

BACKGROUND:

A Collaborative:

Janis Peterson did a one and one half hour interview with Agustín Lira whom she has known from the early days of the grape strike. However, circumstances prevented her from finishing the project. Living closer to Agustín, it became apparent that the person to complete the work would be me. Anyone having worked for the farm worker's movement knows any short exposure at any job is all that is required to make anyone an expert. (Go get a bigger hat to wear though if you let it go to your head.) I am grateful that in January 2005, I observed Terry and Jim Scott as they produced their music for this Documentation Project so that qualified me to work on this one. That experience, as well as sharing Janis' concern and passion that this oral history needed to be recorded, became my driving force.

The interviewee is drafted to help produce and edit:

Janis did an outstanding interview and there was a wealth of wonderful information that had to be reduced to half an hour. It was a struggle for me to leave anything out. On the other hand, Agustín expressed little interest in listening to the interview, much less keeping much of it, so between the two of us we had a good balance. Agustín helped produce and edit the interview and our differences, in my opinion, were easily resolved because he has a rather interesting musician's way of listening— making you less obstinate by believing you have said something profoundly poetic that will get written up in one of his songs.

The recording:

Agustín Lira has evolved into a master storyteller through his music. He never compromises nor waivers from issues that are important to him. Music is the medium he uses with skill to express what is important to him. Having also known him from the early years of the farm worker's movement in Delano, it is exciting to witness how his music developed throughout the years and how he, Patricia Wells Solorzano, and the musical group ALMA continue to use their voices to bring the plight of the poor to the entire world. How fortunate for the farm worker's movement that Agustín Lira loved music and sought ways to develop his talent because it provided an incredible legacy for our history.

Agustín Lira, El Teatro Campesino, their music and that of other farm workers helped to lift our spirits. Not only was the music and theater a daily recording of our experiences in the picket lines out in the fields, it was a salve at times to our weary spirits; music refreshed us, revived us, and gave us hope. The actos (skits) had a similar effect. After enjoying an invigorating teatro or musical performance, we felt that we could bring the entire wall of injustice down with nothing more than a loud and mighty shout!

Venceremos,
Abby Flores Rivera
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