

Father Mark Day and LeRoy Chatfield On The Fast
Interview by Fred Ross 1969

(Second Session)

FR: This is the second session, on the fast, involving LeRoy and Father talking about some of the visitors who came to see Cesar during the fast.

LC: Well, Bishop Manning and Monsignor Mahony came from Fresno and I rode out with the Bishop and Monsignor to the Forty Acres from my office and Manning indicated that he wanted to visit Cesar and, without any publicity or without any interviews. And so, there were none; I mean there were no reporters waiting or anything like that. And he told me also on the way out that he was just going to stay a few minutes; which he did. And then afterwards I asked him what he said, and he volunteered that he told Cesar that in the last analysis he asked him if he would please obey the best advice from the doctors, with respect to when to begin taking the nourishment ????. Because at that time the fast was, I don't know, I think it was maybe twelve days, fifteen days. I mean, you know, obviously it was approaching the time for some decisions ????. Later he told me that he expressed to Cesar his concern for nonviolence. And that he appreciated, in effect, he said he appreciated what Cesar was attempting to do on behalf of this, that he considered the most important issue. You weren't out at the Forty Acres? He was only in there just, maybe like five minutes, at the most.

FR: Was that his first visit to see Cesar?

MD: No, it was his second. He had spent also a very short time coming down here to mention a few things; to talk over a few things about being with Cesar and Jim Drake, but it was very secretive. Both were not very long; they were sort of formal.

LC: The first one was a fact-finding thing that the Bishop came down by himself and met with the union officers and some of the other staff ??? ???. It was a private meeting, I don't know who ???

MD: That was it, huh? And that was about it?

LC: Another thing that was incidental to that, and I ??? off the record, Monsignor Mahony told me that there was an ??? effort on behalf of the Bishop. ??? ???, to prevent the bishop from coming to see Cesar.

FR: At that time, or at all?

LC: At the fast, when he was fasting. That it was a gimmick, that it, that the bishop was being used. And Manning, said; Mahony said, that Manning overruled him, and that he had the obligation to see if Cesar was just as much a, had just as much a claim on his time, his concern ????. In fact, you know, the whole; this is another implication of the fast, seems to me was, it was another kind of confrontation with the church.

MD: Yeah.

LC: Forcing the church to come to grips with the union movement again; because in this case, the Bishop could not afford not to come and see Cesar. And coming to see Cesar was in effect, identifying with him. At least in the aspect of nonviolence, which is basically the movement.

MD: I think there were a lot of good things, because the record of the church in the past with Willinger was just terrible. And I don't know if this was really an about-face, but the fact that we did have mass there, that the church was identified with the struggle. Even if it wasn't always along the official lines ??, on a hopeful level, it represented a real 180-degree turn, you know, because the, well the other churches had come along, and Jim and Chris had given their full support but the Catholic church, up to that time, had only come in, like Father Vizzard, just come in and go out again. But this was more or less a real presence. And this is what really made the ????? furious. Because they had put a lot of pressure on Manning. Not only about me, but about Bishop Manning coming down; just any evidence of the church that was in this thing at all. And I think that they finally gave up their, they gave up on the tactic of trying to keep the church out of it all together. I don't think we could even; and they tried to put the Register out of business too. They found out they couldn't do that, because Jerry took them on, and he's still taking them on now.

FR: Oh he is?

MD: Yeah. He put an article in about Mendoza and ????. And he thinks that he may, he may try more tactics to cut the subscriptions down. They had a campaign; and I think that

element was there, that there was a sort of cementing a relationship and the union of the church.

LC: Oh I think ????. In other words, they gave the church some of the handles to grab a hold of without having to come out directly ???, or whatever. When I said church I'm talking about the Catholic church, not the official church. And it really cut the ground out from under that new ???.

FR: When was it that the announcement came out? The position? The position paper, that came out, representing the position of the cardinal and the bishops, backing the right of farm workers to organize?

MD: Well that had come out in 1966, the first time, you know, when they all signed it. And Monsignor ??? came through here and he had all the bishops sign it, he even got Willinger and McIntyre to sign it. Then Manning came in, and what he did was; he reaffirmed this position as his own too. He didn't really go too much further because he never really knew Cesar by name, or the fact that the church supports the Farmers Organizing Committee, as some of the other churches have done. Nor has he backed the boycott. I would say that he still has come further than that other position, where he was fearful of coming near the thing at all.

