, Nancy, and their children had another apartment, as did Pedro Duran and his family. Lupe and Kathy Murguia had the largest family and had a house in Cleveland Heights, a middle-class suburb east of the city.

The city was sharply segregated at that time: the west side was mostly white with many enclaves of eastern European ethnic groups. Across the Cuyahoga River (which was once so notoriously polluted that it caught fire), the poorer east side was mostly African-American. While we were living in Cleveland, the movie The Deer Hunter came out. It includes many scenes of the area, most famously a picturesque Russian Orthodox church in a district near the river.

The school year was starting just as we arrived, and our first public appearance as UFW staff was during the "Welcome March" staged to promote peaceful implementation of the desegregation plans that were to begin that year. We marched east with the crowd across a bridge over the Cuyahoga River, wearing signs indicating the UFW's support for the march. The bridge had two pedestrian walkways separated by the automobile lanes. We were walking on one of these, when suddenly uniformed members of the American Nazi Party appeared on the far pedestrian walkway carrying signs sporting swastikas and taunting us, upon which Kathy Murguia covered up her children's eyes—the first and only time I have seen American Nazis in person. Later during our stay in Cleveland I drove by their headquarters, which displayed a giant sign showing a cross, the swastika, and the U.S. flag, labeled, respectively, "God, Race, and Country."

Cleveland, like all of the industrial Midwest, was suffering from the loss of industrial jobs to the low-wage South and even lower-wage foreign countries. This economic depression, combined with the unfamiliar climate, the age of the buildings, and the lack of a large Spanish-speaking community, had a depressing effect on the farmworker organizers; Patricio remarked that all the people seemed "tired of life," and the wife of one of the organizers lamented that there was no "modern" part of town.

I grew to like Cleveland and the other Great Lakes cities where I spent the majority of my time during the boycott, appreciating the friendly, down-to-earth attitude of the people and even the distinct seasons, so different from the "perfect" climate of California.

In Cleveland we found many progressive allies, starting with Mayor Dennis Kucinich, with whom some of the organizers met shortly after arrival. The young Kucinich was very progressive, having fought to reestablish a municipal electric utility in the city, which he

celebrated by having a sign erected over the power plant reading "Power to the people!" He was under attack by conservative forces who dubbed him "Dennis the Menace," and during our time in Cleveland he lost the mayor's seat to George Voinovich, a Republican whom Patricio and I met during a campaign stop he made at a local Puerto Rican community organization. Kucinich was able to continue his political career and keep his progressive ideals (as I write this, he is a candidate for U.S. president).

Our strongest supporters, as in all the boycott cities, were religious leaders and unions, and to a lesser extent, progressive community organizations. Catholic bishops, priests, and nuns were our allies and formed our main support base in many cities, responding to the deep Catholic faith of Cesar and the farmworkers, and in line with Church teachings in the modern decades stressing support for the poor and oppressed.

Scott had a theory that this Catholic support was stronger in areas in like Cleveland where there was a strong tradition of service to the Church resulting in young men from Catholic ethnic communities like Irish-Americans and Polish-Americans going into the priesthood. In the Los Angeles boycott the following year, I did not have as good luck getting support from Catholic priests except in the Latino and Chicano neighborhoods. In the Anglo areas, the "hedonistic" culture of Southern California seemed to have prevented young men from becoming priests, with the result that priests had to be imported from tradition-bound places like Ireland and were less willing to use their position as a voice for social justice. I don't know if this proved the "theory" or was just due to chance circumstance.

Of other religious leaders, some were obviously stronger supporters than others. During my boycott years I learned which denominations of Protestant ministers were more likely to support our efforts (for example, United Methodists, United Church of Christ, Unitarians, and some subdenominations of the Lutherans). In some of the larger cities, we also were able to win support from progressive rabbis (generally from the Reform wing of Judaism), which could be especially important in those cases where the supermarket chains we were trying to get to cooperate with the boycott had Jewish owners, as with Richard Bogomolny of Pik-N-Pak in Cleveland.

The other pillar of our support was the labor movement to which we belonged, especially the great industrial unions of the Midwest. The central labor councils in each area, which were affiliated directly with the national AFL-CIO, also gave us support, but in many cases not to the same extent as the individual unions. Of all of these, the United AutoWorkers (UAW) was our oldest and strongest labor ally on the nationwide level. This support dated back to Cesar's original fast during 1960s when he was visited by Walter Reuther while some other labor leaders had not yet embraced the farmworkers' movement. During the march to Salinas earlier that year, we held a supporters' meeting in the UAW hall in Fremont adjacent to the giant General Motors auto plant there. Before the meeting Cesar remarked to the UFW staff that the UAW members would always stand out in any crowd of labor activists.

In some cities we found other locally important unions that formed a base of our support, like the ILWU (longshoremen's union) in the Bay Area, the steelworkers in Cleveland and Corpus Christi, Texas, the rubber workers in Akron (later merged with the steelworkers), the IBEW (electrical workers) in New York, and the machinists in the aerospace industry of Southern California.

Although very supportive of the UFW, during this time these unions had kept their "business" methods of operating rooted in the postwar period when labor was stronger and making steady progress. This was before steady attacks had so weakened the U.S. labor movement that it forced itself to refocus on organizing new workers and finding new ways to fight back. (Labor's "wake-up call" came while I was working in the Michigan boycott—Reagan's firing of the PATCO strikers and the subsequent massive Solidarity Day protest in Washington, D.C.)

Sometimes when addressing union members, we felt that our audiences wanted to help us win but thought of us more as representatives of the "poor farmworkers" rather than as fellow union activists. Once we went to ask for support from the Akron Central Labor Council; the council leader collected a generous donation from the delegates and presented it saying, "This ought to buy some bacon and beans," as if it was going to buy food for us personally, when in fact we turned over all donations to the UFW headquarters. However, the best of the labor leaders and activists understood that our fight was their fight and, to some extent, that we were pioneers in broadening the popular base of the labor movement.

Another important labor-backed organization in Cleveland that supported us was OPIC, the Ohio Public Interest Campaign, generally affiliated with the "Jobs with Justice" movement that was gaining strength at that time and with sister organizations in other cities. Also, there was a small Puerto Rican community in Cleveland with organizations that provided an additional base of support. There was no Mexican community to speak of (at that time the line of Mexican immigrant settlement into the U.S. ended somewhere between Toledo and Cleveland). It has been only in the years since that increasingly heavy immigration from Mexico has planted Mexican-American communities in every part of the country, including the Northeast.

Of the boycott organizers, only Paul David (who was from Mexico but with English-speaking parents from the U.S.), Lupe Murguia, and I spoke English, so I spent part of my time accompanying Patricio and the other Spanish-speaking organizers to meet with supporters and translate what they said. My non-organizing duties had carried over from my time in the field offices, and I spent part of my time in the boycott office helping with administrative and graphic support for our campaigns. Increasingly, though, I sought to define my role as an organizer.

We started in Cleveland, like in all the boycott cities, by researching what produce brands were being sold in the local supermarkets. There was as yet no clear nationwide boycott

target, however. In November, the staff from all of the Midwestern boycott cities gathered for a strategy conference in Fort Wayne, Indiana. We drove to Fort Wayne through the first snowfall of the season and met with the staff from the other cities; Cesar and some other top leaders were there also. At that conference I first met Guy Costello and Alice Thompson, then and in the following years the base of the UFW operation in Chicago. At one point, Cesar commented in front of the other staff that I was known to work so hard that I got sick—a reference, which I greatly appreciated at the time, to my bout with hepatitis in the Imperial Valley.

At this conference we debated whether to focus on a single nationwide boycott target or multiple targets, depending on the market in each city. In the end we decided to focus our efforts on our old adversary Bruce Church Inc. and its Red Coach lettuce (mentioned above in the Imperial Valley section). I believe similar decisions were being made in other parts of the country at the same time. We returned to Cleveland and picked our local supermarket target, Pik-n-Pak, a locally owned chain that sold Red Coach lettuce.

We began informing Pik-n-Pak customers of the Red Coach boycott. One day I was passing out leaflets alone at a store on the east side when an overzealous security guard took offense and dragged me physically by the arm into a back room where he threatened to call the police. I had leafleted and picketed supermarkets for years and knew the drill: we were not intimidated by threats to call the police and in fact often welcomed this as a sign that the store (or other location we were protesting) was bothered by our presence. We specifically never recognized the authority of private security guards to tell us to do anything, always insisting that we would only obey the police. This security guard in Cleveland had clearly crossed the line, and I ended up filing a police complaint against him. Later when I accompanied Scott to meet with the owner of Pik-n-Pak, Richard Bogomolny, he apologized to me when Scott mentioned the incident.

