

LeRoy Chatfield, “Introduction: Mike Miller Archive” 2007

Count yourself fortunate when you find something you weren't looking for.

When I walked into that converted garage/first floor unit of a three story brown shingle house on a dead end street in Noe Valley, I recognized my good fortune: I had found what I was not looking for – the Mike Miller Archive.

More than twenty, four-and-five drawer letter-size metal file cabinets, stuffed with primary source materials about social movements and a large number of boxes filled with similar materials waiting to be filed – 50 years worth of collecting. Civil rights, labor, community organizing, peace, students, farmworkers, black power, seniors, women – all crammed into this dungeon-like space. Correspondence, internal memos, flyers, propaganda, research and position papers, manifestos, minutes, lists of participants, staff meetings, training materials, drafts of public documents, articles from mainstream and obscure publications, public documents, books – there was enough material here to make experienced academic research librarians weep with joy.

People are funny: some collect dolls, some Jim Beam whiskey bottles, some Christmas ornaments, some corkscrews, but a person like Mike Miller, collects primary source documents about social movements, 1950's to the present. Imagine.

Within an hour, with Mike's help, I had gathered several dozen folders crammed with primary source materials relating to Cesar Chavez and his farmworker movement, enough to fill two large Trader Joe grocery bags. Leaving my solemn promise behind to return all that I was borrowing, I took off – and you, dear readers, are the beneficiaries. Thank you, Mike Miller.

If you wish to read more about Mike Miller, the person, please read his essay, “The Farmworkers and Their Allies in the Early to Mid-1960's.” This piece may be found in the ESSAY section of the Website of the Farmworker Movement Documentation Project (www.farmworkermovement.us), in the sub-section entitled: Other Essays.

If I can anticipate your question: the farmworker movement documents presented here, barely scratch the surface of what can still be found on this subject in the Mike Miller Archive. Perhaps this sampling will recruit academics (and their librarians) to assess all the riches contained in this unique storeroom. Believe me, many yet-to-be written books and articles about social movements can be found buried in this treasure trove.