FR: I thought that came out about the time of the fast, before or after, this position that I'm talking about, about the bishops and the cardinals.

MD: Yeah they did. The California bishops came out again. Reaffirming, but they more or less reaffirmed that the bishop; this thing came out in 1966 when Donahue came out here, remember? Then they said they reaffirmed it again, in 1968. Yeah, it was around that time.

FR: Was that after the fast?

LC: I don't know.

MD: Yeah, it was around that time.

LC: Well, I'm sure.

FR: Can you think of any other notables that were around that you heard talking?

LC: Well, you said that Lloyd ??? came.

MD There's something that I want to mention before I forget it. And I think ??? for the fast, and that is about a month or two months before Cesar started the fast he stopped in

Colorado for a meeting with Corky Gonzalez and several other leaders; he may have told you about this. They were all hitting the bottle pretty heavily and they were talking violence pretty much. And he left, and the statement he made when he walked out on them, and when he walked out he said, "Gentlemen, when the revolution comes I wanna be sober", and he walked out. I think that contributed to it also; I think he saw the whole scene in Colorado and Texas, and he saw the, I think, the whole Chicano movement turning that way. I thought of that because that's what Ralph Guzman; we were talking about; we were talking about ????. We talked about this when he wanted to see Cesar, and I think they talked about this too.

FR: The movement?

MD: Yeah. Lloyd ??? and Guzman.

LC: You know, Reuther came, Richard came, Schrade, Conway, Irv Bluestone, ??? administrative assistant.

MD: Also during the fast the big cheeses for the National Council of Churches came that one night. Remember we had a mass; it was outside that night?

LC: That's right.

MD: And they ??? striking the boycott and the fast and they said a few words at the mass; these were the men from the National Council of Churches.

LC: And I think, Father, the ??? came too; didn't he?

MD: He came. Father McKinney came too.

LC: Father McKinney, yeah, Monsignor Connelly.

MD: Monsignor Connelly came one night.

FR: Any politicians?

LC: I'm trying to think of ??? opportunity. Were there any congressmen there?

MD: There were some assemblymen there.

LC: Oh, someone who came, yeah, was Roberti; yeah, Senator Roberti.

MD: Yeah, Senator Roberti.

LC: Senator Roberti came.

FR: Did Brown come?

LC: Willy Brown? No; not that I know of. I don't think any other – see, by that time Fred, Kennedy had gotten into the picture, of coming, or, you know, well you know how politicians are. You have to treat each one, you have to give each one his own due, otherwise they don't want to ??? ???.; otherwise, they don't want to come, you know; they don't want to compete with other politicians. Which was just as well actually.

MD: We made a big thing about that, we didn't want the fast ????. The only one that was gonna speak was Reuther, and get up on the, remember the truck we had there? It was Reuther, and one of the others, but not all of the politicians get up.

FR: Where was this at?

LC: No, no, no, no no. Reuther came before the ending of the fast. Ruther came out before ????.

MD: Also out there...there were a few others that were called up from L.A. and wanted to come and get in on the fast.

LC: Oh yeah, yeah, right.

FR: The day I was there some big producer or director was there, with his wife. I think it was.

LC: Eddie Lewis?

FR: Was that his name? He was going to make a picture; not about the strike, but, well, about farm workers, or a picture that sort of paralleled the strike in a way. You think that's who it was?

LC: This isn't the producer who was interested in starting a book is it?

FR: Might be.

LC: I think it was Eddie Lewis and his producer from MGM. And he's the one that produced the picture, the most recent picture.

FR: Oh. That's probably the guy then.

LC: And his wife, I don't think it would be. I think you're right. I remember Kircher called me and asked me to pick him up at the airport alone. This is when he found out that Cesar was fasting. He called me you know, and asked me what was happening. He asked me to pick him up there alone, and, so I did. And of course the reason for that is he wanted to brief on what the hell what was going on. But interestingly, he didn't stop talking from the

time I picked him up until I got him out to the Forty Acres, it was almost like he didn't want to know. He was apprehensive, you know. And, in fact, the closer we got to the Forty Acres, he told me, he said "No, listen, I've walked into situations and conditions where I didn't know if I was going to come out alive; what, where, you know, there was some chance where I was going to be physically assaulted, or even killed, you know." "But honest to God" he said, "I'm more nervous now, then I was at those ????" "I don't know what to say; I've never done this before."

FR: Yeah.