It was time to get some visibility in the other parts of Ohio. In December we organized a tour for Cesar to meet supporters and publicize the boycott in Cleveland, Akron, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati. In preparation for the Cleveland leg of this tour and keeping security considerations in mind, I carefully prepared a route with Patricio, marking the exact lanes and turning points for the whole day. When Cesar arrived at the Cleveland airport, however, Paul David drove the van in which he rode, accompanied by an assistant and the local staff. Paul had temporarily had his driving privileges revoked for an accident that he had in California, but after driving faultlessly for a day, Cesar restored those privileges.

In each of the cities Cesar was to meet with key supporters, raise funds, and publicize the boycott through TV and newspaper interviews. In some places, Red Coach lettuce was not being sold in local stores so the message was not focused on a specific supermarket chain. The first stop was Lorain, a steel town on the shore of Lake Erie west of Cleveland, with a sizable Latino community, where Cesar spoke to an overflow, adoring crowd. I have another memory of Lorain as well, from a morning when we visited a steel plant on an

early winter morning to collect donations from the workers. I was standing right in front of a giant thermometer that did not rise above 5 degrees—the kind of cold that I was totally unused to as a native Californian.

In Akron, home of the great tire companies like Goodyear and Firestone, and where the United Rubber Workers (URW) were Cesar's hosts, the visit started out tensely due to a last-minute change of schedule that the URW had not been informed of, but relations warmed over an Italian dinner at the home of URW activist Jim Guzzo. At one of the stops, Cesar taught me a trick on getting the TV cameras to film a boycott sign—referring to it as a "visual aid" that they would want, rather than as a boycott promotion tool that we wanted to publicize.

In Cincinnati, Kathy and Mike Lacinak were the core of the UFW support community, and we stayed overnight at the home of Kathy's parents before dropping Cesar off at the Cincinnati airport and ending the tour. I returned several times to Cincinnati, whose culture was a combination of Midwest and South, with the unique addition of economic "refugees" from the nearby Appalachian region of Kentucky. Racial relations in Cincinnati were (and continue to be) troubled. Once when I was getting gas there, I insisted on an "honest" not "padded" gas receipt showing how much I had paid. The African-American gas station owner responded to my request by saying, "There aren't any honest white people!"

We spent the first months of 1980 pursuing the Red Coach boycott. My recollection is that during a boycott planning session in New York, Scott Washburn reached an agreement with Richard Bogomolny to remove Red Coach lettuce.

One day early in 1980, several of the staffers went to Toledo to participate in a march sponsored by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). FLOC, headed then by Baldemar Velasquez (to my knowledge, he still does), was a local farmworker union that was organizing the seasonal migrant farmworkers who worked the Central States agricultural circuit from Texas north to Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and surrounding states. In the Great Lakes area, important crops picked by these workers included tomatoes (many of which were sold to processors like Campbell's and Libby), cucumbers, and tree fruit. Unlike the TFWU described below in the Texas section, FLOC had arisen independently and was in an alliance with the UFW. FLOC had a strong base of support in the Midwestern industrial cities, pursuing a boycott strategy against the large tomato processors similar to the UFW boycott strategy. Some of these supporters preferred to support FLOC, which was closer to home and considered more relevant, rather than the UFW.

The march was well attended in spite of the very cold weather. After the march, Baldemar took us on a visit to the FLOC headquarters where we met some of the volunteer staff. FLOC and its supporters used the term "migrants" rather than "farmworkers," reflecting the reality that the workers had to travel thousands of miles each year to be able to work steadily. Unlike in California, there was nowhere in the Midwest where agricultural

harvesting was possible in the middle of the winter. Later, when I was working in the Michigan boycott, I visited the FLOC operations again, this time in the summer when the workers were present and we went on a tour of some of the labor camps.

Because we had achieved a major goal in Cleveland by the agreement with Pik-n-Pak, the staff was ordered to start up a boycott operation in the Dallas area. Although the union would maintain a boycott presence in Cleveland the following year, all of the original Cleveland boycott organizers prepared to move to Dallas, including Judy Schwabe, who had joined the staff in Cleveland to help with administrative and community organizing duties.

Dallas-Fort Worth Boycott

I left Cleveland in March, accompanying Scott to do advance work setting up a boycott operation in Dallas-Fort Worth. We arrived at the beginning of April, having visited Jim Drake along the way. Jim had left the UFW and was working for the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), founded by Saul Alinsky. Jim was organizing a woodcutters' cooperative near Koscuisko in rural Mississippi. We took a brief sightseeing detour to New Orleans. A farmworker support group already existed, based in Dallas, among members of the Disciples of Christ denomination. Bobby De La Cruz was running a boycott operation in Houston and came up to Dallas briefly to give us advice on getting started.

We found accommodations for the staff and returned to Cleveland to organize a new car caravan. Upon arriving in Dallas and getting situated, the organizers fanned out to local supermarkets to research produce brands. Initially, we couldn't find any Red Coach lettuce being sold, so we concentrated on building the support network. Dallas-Fort Worth was a more conservative community than Cleveland, but there were farmworker supporters to be found among liberal religious denominations and Chicano activists. It was among the latter group that I heard the word bolillo (roll or biscuit), a uniquely Texas semi-pejorative word for Anglos, corresponding to gabacho among the Mexican immigrant farmworkers in California.

There was also a labor movement in Texas, a right-to-work state, and we met early in our stay with the local central labor council and district office of the AFL-CIO. But I don't remember much contact with the Dallas–Fort Worth unions after that. An interesting comment on the state of unionism in Texas came from one of the stronger UFW supporters we met in Dallas, who helped us arrange housing. She was an employee at Texas Instruments (then a company riding high on the new popularity of handheld calculators), and there had been an organizing drive there that she had obviously opposed, for she commented, "We didn't think we needed a union at Texas Instruments."

South Texas Political Campaign

In May, when we had been in Dallas–Fort Worth only a few months, we were told to go to

South Texas to help in the Texas primary election. Senator Edward Kennedy, an old ally of the farmworkers' movement, was challenging Jimmy Carter for the Democratic nomination for president, and we were going to go campaign for him. So we packed up and a few days later set out from Dallas in the morning. We stopped in Austin for a barbecue lunch, drove through San Antonio, and late that night we arrived at San Juan on the Rio Grande border with Mexico.

San Juan was one of many poor towns in the lower Rio Grande Valley, a "winter garden" agricultural area similar to the Imperial Valley. Here Mexican-American or Chicano families had lived for generations in some of the worst poverty in the U.S., dominated by Anglo ranchers, voting according to the dictates of political bosses, and forbidden in earlier decades from speaking Spanish in schools and workplaces. This was the political culture where Lyndon Johnson had gotten his start in the Depression. This was also the birthplace of the Raza Unida party—the most serious attempt to date at a specifically Chicano/Latino political movement—which was founded in Crystal City in 1970 and which I had run into occasionally as a boycott organizer on the East Side of L.A.

The union had a field office in San Juan run by Rebecca Harrington. Her husband, Jim, was (I believe) an attorney for the union and for other progressive organizations. We only stayed a few days in San Juan, but during that time we got to know yet another aspect of the UFW's complex history—the split and conflict with the Texas Farm Workers Union (TFWU). The TFWU was founded by former UFW organizer Antonio Orendain in 1975, who felt that the national UFW leadership—preoccupied with its great struggles in California—was not prepared to make a serious attempt to organize farmworkers in Texas.

The TFWU was relatively active during its short life from 1975 to the early 1980s, having organized strikes, protest marches, lobbying for a Texas equivalent to the California ALRA, and other activities. But the UFW position, as I have indicated in various sections above, was that "dual unionism" was divisive and wrong and in the long run would help only the growers. So the TFWU did not get the backing of major organizations that were UFW supporters, notably the AFL-CIO and the national Catholic Church. The TFWU, and Antonio Orendain in particular, cultivated a tougher, more macho image than the UFW (probably in keeping with the Texas political culture). I remember first hearing of the TFWU in an article that praised Orendain's "workers' black hat" in contrast to Cesar's "liberal white halo."

At one point the TFWU and the UFW both laid claim to the San Juan field office. Rebecca took us on a little tour of the office and described a room-by-room struggle where each organization would occupy different parts of the building and would try to move the other out of the sections it occupied. Eventually, the TFWU gave up its claim, was not successful in establishing any permanent base in Texas, and disappeared.

