

## Karen (Schlossman) Castle 1978–1979

I first heard Cesar speak when I was a young college graduate working in Washington, D.C. at NAFO (National Association of Farmworker Organizations). I immediately called the UFW and signed up to volunteer. I had absolutely NO idea what I might be getting myself into! My parents thought that I had joined a cult! My assignment was at union headquarters in La Paz, California, teaching English to farmworkers. The name of the school was FIELD (the Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development). It was funded by a government grant.

During the year that I worked for the UFW we campaigned for Jerry Brown in Bakersfield and San Francisco, walked picket lines in Los Angeles, attended a protest march and rally in Sacramento, and marched in a funeral procession in (I think) Calexico.

During the year that I lived in La Paz we played “The Game,” slept in an old TB sanitarium, ate in kitchen cook groups, fasted with Cesar, and went to numerous meetings, weddings, parties, and celebrations. During that time I met some of the most interesting and talented people I have ever known. Some of the friendships have lasted a lifetime.

My year at La Paz ended abruptly when Cesar and several other board members perceived as ideologically threatening a slide presentation made by our English students from the advanced class. Two of the three English teachers were asked to leave immediately. I was one of them. I called my father, he drove up from Los Angeles to pick me up, and that was the end to my time with the UFW.

The justice department later investigated the FIELD operation and I heard that *60 Minutes* did a television segment on the controversy.