MD: The same way with Jim Drake. Once, he came up from Mexico, remember he was ??? and everything and he came back and Chris met him and said, Cesar's gonna fast. And Jim said "What is this, some kind of religious kick?" And then Chris got real mad, he says, don't you see what's happening? And Jim said, he took him two or three days to get into it, you know; it was the furthest thing from his mind too.

FR: Yeah. Father Duggan met him once; there was a lot of crazy stuff going on. As soon as he walked in the office, you know, Father Duggan said, "You better just get in your car and keep moving."

MD: Yeah, well, of course, Duggan was pretty bitter.

LC: There was uhh; I guess the fast was confusing to a lot of people. I mean staff. Confusing in the sense of, to grab a hold of, I'm talking particularly of Marshall Ganz and Jerry Cohen, with a Jewish background. Not quite knowing how to relate to it, you know.

MD: Well, that was the case with a lot of people. Ah gee, Tony ????

LC: Well see, Cesar was able to come up with examples, ways of breaking things down to make them simple to understand. And he used one example again and again, and I thought was very good. And I remember one time I was in the room and he was using it with Jerry and Marshall. Someone else was there too, and he said, he pointed to the wall, of course this was a very small room, they were all white walls, and he pointed to the opposite wall and he said "Just picture that wall there, and we have colored ping-pong balls, in rows, all the same color, in rows, and they're jumping up and down."

FR: Oh like the ones they used to have in the movies?

LC: Yeah, right, right. Well, you men for..... No, these are...

FR: Uh-huh.

LC: These are; no, I know what you mean. These are different colors, but there's a, there's a red one, there's a blue one, there's a black one, there's a green one; whatever. And each one is shooting, up, see, so there's twelve balls, twelve different colors jumping up and down. And one of them represents religion, the other one represents politics, the other one represents ???, the other one represents organizing, the other one represents publicity. I'm making these up, I don't know if these were his exact examples, something like this. Another represents...oh, I don't know, something else. And he says, you know when people, different people look at the wall, they're attracted by a certain ball, and the trick is to keep your eye on that ball. Well, for one it might mean organizing, for another it might mean ???, for another one it might mean religion, but the trick is to keep your eye on that ball. Well, in a way, giving that example, identified for us, broke down for us, the different areas of our concern during the fast, of our activities during the fast. For example, Marshall was out organizing.

FR: Yeah.

LC: You know, from L.A. up to Napa.

FR: Yeah.

LC: They were supposed to come to Delano for the court trial, and he magnificently ?????.

FR: ??? and the boycott too.

LC: Sure, sure. And I handled the press, you know. Of course, all these, the point is, all of these elements were there and present at the same time, and he didn't have to take one to the exclusion of all the rest, you know. But you could relate to one. No matter if you were even irreligious or unreligious, you know.

MD: And that was what I thought was so hard to understand about people like Fred, who, you know, who should of, with his background, should have been able to grab, to act under the organizing one right like that, you know. So he had this hang-up about religion and Gandhi and all that stuff. And I talked to other people you know. Right up to that point, my god, what's behind this Gandhi kick about? Old-time left-wingers, you know, that thought that somehow they'd go up in cloud nine now, with all this. God, I hope he gets off of that.

LC: Well, anyone who could see the amount of activity that generated and the number of people that became involved and responded to the work and the press. You know, it just ????. Only a person who is in effect was out of it could sit back and take that attitude you know, was he off on this kick for. It was one of the most intense and practical things that he was ever involved in.

MD: Although he didn't sit back and plan that at all. That all these things would be working together. I mean, maybe I'm naïve, but I don't think that he ever conceived that it would all build up that way. I think that his basic concern was that he give some real sort of a witness-eluding example that the violence wouldn't work, and that nonviolence was the only answer, and that the ethical base should be there. And in his pursuing that, everybody else just built this other thing around it, you know. And then it all went ahead. I don't think a lot of those things were premeditated. When he went out to Forty Acres I don't think he envisioned any of that, do you?

FR: I think what you've got to keep in mind all the time about him is that, is that his whole life is in the strike; and I mean in the movement, and that's the thing you've got to that he had uppermost in his mind at all times and his, well, you know, that's what his whole propelling ???? is, you know, and when he, I think he, he's always so alert to what his need is, at any one time, you know. I think that probably everything else; he thought that things were slowing down and had to be zoomed up. I mean something had to be created that would zoom things up, just like the march did, you know.