In our brief stay in San Juan I got two reminders of my past work in the field offices in California. At an outdoor meeting in a nearby town, I ran into Lalo Saldaña, whom I hadn't

seen in the three years since we worked together in the Lamont Field office. We greeted each other warmly, and he told me that he was now living in the Rio Grande Valley. Also, at the San Juan field office, I saw some organizing cartoons that looked remarkably familiar and found that they had been modeled on cartoons I had produced for the organizing campaigns in California.

From San Juan we went to our assigned city for the Kennedy campaign: Corpus Christi on the Texas Gulf Coast. Driving north through the endless King Ranch immediately north of the Rio Grande Valley (said to be the largest cattle ranch in the continental U.S.), we stopped to use the phone at a U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint, the only phone for miles in any direction. The agents were friendly, but I was politically opposed to the border patrol as part of U.S. immigration and was only polite with them.

In Corpus Christi we campaigned for about a week, leafleting and driving sound trucks to invite the public to a Kennedy rally at a local steelworkers' hall. It was a fun break from more tedious work of organizing boycott supporters, but in the end Kennedy lost the Texas primary to Carter. The staff returned to Dallas, and we stayed there only a few more weeks before we were told to close up our operation and relocate to Los Angeles. I turned over some of our records to a local farmworker support committee, and the organizers prepared to return to California after almost a year in Ohio and Texas.

Los Angeles Boycott

When we arrived in Los Angeles in June of 1980, most of the organizers in Scott's group were reassigned to the field offices or other duties. I joined the large boycott staff in Los Angeles. It was during this time that Frank Ortiz began taking over the direction of the boycott efforts nationwide. Two of the other boycott organizers that I met in L.A. were David Ronquillo (with whom I worked briefly a year and a half later in Denver) and Scott Templeton. I don't recall that we had a clear supermarket target at that point, and I was concentrating on getting support and fundraising among UFW supporters in West L.A., Santa Monica, and the area south of the Los Angeles international airport. Gilberto Rodriguez and Lupe Bautista, whom I hadn't seen in at least two years, also appeared in Los Angeles, along with another member of their informal team nicknamed "Compis."

The boycott office was at its long-established location on Olympic Boulevard west of downtown L.A., and we lived at the Harvard House, also west of downtown, which (I believe) the union owned and had housed UFW staff for many years. Also while working in Los Angeles, I was once again called on to play the Game, which we played at least once a week during the time I was there.

Scott Washburn returned to field office work in north San Diego County, where he had run some organizing drives before. This agricultural area, specializing in citrus, avocados, and nursery products, had some of the most backward conditions for farmworkers in the state, in spite of its proximity to affluent urban areas; stories of farmworkers living out in

the open in crude cardboard shacks were common. North San Diego County was one area that I never worked in, although I did produce a cartoon for that campaign of Los Diablos (The Devils), a notorious pair of abusive farm labor contractors.

In L.A. that summer I met Scott's brother, Russ Washburn, who was part of the well-known team of "Russ and Rios" who ran a UFW auto shop in the Highland Park section of East L.A. They performed much-needed repairs on the staff's old cars, although at first glance their shop seemed disorganized and covered in grease. This was one of at least three in-house UFW auto shops that I was aware of. There was one in Delano (where I went to get my front wheel straightened out after a freak accident in which I hit a bale of hay that fell off a truck just in front of me eastbound on Highway 58 near Bakersfield—it is surprising how much damage a hay bale can do), and another in La Paz, where my car was fixed up before we headed east to Cleveland and Detroit in 1979.

My assigned area had a different mix of UFW supporters than other areas I had worked in. There was a large Jewish community, including a retirement settlement I recall in Santa Monica for Jewish pensioners, with a very radical director; liberal Protestant clergy in the coastal suburbs (I worked out of a Methodist church); and very strong unions surrounding the airport, in particular the machinist locals ("lodges," as they are called in the IAM) representing airplane mechanics. I also did some work in other parts of Los Angeles. In one assignment to meet a Protestant minister in East L.A., I made the mistake of entering the church yard through a half-open gate without waiting for someone from inside the building to come out; I had barely taken five steps when a German shepherd appeared out of nowhere and began biting deeply into my leg. The minister soon came out of the church building and got the dog to let me go.

While I was in Los Angeles, the union held its political convention in a local trade school hall. The staff worked on preparations for the convention for several weeks. Ted Kennedy had been defeated by Jimmy Carter in the primaries, and the choice before the convention was whether to endorse Carter. It was also becoming clear that the Republican candidate for president would be Ronald Reagan, who had immediately preceded Jerry Brown as California governor and had proven himself no friend of the farmworkers' movement. In the end, the delegates (urged by Cesar and the other UFW leaders) took the pragmatic step and endorsed Jimmy Carter, a move that angered our more progressive supporters. (When I called the director of the Santa Monica Jewish retirement home after the endorsement, he said, "I'm fed up with you," and hung up on me.)

Following the convention, some of the L.A. boycott organizers went to new cities. I was to be sent to Detroit in a new role as director of the Michigan boycott. In September I set out to return to the Midwest, along with two other L.A. organizers, Louise Anlyan and Judy Schwabe (who had come to L.A. after leaving Dallas).

Michigan Boycott

A number of cities around the country were having L.A. assigned to them at that time, but Detroit was the largest of those cities and was considered an important assignment. Unfortunately, the city of Detroit has gotten a bad rap in recent years, being held up as an archetype of a blighted, crime-ridden metropolis with a declining "Rust Belt" economy, high unemployment, and failed, obsolete factories. There is truth to all of this, of course. In some sections of Detroit I saw block after block of abandoned, burned-out or boarded-up wooden houses, and areas that did not "feel" safe.

Personally, I never encountered any problems, and found the people of Detroit to be mostly friendly and helpful (for example, offering to help me find my way one night when I was consulting a map to find an address). Like the Imperial Valley in my field office years, Michigan was my longest assignment in the boycott years and made the strongest impression on me. Detroit was the home of a proud history and culture, great boycott supporters, and the powerful United AutoWorkers. Among other Detroit surprises, it is not widely known (or at least I hadn't known it) that the greatest Diego Rivera mural in the U.S. is on a series of panels in the Detroit Institute of the Arts, painted to celebrate the militancy of the UAW's early years.

We arrived in Detroit to take over from the previous boycott team, under the direction of Terry Vasquez and including Javier ____, as well as Terry's husband, Elizer, a farmworker from Earlimart near Delano. Terry took us to meet key boycott supporters, including the head of the local labor council, UAW leaders, and church leaders. Lupe and Kathy Murguia also visited us in Detroit, and Karen King from Massachusetts joined the Detroit staff in the summer of the following year, as well as a temporary intern from one of the local high schools.

One day Terry took us north to the city of Flint, where the UAW is often credited with "inventing" modern industrial unionism during its famous sit-down strike at GM in the 1930s (and more recently, the subject of Michael Moore's famous documentary film Where's Roger?). There we met with a coalition of religious leaders from the surrounding agricultural areas who were resistant to supporting California farmworkers.

We settled in the neighborhood of Southwest Detroit, close to the Ambassador Bridge, which crossed the Detroit River to Windsor in Ontario, Canada. There was a small Latino community there served by the St. Anne's (the oldest Catholic Church in Detroit), but it was a diverse neighborhood, and just across the street from us lived an elderly African-American couple who were close relatives to the family of Martin Luther King, Jr. The UFW boycott office was nearby on Michigan Ave., which ran from downtown Detroit westward to the suburb of Dearborn.

Like Calexico, Detroit is a border town, and we sometimes went on excursions into Windsor and nearby areas. In fact, at least during that troubled economic time, crossing from Windsor into Detroit felt a little like crossing from Calexico into Mexicali—passing

into a poorer area with older buildings and jobless people on the streets. Once Kathy Rudy (who worked briefly for the union when I arrived) took us for a weekend overnight stay at a retreat center on the north shore of Lake Erie in Ontario, east of Windsor.

I now took over for Terry and began reporting by phone to Frank Ortiz in California. We spent our first few months establishing our own connections with the UFW support community. Before Terry left Detroit, she had taken me to meet UAW leaders at Solidarity House, the UAW International headquarters east of downtown. The U.S. auto industry was in decline, partly due to competition from foreign—and particularly Japanese—auto producers; "Buy American" was the watchword of the U.S. labor movement, meaning U.S. brands, especially cars, for this was before Japanese and other foreign auto companies began establishing manufacturing plants in the U.S. (In 1985, the Fremont, California, General Motors plant mentioned above reopened under the name of NUMMI, a joint partnership between GM and Toyota.) The parking booth at the entrance to the UAW parking had a sign saying that thousands of laid-off UAW members "don't like your import—go park it in Tokyo."

A prominent retired UAW leader who had been particularly close to Terry showed us around Solidarity House, which was a working union headquarters but also a "shrine" to the great labor history it embodied. Later, I had the opportunity to meet with Sam Fishman, at that time the UAW's national political director, who gave me valuable advice about local Detroit political, business, and labor leaders (or as he put it, "the cast of characters you're dealing with here"); later I heard him speak at a Sunday morning membership meeting of one of the UAW locals. Fishman was a powerful political player, nationally and especially in Michigan and other states with large UAW memberships like Illinois and Ohio. A newspaper article at the time referred to a particular state election as having been "Fishmanized" by the entry of the UAW's weight on behalf of one of the candidates.

We got to know other key supporters. Our closest supporter among Catholic priests was Father ____ Tobin, pastor of a large Catholic parish near our office, who helped us whenever called upon, with letters and phone calls, resources, referrals to other priests and community contacts, and moral support. An active, outgoing person, Father Tobin was proud of Detroit and once commented, having learned that some of us had worked the previous year in Cleveland, that Cleveland was like a "small country town" compared to Detroit. Father Thomas Gumbleton, auxiliary bishop of the Detroit archdiocese, was another key UFW supporter (and active in nuclear disarmament and other causes as well) and opened many doors for us. A supportive Methodist minister, Rev. John (?) McCarthy, had a family connection to the farmworkers' movement since his daughter Mary was (and may still be) a UFW staffer in the research department.

Our strongest political supporter was Detroit city council member Maryann Mahaffey (who is now the president of the city council), who among other things helped us as a liaison to other political leaders. At the top of the political heap was Mayor Coleman Young, elected

Detroit's first African-American mayor in 1974. He had begun his career in the 1930s as a union organizer in the auto plants. He was extremely popular for his defiance toward Detroit's serious problems. At a Jimmy Carter campaign rally at Detroit's Cobo Hall, which we attended as guests of the UAW, the crowd applauded Carter enthusiastically when he arrived, but just went wild when Mayor Young was introduced shortly after.

Life is not neat, and although leaders from these different sectors supported our boycott efforts, they sometimes had bitter conflicts with each other, famously during my stay in Detroit over the Poletown project. "Poletown" was the name given to a predominantly Polish-American neighborhood consisting of part of the city of Hamtramck and adjacent sections of Detroit, where GM and Mayor Young had agreed on building a new auto plant to replace the closed-down Dodge Main. This involved razing numerous homes, churches (to which the Detroit archdiocese had agreed), and businesses. Opposition rallied around one of the churches to be destroyed, Immaculate Conception, where parishioners staged a sit-in in June and July of 1981 before being evicted by police. Many Catholic clergy and nuns, as well as radical Catholic organizations like the Catholic Worker, supported the farmworkers' struggle most fervently but opposed their own archbishop over Poletown. On the other side, our heavy-hitting labor and political supporters stood behind the new auto plants and the jobs it would bring. As representatives of the United Farm Workers we maintained a "delicate balance," putting personal feelings aside and trying to preserve good relations with all potential supporters for the sake of the workers we were representing.

On election day shortly after the Carter rally in late October of 1980, I was meeting with the council of a Protestant church in one of Detroit's conservative suburbs, trying to win their support, when one of the church leaders burst in (happily, as I remember) with the election results: "Reagan—in a landslide!" Thus began a period of severe challenges for the labor movement and other progressive forces in the United States.

In my meeting with Sam Fishman of the UAW, he had commented that local supermarket executive Paul Borman was tough to deal with. This proved correct, as our fight in Detroit ultimately focused on Borman, president of Farmer Jack Supermarkets. Farmer Jack (later bought by A&P, the East Coast supermarket chain) was the dominant grocer in the Detroit area and sold Red Coach lettuce. For some months we had gotten supporters to phone and write to Farmer Jack urging cooperation with boycott. During the fall and winter of 1980, we felt it was time to meet with the company to see if this pressure had succeeded in moving them. I tried repeatedly to schedule a meeting with Borman, but my calls and letters went unreturned. Finally I sent a certified, return-receipt personal delivery letter, which Paul Borman would have to sign for personally. Apparently this got his attention, for about a week later we got a call from his office agreeing to a meeting and setting a date.

For this meeting, we assembled an "interfaith" team, which included Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders. We went to the Farmer Jack headquarters—a large complex in northwest Detroit under heavy security—and were shown into a fancy conference room to meet with Borman and some of his executives. We laid out all of our arguments—that

Bruce Church was subverting the collective bargaining process by not negotiating fairly, the miserable working conditions of farmworkers, the support we had from religious and political leaders, the alternative lettuce brands that he could use—but to no avail. Paul Borman was polite but basically told us that he had no intention of cooperating.

We had worked hard for this meeting with Borman—and to create the conditions for it to succeed—and it had failed. Following the meeting, I sank into a depressed period, possibly exacerbated by the Detroit winter weather (Detroit was so cash-strapped during this time that snow-covered roads were not plowed away as in other cities, but simply spread with salt so that snow turned into waist-deep gray slush). Finally, after a few weeks of little activity, we got back on our feet and, determining that we hadn't yet pressured Farmer Jack enough to move them, we launched a renewed campaign of phone calls, delegations (unscheduled surprise visits by a group of supporters or workers—a term still in use today) to supermarket managers, leafleting, and picketing.

Several individual supporters became part of our core group during this time. Ricardo Santos was a UAW activist from Pontiac, a medium-sized city north of Detroit. He and his large family were our base of support in that area and organized picket lines, fundraisers, and other activities. Clint Smith was a telephone company employee and activist with the Communication Workers of America (CWA). During the course of the year that I spent in Michigan, I grew personally close both to the Santos family and to Clint and his wife, Karen. Another close supporter (whose name I don't remember) was a local UAW activist. A young single man, he sometimes came to our apartment to for dinner, where he would eat ravenously.

We developed local support committees in each section of the metropolitan area (East Detroit, Macomb County, Oakland County, etc.) that met regularly and planned fundraisers, leafleting, pressure campaigns on individual Farmer Jack stores, and other activities.

Being in Michigan gave us access to the great labor movement resources that the city had to offer. At Wayne State University we got a tour of the UFW archives that have been housed there since the 1960s, and I took a class in labor journalism at the university, taught (as I recall) by a past editor of Solidarity, the UAW's award-winning monthly magazine. Later, as mention below, I had the chance to visit the UAW's Family Education Center in Northern Michigan.

We leafleted customers at Farmer Jack stores and organized occasional larger picket lines. Once while leafleting a store, I met Congressman William Ford, a local Democratic congressman, who shook my hand and said that he had always supported the farmworkers' cause. Also early in 1980, keeping in mind that I was responsible for UFW support in the whole state of Michigan, I went on an overnight to Lansing (the state capital) and Grand Rapids, the other major cities in the state, where I met with the heads of the labor council and some other leaders to get their support for the boycott and fundraising.

We got word from two Catholic priests that Bruce Church Inc. (BCI) officials had asked to meet with them, apparently to get out "their side of the story" against our boycott message. Later we heard that BCI was visiting other boycott supporters around the country. The pastor of a large parish south of Detroit invited me to attend one of these meetings, and I got a promise from him to affirm his support for the UFW even after BCI had made its case. At the parish office, a middle-level BCI executive asserted that Bruce Church workers no longer supported the union, and complained that the ALRB was the proper forum to resolve the dispute, not the boycott—both arguments that I had anticipated and against which I had "inoculated" the pastor (a term we used meaning to prepare someone for contrary arguments). True to his promise, the priest thanked the BCI official for coming but pledged his continued strong support for the UFW boycott. On leaving, I shook hands with the Bruce Church official, while giving him what I hoped was a look of grim determination.

During the spring and summer of 1980, we organized several major events. When the spring weather arrived, we organized a walkathon fundraiser on Belle Isle, an island in the Detroit River entirely occupied by a beautiful park. We raised thousands of dollars in pledges and donations. I don't remember the exact total, but other staffers said it was one of the largest fundraisers in the boycott cities during that time.

We also staged a large, noisy picket line at a Farmer Jack store in a northern suburb of Detroit, which got the attention of the store manager and local police. This was not something we did all the time. During those years in the boycott, our emphasis was more on constant pressure on supermarket chains rather than building for periodic large protests (a contrast to the "Justice For Janitors" campaign, where the union tries to stage as many large protests as possible). In fact, at one point during the Red Coach boycott, we were told that the ideal protest at a supermarket consisted of only three people: one holding a picket sign, one holding a UFW flag, and one leafleting the customers. Personally, I disagreed with this.