LC: I don't think. I agree with you to this extent, I don't think ??? detail, or possibly ????, because there were so many circumstantial things for example, perhaps if the opportunity would come, of the fact that Kennedy would come, the fact that the press would pick up ???, that fact that Reuther would come ??? fifty miles an hour. Who could foresee that? But on the other hand, he was not unaware that ??? fast could ??? as a result.

MD: But see, the big criticism that a lot of people gave was not just the ranchers, but a lot of people even within the movement, that he was adopting this like a gimmick. And that a lot of people, the same thing like Cesar criticizes some people like Joan Baez. For them, nonviolence is some sort of a gimmick. A lot of people said, you know. I mean, you guys, any rancher or anybody in town as far as the opposition that Cesar planned everything out.

That he called the press, that he called Kennedy, that he called Reuther and that he got you guys together, that he called me, and that he planned it out, and it just sort of built up out of his...

LC: Oh yeah, yeah. On the other hand, you ????. A lot of people thought that. When you started counting a whole lot of people, I think you counted three or four or five ... Well, one tenth of the opposition could blow it up, much bigger than they really are. I think, you know. One thing though is, how, how much trust Cesar would have to have in; well, for lack of a better term I'll say, in his staff, you know; to be able to do the right kinds of things. To make his act, as I suppose it could be, you know. What I mean to say is: he went out to a ??? room, ??? and really wasn't directing. In a certain way he wasn't directing, you know what I mean? General, general, I mean, now I didn't move completely or independently or completely without at least him; because when he was out there I still considered him the leader of the union and I was responsible to him and that kind of thing. And he never said do this or don't do that or whatever. I would come up with ideas or other people would ... and then off we'd go, you know.

FR: And there were some things you didn't, because you knew that you'd probably meet opposition and that would just slow --- you knew that something had to be done. Just like understand on the security thing.

MD: I just wondered how much of that he really understands, you know. How much of these independent actions the people have had to take off and on over the years. That might have gotten him into trouble later on. How much does he really understand about what caused people to do that, you know.

LC: I don't know.

FR: I don't know; I sometimes get the idea that he doesn't.

LC: Sometimes I agree with you, sometimes I don't think he understands – oh no, not understands, what I'm saying; sometimes I don't think he appreciates the box that some people have found themselves in.

FR: Right.

LC: They break out; they just have to decide to do things, and then take their own chances.

FR: One thing I think he had in mind was a little at the conscious level, or conscious, is the, is the a, is the a, sort of the, well, the nonviolence, resistance. Or not the nonviolence, but the, what's the other term for can't resist?

LC: Passive?

FR: Passive resistance to certain possible situations, you know, of people. Well, you know how he reacts to certain actions of people. Certain acts detrimental to the union. Those people that are, you know, disrupting the union. Instead of throwing them out; what does he do? He brings in this passive resistance. To whatever it is that they're doing. And he seems to have – I think he's always, what I remember of him in the past – he rarely had a showdown with anybody. He would have the passive resistance. Once in a while he'd have a showdown but with the passive resistance sort of thing. And in a way, instead of, it seemed to me, instead of raising havoc or fault, with these people that were talking violence, he'd call them all in and instead of just lopping their heads off and so forth, he told us this – that's there's a much ??? sort of way at getting at the problem, and in a way, it is some sort of passive resistance, to all that stuff that was going on. It seemed to me, he figured it out, he could take it all on; all this stuff that was going on by just one stance.

LC: Right Because see, what the thing is, Fred; the reason why is because, he forces you to fight on his grounds. Under his ground rules, see? And so he ??? of not eating, this type of act ??? all of this religious, and liberal significance, you know. And you can't compete on that level. Most people can't. And so when he tucks the ground out from under you, then you look pretty ruthless engaging in somewhat of a bravado about what you're gonna do to the growers or what you have done, or what you plan to do, or could be done. You know what I mean?

FR: Yeah.

LC: Because it seems so childish compared to this act.

MD: Cesar really follows the Gandhian thing, because he gave me the book, because he reads Gandhi the most, and I've been reading through it, and he's made that part of himself in a very unscripted way. The way of dealing with people, the way of always not afraid to accept suffering, and everything, it's just right, it's just right from Gandhi.

LC: Well, I know what you're getting out of this. This ability to engage, with one stroke, a whole lot of people, a whole lot of events, and it's just, it's almost as if ????, you come to grips with it and you stay with it, until, until they collapse..