Most significantly, we prepared to bring our message to Farmer Jack's annual shareholders' meeting, which was to take place in the summer. Unlike some supermarket chains that were family or privately owned, Farmer Jack was a publicly traded company, which made this possible. But when I reported my plans to Frank Ortiz, he was not enthusiastic. He reported that Chicago boycott director Guy Costello and his team were planning the same tactic against a supermarket chain that they were fighting (I believe it was Jewel-Osco), and that we should wait to see how they did before proceeding. This had been a common "corporate campaign" tactic for years, but it was the first time I had ever organized such an event.

I disagreed with Frank—I thought this was our best chance to force Paul Borman to confront the breadth of our support in the community, and I proceeded with our plans. Through contacts with unions and religious organizations (especially religious orders of

nuns, some of which collectively owned stock, although the individual sisters, bound by vows of poverty, could not do so), I rounded up enough shares of stock to enable a sizable group of supporters to attend the meeting as proxies. I also visited a stockbroker and bought a few shares for myself and the other staffers in Detroit. The stockbroker, to whom I didn't reveal my real purposes, assumed that I was buying shares for a small investment club.

The morning of the shareholders' meeting, our group of about 15 gathered in the UFW office. Most of the group were priests, nuns, and other religious leaders, plus some UAW activists and individual supporters. We had gotten proxies issued by the supportive shareholders in the name of each individual who was pledged to participate, and I had prepared a "script" indicating the comments that I wanted each person to make, reflecting his or her particular background and sector. We set out for the Farmer Jack headquarters and passed through security to the Farmer Jack offices.

A Farmer Jack official greeted us at the door to the meeting room, and it was now obvious to them what we were doing. It was relatively small for an annual meeting, and we were able to get seats toward the front of the room. Then Paul Borman rose to welcome the shareholders and begin the meeting. Borman began to read the financial report extolling Farmer Jack's profits—when suddenly one of the nuns interrupted him by saying, "On the backs of laborers!" Borman glared at her and continued with his report. The nun's comment had been spontaneous, but now our part of the show began, and during the rest of the meeting our supporters raised their voices over the company officials' objections. A UAW leader gave an eloquent speech about the farmworkers' conditions in the fields; religious leaders quoted their basis in faith for supporting workers' struggles; and I stated the specific demands that we had of Farmer Jack. We had actually tried to get formal resolutions presented at the meeting requiring Farmer Jack to honor the Red Coach boycott, but for technical reasons that I don't recall, we were not able to do so.

Eventually, Borman managed to shut off our comments, and the meeting ran its course. We left the meeting satisfied that we had made our point, however. And just as we were walking away through the parking lot, Paul Borman spotted me and waved at me to stop. With a hearty grin, he came over, grabbed my hand, and shook it, saying, "Great to see you again!" I tried to take advantage of this personal contact to press our case with him, but he quickly walked off. Obviously, we had at least gotten his attention.

Soon after this, the staff left Detroit to attend the UFW convention in California, and when I returned to Detroit after that it was only for several short periods in between traveling to other cities. We did not reach a settlement with Farmer Jack while I was there, but my recollection is that I learned later that year that they were dropping Red Coach lettuce.

UFW Convention and Boycott Conference

The biannual UFW constitutional convention was coming up in August. We were asked to recruit boycott supporters to travel with the staff to Fresno to attend, not easy because of the time commitment needed. We had been informed that Bruce Church workers would be at the convention and that they would have the opportunity to thank the boycott supporters for standing with them. Clint Smith got his CWA local to arrange for a paid release from his job, and at least one religious supporter from Detroit went, along with supporters from the other boycott cities.

The plan was to take a van from Detroit and from New York, meet up in Chicago, and travel together from there. By the day before departure, we had not yet lined up a credit card for the deposit. After several frantic calls to supporters, Rev. McCarthy (mentioned above) agreed to meet us the next day and help us get the van.

We set out at midday and reached Chicago by late afternoon, the first time I had been there. There we met up with Guy, Alice, the rest of the Chicago staff, and several supporters, as well as the van from New York filled with East Coast staff and supporters. We drove without stopping, changing drivers every few hours, as far as Fort Collins, Colorado, where Alice's parents lived. Karen from our Detroit staff had never been west of Detroit, and on first seeing the arid landscapes of western Nebraska and Colorado, commented that she couldn't image people living in places like that. We next stopped at the home of the parents of Rob Everts in Marin County, north of San Francisco, having taken a brief detour to Lake Tahoe. We arrived at the convention in Fresno the next day.

Here I saw staff and workers I had known in the field offices but hadn't seen for several years. The supporters who had come with us enjoyed meeting the farmworkers and seeing the spectacle. Unfortunately, we found that Bruce Church workers were not present at the convention as we had promised supporters. I never did find out exactly why—although they were not "members" at the moment because they had no contract, other workers in similar situations were there as delegates.

Here I learned more about the internal divisions that had grown while I was absent from California, which several close coworkers from the field offices took me aside to explain. Dissident leaders from some areas, especially Salinas, were demanding more autonomy for the ranch committees, which were the rank-and-file leadership group at each unionized company. Some translated this into a demand for local unions with their own elected leadership and financial resources, as other unions had. For others it was simply a demand for being able to make their own decisions as members over contracts, political activity, and other aspects of the farmworkers' movement.

The convention reflected these splits, although they did not affect the entire membership. It was part of the "pageantry" at these conventions for workers from each company or town to bring colorful banners identifying them to the other delegates. Marshall Ganz had by now resigned his position, and at least one banner I saw read "No queremos gente de

Marshall" ("We don't want Marshall's people")—presumably a banner made by UFW loyalists who viewed Marshall as a threat (wrongly, in my opinion) to the leadership.

By the last day, debate over these issues had come out into the open, and resolutions for more rank-and-file autonomy were voted down. My last memory of the convention was of Mario Bustamante grabbing his Green Valley Farms banner and stalking out of the convention hall, in open disagreement with the vote. Some of the staffers I had known from La Paz hissed at him as he left.

Following the convention, the boycott staff and supporters who were with us went to La Paz for a strategy conference. The supporters participated in the planning and discussion. Clint Smith tended to be outspoken in expressing his own sometimes contrary opinions, which caused some tension with staff from the other cities. At the conference, with boycott fights winding down due to our successes in some cities, we discussed reassigning the staff to different cities. Frank Ortiz gave me a choice of returning to work in California, but I said I wanted to stay in the Midwest.

Michigan and Washington, D.C.

We arrived back in Detroit in the midst of a national crisis for the labor movement. On August 3, 1981, the federal air traffic controllers union, PATCO (Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization), went on strike after months of frustrating negotiations with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in which health and safety issues were a major issue for the union. As federal workers, PATCO members were prevented by law from striking. Within hours, President Reagan (whom PATCO, unlike most unions, had endorsed in 1980) gave PATCO members two days to return to work or be fired. The Reagan Administration made good on this threat and went far beyond a simple legal remedy—firing strikers, arresting the strike leaders (photos of strikers being led away in handcuffs appeared on front pages across the country), fining the union millions of dollars, and eventually destroying PATCO altogether.

In addition to the attack on PATCO, Reagan was claiming that the labor movement was no longer in touch with its own members, throwing in our face the phenomenon of the so-called "Reagan Democrats"—working-class voters, many from union households, who had voted for Reagan in 1980.

In Detroit, the labor council hurriedly pulled together a large demonstration at the Federal Building, in which we pounded the pavement with picket sign sticks while shouting "PATCO!" But we were waiting for a national response, and soon learned that AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland had called for a massive labor demonstration in Washington, D.C. in early September. All of the UFW boycott staff in the Midwest and East planned to attend (although I recall that for some reason our participation was made optional, even though this was the biggest labor event in years). The Detroit staff set out with several close supporters to drive through the night to Washington, D.C. Driving in Pennsylvania

through the increasingly heavy traffic, we waved at a car in the next lane, a car full of UAW leaders from Detroit whom we knew.

We arrived at the house where the Washington, D.C. boycott staff lived, in the northern part of the city. Among other staffers, I met Steve Jones, who was a musician as well as a boycott organizer and later gave me a little book of boycott and union songs he had written. Then we headed downtown on the Metro (subway system), on which AFL-CIO had purchased an entire free day. The protest, called Solidarity Day in honor of the Solidarnosc labor union, which was then challenging the Polish government, drew 500,000 union members to Washington, which I was visiting for the first time. We were all bitterly aware that Reagan extolled Solidarnosc as a great workers' organization because it fit into his anti-communist global strategy—while jailing and firing union activists in this country. We thronged the National Mall and marched around the area of federal buildings surrounding it. All in all, an unforgettable day.

Some labor leaders have since asked if Kirkland couldn't have called more aggressive actions to confront the Reagan Administration than a single demonstration, impressive as it was. The PATCO crisis gave urgency to a debate over old versus new tactics within the labor movement that "percolated" up through local and international unions, and led eventually to SEIU president John Sweeney taking over as AFL-CIO president from Lane Kirkland's hand-picked successor, Thomas Donahue, with a new emphasis on organizing, political activism, and aggressive tactics.

Black Lake, Chicago, and Rockford

In October of 1981, I traveled from Detroit to Chicago to work for a month in Rockford, a medium-sized city a few hours west of Chicago. Before going there, I first headed north to the UAW's Walter and May Reuther Family Education Center in Onaway, Michigan, near the northern tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. I had been invited to attend a conference there by a leader in one of the UAW regions near Detroit, which was headed by another great labor veteran, Robert "Buddy" Battle. The education center (commonly called "Black Lake" after a lake that was on the property), was a well-equipped training and retreat center in Michigan's north woods. I addressed the UAW members in the afternoon session, thanking them for their past and continued support and (I believe) collecting donations. The members had begun the session by singing "Solidarity Forever," the labor anthem written to the tune of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Battle (or another UAW official) introduced me just before the song, making gracious comments to the effect that as a farmworker activist I knew the meaning of "solidarity" intimately and didn't need to be taught the words to the song. In the evening after dinner, a few Italian-American UAW members played bocce ball on the lawn in front of the dining hall.

I spent the night and attended several training sessions the next morning, including a video workshop on how to effectively address TV cameras. Then I drove north over the Mackinac Bridge into Michigan's Upper Peninsula and continued south through Wisconsin

to Chicago.

After a briefing with Guy Costello, I headed to Rockford, where I ended up spending several weeks establishing support for the Red Coach boycott, returning to Chicago on the weekends to stay overnight in an apartment with other UFW volunteers in the Uptown neighborhood along Lake Michigan north of the Loop (downtown Chicago)—one of the few racially and ethnically mixed parts of this city that was known as the most segregated major city in the U.S. Although there had been some tension between us during the trip to and from the convention, once I was working in Illinois I got along very well with Guy, who was one of the most senior UFW boycott leaders in the country and had an open and easy way of dealing with people while also being very conscientious toward the details of the work.

Guy and Alice had established a deep support base in Chicago among religious, community, labor, and political leaders. Most notable of the political leaders was Congressman Harold Washington, a strong supporter of all progressive causes. Washington's appeal reached across traditional ethnic boundaries. The one time I saw him in person was in the early summer of 1982, when he was a keynote speaker at a commemoration of the 40-year anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising—all the more welcome considering the tension that had erupted in some places between the African-American and Jewish communities. After leaving the UFW staff, I saw Alice and Guy again in 1983 on my way to the East Coast and Europe; they had just finished working in Washington's successful campaign for mayor in which he succeeded Jane Byrne to become Chicago's first African-American mayor, and they were energized by the new possibilities for their city that this seemed to unlock. Tragically, Washington died in office in 1987.

Rockford was a medium-sized industrial city with a base of churches and labor leaders who were ready to give us their support. A local supermarket chain was selling Red Coach lettuce, and I organized an interfaith prayer vigil in front of one of the stores. I also performed our regular duties of getting pledges of support, collecting donations, and getting letters and phone calls to the supermarket executives. At a luncheon with some local UAW officials, they reported the news that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat had been assassinated.

I was in Rockford only a short time. I was able to establish a base of supporters (who were reactivated the following year when we continued the boycott effort there), but I did not make any lasting personal contacts. After my brief Rockford assignment, as the fall weather was getting cooler, I returned to Detroit around the beginning of November of 1981.

New York Boycott

In late November or December of 1981, Frank Ortiz pulled many of the boycott organizers to New York. There was no Red Coach lettuce being sold there, but another old UFW adversary, D'Arrigo Brothers, was selling broccoli there under the label Andy Boy.

By this time I was the only boycott staff left in Detroit; I closed up the house that the union would continue to pay rent on, stored the car at the home of Clint Smith, and took the train to New York. I arrived at Grand Central Station in Manhattan, along with some other boycott staff from the Midwest, in the afternoon of the next day; Frank Ortiz met us there and took us to the New York boycott headquarters on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, near Central Park. This was a large multistory apartment that served as both an office and a residence.

The New York boycott director was Irv Hershenbaum, another veteran boycott organizer, who stayed with the UFW and is now the union's first vice president. I had not worked in the East Coast boycott cities before, so many of the staffers were new to me, including Gary Clements, Hillary Horn, and others. Irv was a native New Yorker with a street-smart, wisecracking attitude. He assigned me to Queens (he called it his "favorite home borough" since he had grown up there) and Long Island. I established an office in a Catholic high school in the Long Island City section, just across the East River from Manhattan.

As instructed, I had arrived in New York without a car, for a car was difficult to keep in Manhattan, and work in many parts of New York City didn't require one. However, a car was essential for Long Island and the many sections of Queens not serviced by the subway, so early in my stay I traveled to Boston to pick up an extra staff car that they had there. Rob Everts, whom I had known in the field offices, was the boycott director there.

Like Bruce Church, D'Arrigo was refusing to deal with the UFW. Many local chains were selling Andy Boy broccoli, and UFW supporters were writing letters and calling to urge them to stop selling it. Once we visited the famous advertising agency of Jerry Della Femina in Manhattan, which was doing pro bono work for the union; they showed us an ad they had developed featuring the Andy Boy logo—a young boy in farm clothing—with a caption that read, "Hundreds of men and women live in fear of this little boy." Two of the target chains I remember were Grand Union, which had many stores in my assigned area, and Red Apple, a chain specializing in smaller stores in Manhattan catering to pedestrian customers. While I was in New York, we reached an agreement with Red Apple to stop selling Andy Boy broccoli, which I believe was our first breakthrough of that campaign.

I worked with the already developed network of boycott supporters in Queens to put pressure on the target supermarkets, organizing several protests that were reasonably well attended in spite of the winter weather. Long Island (Nassau and Suffolk counties) had not been worked as intensively, so I concentrated on building a support base. At the eastern end of Long Island, there was an independent group (whose name I don't recall) organizing farmworkers who worked there seasonally as part of the East Coast migratory circuit. This group had gotten a bad reputation (whether deserved, I'm not sure) due to its confrontational tactics and radical rhetoric, and when I contacted a Protestant minister in the area, he only agreed to meet with me after determining that I was with the UFW, not the independent farmworker group.

Besides working my area, I participated in special projects. At one point, Irv assigned me as liaison with the unions in building for a big Midtown support rally. I made calls out of the "God Box"—a nickname for the headquarters of the National Council of Churches on Riverside Drive, next to the home church of the famous radical minister William Sloane Coffin. The New York City labor movement was strong and very well established and had been one of the major sources of supporters for the farmworkers' movement since the very beginning. In the course of this assignment I met Joe Lopez (?), a prominent Latino labor leader who appears in Fighting for Our Lives denouncing the Teamsters tactics in breaking the grape strike. I addressed the New York Central Labor Council, then headed by Harry Van Arsdale ("Van" to his close associates), who according to Irv was such a high-ranking labor leader that he was hard to approach—as Irv put it in briefing me on Van Arsdale, "You don't call God—he calls you." There I also met Brian McLaughlin of the IBEW, who now heads the council.

Living and working in New York was fascinating for someone who had never been there before. It was certainly convenient living in the same building as the union office, but it also meant that you could never really escape the intense work atmosphere. But the attractions of New York, which I got to see a little of, partly made up for this. During a brief Christmas–New Year break, I was able to visit the Statue of Liberty and the American Museum of Natural History (walking distance from the staff apartment), as well as other famous museums, and ascend to the top of the now-fallen World Trade Center. I also accompanied Irv to a Yiddish-language play on the Lower East Side and to a New Year's Eve party in (I believe) Greenwich Village.

Denver and Chicago

By March of 1982, we had scored some gains against D'Arrigo in New York, and once again we were called to a staff conference (this time in Chicago) for reassignment. Thus began the final months of my time as a UFW staff volunteer, much of which I spent traveling from one brief assignment to another. The entire New York staff first drove west to Cleveland, where we met up with staff from the other East Coast cities. I took a brief detour to Detroit to pick up the car (which Clint Smith had to dig out with a snowplow) and the rest of the personal belongings I had left there. A new Detroit boycott organizer went with me and took up residence in our Southwest Detroit apartment.

Then I proceeded to Chicago for the boycott conference with Frank Ortiz. I was assigned to Denver along with David Ronquillo, Hillary Horn, and several other organizers. Before leaving, we gathered for a group portrait with the "dean" of the UFW supporters among Chicago's Catholic priests, a very senior person with the Chicago archdiocese. We headed for Denver, stopping overnight at the homes of farmworker supporters in St. Louis and Kansas City, Kansas.

In Denver we stayed in a large seminary (which seemed half empty), and after a brief

research found that one of the major local chains, King Soopers, was selling Red Coach lettuce. In Denver, the local labor council (the Denver Area Labor Federation) was headed by Bill ____, a firm UFW supporter who introduced us to many. The labor movement of the Front Range cities east of the Rocky Mountain crest—in the midst of conservative, Republican-dominated Colorado—had been forged by some legendary labor struggles in the steel mills of Pueblo (south of Denver) and, more recently, the long nationwide boycott against the anti-union Coors brewery in Golden.

Denver also had a large and growing Latino community with organizations and Spanish-speaking parishes that gave us a lot of support. This community consisted both of recent immigrants, as in California, and of descendants of the centuries-old Spanish settlements in New Mexico and southern Colorado, whose influence we saw reflected in aspects of local culture such as the food served in Denver's Mexican restaurants, and even unexpected musical quirks: On the day we had driven from St. Louis to Kansas City, I had sung for the staffers the blues classic I'm Going to Kansas City… (they had never heard it). To their surprise, at one party of Latino community activists we attended, someone started a chorus of that song, commenting "If you're Raza in Denver, you've got to sing Kansas City!"

I left Denver after about a month, called back to take up a new post in the Chicago boycott office; some of the rest of the staff had already left, although I can't recall if we had reached an agreement with King Soopers. I took a detour north to see Minneapolis–St. Paul, arriving there on Easter Sunday (April 11), then stopped in the Quad Cities (an industrial urban area straddling the Mississippi River consisting of Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa, and Rock Island and Moline, Illinois) to visit one of the boycott organizers who was stationed there.

When I got to Chicago, Guy Costello asked me to coordinate the work of three boycott organizers who were going to work in the "outlying cities" surrounding Chicago—Rockford, Illinois and nearby Beloit, Wisconsin; the Quad Cities; and Peoria, Illinois. I worked out of Chicago but was expected to travel frequently to the outlying cities to train and help the organizers. I was reporting to Frank Ortiz but also coordinating my work with Guy, who was generally in charge of boycott activities throughout the region.

Gibb Surette from Iowa was assigned to Peoria, a city with a strong UAW presence at the John Deere manufacturing plant. He had strong views on the role of unions as working-class organizations and was dismayed when, during an introductory meeting with UAW rank-and-file leaders at John Deere, one of them commented that "we" were producing certain products, referring to the company and its employees. Two other new organizers were assigned to the other cities (I don't recall the names—both were women, one of them from the province of Prince Edward Island in Canada).

Guy Costello and I accompanied the organizers to meet their initial contacts from labor and church groups and to get set up with housing. The organizers would also come to Chicago periodically for training and staff meetings. They continued the boycott effort

against Red Coach; at one point the "outlying cities" organizers had a concentrated letter-writing campaign by supporters to our supermarket targets and achieved a total that was close to what supporters in Chicago did with a better-established base.

During my stay in Chicago we participated in some other organizations' events as well. The staff helped picket a Loop restaurant in a protest called by INFACT, part of its boycott against Nestle products (the restaurant employees responded with "INFACT has no facts!"). We also went to the state capital of Springfield for a massive rally to support passage of the Equal Rights Amendment; Chicago Mayor Jane Byrne addressed the rally, which was not successful in getting the Illinois legislature to ratify the ERA, and ultimately the ERA fell short of being added to the Constitution by four states.

While working in Chicago I met Olgha Sierra Sandman, one of the leaders of the National Farm Worker Ministry. She organized a meeting for Cesar to meet with farmworkers in Onarga, IL, about 2 hours south of Chicago where the NFWM had established a presence. I was in charge of security for the meeting, the only time that I had that assignment; I don't know whether any permanent organizing grew out of that effort. I also participated in a return visit to FLOC's (potential) membership that Olgha organized, visiting labor camps in Indiana as workers returned from the south to begin the 1982 spring season.

Leaving

In Chicago during the early summer of 1982, I heard from John Brown, who by then had left the UFW staff and was traveling around the country in an old camper truck that he had borrowed from Scott Washburn. He stopped for an overnight stay in Chicago to see me, Guy, Alice, and some of the other staffers he knew. A number of experienced boycott staffers were considering leaving at that time, and John told me that if I was going to leave soon, I could travel together with him back to California when he came back through Chicago in another month after visiting relatives in the East.

In July I made my decision to leave, partly because I was affected by questions about the direction we were headed and by the internal divisions that I have described above. But I also felt it was time for a change—I had (I hoped) helped advance the farmworkers' cause during my six years on staff, and now I wanted to do other things in life. I called Frank Ortiz and gave him my resignation. He said it was too bad because he was thinking of assigning me as director of the San Juan Bautista field office. This would have been a great assignment if I was staying with UFW, but I had made my choice.

John Brown came back to Chicago soon after; we set out for California, I driving my old car and John the pickup truck. We went south through New Orleans and stopped in Houston to see Ken Fujimoto, who was then working for the IAF. We saw Rios (the L.A. car mechanic, mentioned above) at his home in rural South Texas. We arrived in L.A. to stay with some friends of his. A few months later, I moved back to the Bay Area and began a new period of my life.

The Later Years

After I left the UFW staff, I continued close contact with many of the people I had met there, and worked with a number of people mentioned in this essay on political and labor campaigns for several years. In 1987, Susan Sachen (whom I hadn't seen since the Proposition 14 campaign, but who was referred to me by John Brown) recruited me to my present job when she was working with the SEIU International Union's "Justice For Janitors" campaign.

In the summer of 1983, I took a break to travel to Europe and the Soviet Union, first driving across country to catch a charter flight from New York. On my way to and from the East Coast I revisited old UFW friends (staff and ex-staff, plus the Smith and Santos families in the Detroit area) in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, and other cities. When I returned to California, I joined Scott Washburn in San Diego to work temporarily with the United Domestic Workers (an organization sponsored by SEIU) and met some long-time activists from San Diego who had long been core UFW supporters (Alice Barnes, Greg Akili, Ken Msemaji). I returned briefly to San Diego in 1985 to work on Maureen O'Connor's successful campaign for mayor, which was being advised by Marshall Ganz and Scott.

Many of my closest friends among the UFW veterans were bitter over the internal divisions and disputes that were so strong at that time, and dismayed at what seemed to them a loss of focus by the UFW on its core mission of organizing and representing farmworkers. None of this meant a lack of desire to improve the workers' lives—or at critical moments, for the UFW and its goals. When Cesar embarked on a 36-day fast in 1988 (the longest and most dangerous of his life) to protest excessive use of pesticides in the fields, some of the rank-and-file leaders who had broken most completely with the UFW leadership communicated to Cesar their personal concern for his well-being.

Sadly, deaths have also brought many of us back together briefly; for example, at the memorial service for Fred Ross, Sr. in San Francisco, and most of all when Cesar died in April of 1993. My first call when I heard of Cesar's death was to John Brown, who later told me that he felt as if he had lost his own father (I felt the same). Along with Mike Garcia—then and now president of SEIU Local 1877, where I work—I attended the wake in Delano on the day before the funeral. Neither of could stay for the funeral itself because we had to testify in an NLRB hearing that the board would not postpone in spite of the occasion, but on that warm evening at Forty Acres I ran into many people whom I hadn't seen for years.

When Arturo Rodriguez took over as interim and then permanent UFW president after Cesar's death, many of us who had worked for the union were impressed with his emphasis on organizing, as symbolized by the slogan "Cada trabajador un organizador" ("Every worker an organizer"). My last direct involvement with the UFW was in one of these new

organizing drives, the strawberry campaign in Watsonville in 1997, where I went for a brief week to help out. Dolores Huerta—the last survivor of the original UFW founders—who has endured so much, including a vicious beating by the San Francisco police in 1988, was there to visit workers in the campaign, and it was an honor to work with her again briefly.

Strawberries are an industry, like citrus before 1978, where the union had not had great success. They are a very physically demanding crop to harvest, requiring workers to kneel for hours on end. Visiting workers during that week in Watsonville, I felt sad to see how much fear and intimidation there was still to overcome, more than 30 years after Cesar took the first steps to form the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee. In one house visit I did with another organizer, a strawberry worker gave her opinion that the "union was bad." Why was the union "bad"? Because if the union won an election at her strawberry ranch, the grower had threatened to "disk" the fields—destroy the strawberry crop and throw the workers out of a job. So ingrained was this fearful mindset that apparently to her, the union was bad to even think about challenging the bosses.

Ultimately, the UFW was able to win some victories in the strawberries and fight off still more phony grower-dominated "unions," just as the union had fought against the "Independent," the "International," and similar "unions" during my time.

In the broader movement for labor rights and social justice, the UFW has not only given birth to an entire generation of organizers and activists, but popularized ways of fighting and winning (nonviolence, building community and political allies for unionization, methods of assessing worker support), and—especially relevant for movements organizing Spanish-speaking workers like SEIU's "Justice For Janitors" campaign—to words, music, and images that still resonate (Sí Se Puede, Spanish versions of labor and civil rights songs like Solidarity Forever and We Shall Not Be Moved).

The fight for farmworker rights is not a historical relic, much less merely a backdrop to the life of Cesar Chavez, but an ongoing social challenge. I am proud to have worked on the front lines of that movement during those very formative years of my life.

Notes

Information sources. The major information sources are my own recollections and records. I have saved UFW leaflets, anti-UFW leaflets, and some other literature from my years working on the UFW staff, particularly the organizing campaigns in UFW field offices in 1977–1978, plus photos and some saved newspaper articles. I have scanned some of these graphic materials and they could be available for inclusion in a future version of this essay. The organizing leaflets (mostly produced by me, but some by Alberto Escalante) provide information on election victories and defeats, as well as major issues in the organizing drives at the different companies (e.g., two notorious supervisors—El Búfalo at Holtville Farms and Frank Vargas at Garin, both mentioned in the text).

After leaving the UFW staff, I compiled and sent a complete set of the leaflets and graphic

materials to the UFW archives at Wayne State University in Detroit. I received back a letter saying they were being housed in a "Mark Sharwood collection," although a recent Internet search of the Wayne State archives did not show any reference to these materials.

The most valuable set of outside information sources in the field office section is found in the decisions and other records of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board, many of which are available through the Internet in PDF (Acrobat Reader) format. Here you can find exact details of elections, ULPs, and legal decisions (for example, the decision certifying the UFW election victory at Bruce Church Inc., mentioned in the text) as well as the names of organizers from the UFW and the other unions, rank-and-file leaders, and management personnel.

A variety of Internet sources provided information for the boycott section about political and labor leaders, local and national issues, and supermarket and other businesses. It may be that much of this material is already familiar to readers. I have included it to explain the environment in which we worked and because our work was directly affected by the leaders we dealt with and the issues of the day.

Some facts and events reported here are based on memory and may be in error. If this is the case, I regret it, for this was never deliberate. I have tried to write as accurate an account as I could. I would be glad to receive corrections or comments on anything in this essay via e-mail at Msharwood@aol.com.

Names. In six years of working for the UFW I met many different people, and I mention those with whom I worked most closely or who were important UFW leaders at the time (and in many cases are still well-known, e.g., Marshall Ganz), as well as some who were/are prominent in other fields (e.g., George Voinovich in Cleveland). In some cases I am not sure of the name (indicated with "(?)"), or I can only remember the first name or the nickname (missing last names are indicated with "____"). I also met many rank-and-file farmworker leaders in the different campaigns, but in most cases I knew them only for brief periods unless they worked as organizers, and I am not able to include most of their names here, particularly because in the field offices I was a "propagandist" and not an organizer with direct responsibility for worker contact.

Disclaimers. As stated at the beginning of this essay, everything I have written here reflects my opinions and beliefs about what I did while volunteering and working for the United Farm Workers. The material on the internal conflicts within the union is bound to be controversial any way it is presented; I include it because it was important to present an honest picture, while making it clear that my work with the UFW was overall a positive experience. I have tried to stay away from any comments about strictly personal conflicts or shortcomings. I also have left out comments about personal relationships among staff volunteers and between staff volunteers and other people. The staff consisted mainly of young, single people, so romantic relationships certainly occurred, but I didn't think they needed to be discussed in this essay.

Chronology of My Involvement in UFW Field Office and Boycott Office Campaigns

ALRB ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

Organizing leaflets I have kept show the following election results during the different organizing drives where I worked providing graphic and other support.

Election				Election Results:		
Month/Year	Field office	Company	Crop	UFW	NO	Other/invalid
Early 1977	Lamont/Calxc	Yurosek	carrots	(union victory)		
Early 1977	Lamont	Tejon Ranch	grapes	(no-union victory)		
Early 1977	Lamont	Valicella	(?)	17	6	
4/77	Lamont	Malovich	(peaches?)	52	13	
Early 1977	Lamont	Patterson & Hale	(?)	8	30	
5/77	Coachella	Mel-Pak grapes		142	55	85/5
6/77	Coachella	Karahadian	grapes	121	169	64
6/77	Coachella	Moreno	grapes	107	88	
6/77	Coachella	Mouradick	grapes	(?)		
6/77 (?)	Coachella	CID/Coachella Vinyds	grapes	112	136	9/149
6/77	Coachella	Carian	grapes	(no-union victory)		
6/77	Calexico/Lmt	Sam Andrews	lettuce	456	98	
6/77	Calexico	Hubbard	tomatoes	95	26	
Mid 1977	Lamont	Nalbandian	grapes (?)	(?)		
8/77	Lamont	Mosesian	grapes	287	241	
8/77	Lamont	Rancho #One	grapes	203	24	
9/77	Delano/Lamont	Giumarra	grapes	673	900	191
11/77	Salinas/Lamont	Jack T. Baillie(1)	lettuce (?)	64	5	67/13
12/77	Calexico	Desert Seed	seeds	95	26	
1/78	Watsonville	Miranda-Ariel	mushrooms	other union victory)		
2/78	Calexico/Oxnd	Mel Finerman/Circle 2	(?)	117	29	30
2/78	Calexico	Holtville Farms	carrots (?)	20	7	
2/78	Calexico	N.A. Pricola	(?)	27	1	
2/78	Calexico	Jackson	(?)	83	28	
Early 1978 (?)	Calexico	Neumann Seed	seeds	38	17	
3/78	Watsonville	Monterey Mush.	mushrooms	138	42	
Early 1978	Salinas	Delfino Artichokes	artichokes	(other union victory)		
3/78	Oxnard	Coastal Growers	lemons	897	42	
4/78	Oxnard	Limoneira	lemons	191	83	
5/78	Oxnard	Rancho Sespe	lemons	116	53	
5/78	Oxnard	L & O	lemons	162	14	
5/78 (?)	Oxnard	MOD	lemons	(union victory?)		
6/78	Santa Maria	Phelan & Taylor (1)	celery	21	16	33/8
6/78	Santa Maria	Point Sal	celery	(other union victory)		
6/78	Santa Maria	Phelan & Taylor (2)	celery	(other union victory)		
7/78	Salinas	Oshita	lettuce	154	40	
7/78	Salinas	Jack T. Baillie(2)	lettuce	(other union victory)		
8/78	Salinas	Arrow	vegetables	110	44	

8/78	Salinas	Hibino	lettuce (?)	15	14
8/78	Salinas	Huntington Farms	lettuce (?)	46	14
Summer 78	Salinas	Cel-A-Pak	celery	(other union victory)	
Summer 78	Salinas	Sakata lettuce		(UFW victory?)	
Summer 78	Salinas	Garin lettuce		(no-union victory)	
Summer 78	Salinas	Merrill Farms	lettuce	(no-union victory)	
Summer 78	Salinas	ACA	(?)	(?)	

BOYCOTT/POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Begin	Boycott Office	Campaign Target(s)	Assigned Areas
6/78	Los Angeles	Yes on Prop. 14	L.A. , Pico Rivera
12/78	Los Angeles	General support	L.A. , West L.A.
8/79	San Francisco	Lettuce strike support	S.F., Oakland
9/79	Cleveland	Red Coach lettuce, Pik-n-Pak	Cleveland, Cincinnati
4/80	Dallas	Red Coach lettuce	Fort Worth
6/80	(San Juan)	Kennedy for President	Corpus Christi, TX
7/80	Los Angeles	Red Coach lettuce (Lucky?)	South Bay area, West L.A.
9/80	Detroit	Red Coach lettuce, Farmer Jack	Detroit and Michigan
10/81	Chicago	Red Coach lettuce (?)	Rockford, IL
11/81	New York	Andy Boy broccoli Grand Union	Queens, Long Island
4/82	Denver	Red Coach lettuce King Soopers	Denver
5/82	Chicago	Red Coach lettuce (?)	Rockford, Peoria, Quad Cities