FR: Whether it happened to be, you know, by way of what he did in the fast. Or by what he's done, you know, instead of throwing people out of the union. Everybody else would have been long gone, you know. I guess just by his leaving them alone just sort of, through a certain type of ostracism, embarrassment, to the point where they just can't stand it any more.

MD: That's what happened with Fred Hirsch, and lot of people

LC: Give them enough rope and they'll hang themselves.

FR: Or they'd come back in, you know – with their tails between their legs.

LC: Yeah, yeah, that's right. And also, changing the subject a little bit. Talking about dealing with people. He never, I rarely did see him giving up and trying to compare a person...to bring a person back. And in many, many cases, I think it's absolutely hopeless. Very rarely have I seen, I think, maybe I know one case – maybe – I'm not even sure about that. Where he would finally throw up his shoulders and say ????

FR: Yeah, yeah.

LC: There's one other, somewhere along the line Cesar made a statement during the fast. A statement in conversation or something, that – oh, I guess it was when people started to try to talk him into stopping the fast – the doctor was concerned, then Dr. ??? came down, and he was concerned. Well then, of course, delegation after delegation began trying to change his mind as soon as possible. And at one point he said, "Well, I've made up my mind, I only want to fast once in my life." And so, he was pushing it to the point of – not of no return, but

FR: Right to the brink.

LC: Right. There'd be no doubt about how strongly he felt about this.

FR: Do you remember anything, oh, of a comical or humorous nature that happened out there?

LC: Oh, yessss!! One time Manuel Chavez was inside and, someone else was there – I was there, I was inside – someone knocked on the door, you know – it might have been Paul,

???, ??, or someone knocked on the door from the outside, and so Manuel, not knowing who it was or anything, knocked on the door and said, “You can’t come in now, Cesar’s eating!”

FR: Ha, ha, ha! Cesar’s just finishing his sandwich.

MD: Manuel was really funny that way.

LC: Ohhhhh! And Cesar just thought it was – he really got a kick out of it!

MD: The relationship between Manuel and Cesar; like, this is a couple of weeks ago, but, about a month ago, Cesar was very intently serious and he was talking about the great nonviolent leaders of our times. Manuel was on the floor, and he had his hand like that, over the Lady of Guadalupe, and Cesar was saying, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and he was giving the deepest doctrine, and Manuel says “Hitler.” And it was very, it was the type of thing that if I said, or anybody else said, it would have been very rude and stupid and Manuel does it all the time; everyone else just cracked up.

FR: Yeah, yeah.

LC: Another humorous thing, that - I didn’t witness it myself personally, but I heard about it – Cesar talks about it – is, he was so nervous when Kennedy came to see him and there was a case where I’m sure mutually, they didn’t know how to talk to one another – it was very touchy – post office kind of touchy – and Cesar introduced Kennedy to Paul Schrade, which is like introducing Jack Connelly to Walter Reuther. It turns out Cesar was kind of embarrassed. ??? after he realized what he said.

FR: Yeah, yeah. Were you there when Kircher went in to see him?

LC: Well I was there, but I didn’t go inside. I didn’t go inside. I was, later on, several days. As I remember, most conversations with Cesar, they were, made a very deliberate attempt to be, I thought, lighthearted and humorous, and didn’t want to – if anyone else was there – engage in any serious, or what I consider, serious or wavy discussions, you know?

FR: With Cesar?

LC: With Cesar, yeah. I think he took the stance, that he could possibly best be helpful by just – even, even, he ??? Cesar a lot, in a good-humor way. I can’t think of anything quite specific but, I remember noting it at the time, I think he was releasing his own tension by just being a little lighthearted.

FR: Do you remember anything kind of exciting or dramatic that happened out there?
During the day or at night, or...?

LC: Well.

FR: After mass?

LC: Yeah. There was a couple of things. Ministers would come, by ministers I mean, ??? , I think there was a black minister, and they would come in every night and they would go in and pray with Cesar. I kind of thought that was dramatic in a certain way, you know. Peter didn't practice as a minister, he doesn't you know, and he's not. Now the brother ministers, and by ministers I don't mean ministers, I don't know if they are formally ordained, I don't know if he wasn't or not, but they definitely come out of the ??? . One thing is, I don't ????, one of the charity workers, I understand, ??? workers, who in effect, broke into Cesar's room and tried to force him to

FR: Oh yeah. No, that was somebody from further north.

LC: Oh, further north?

FR: Yeah. I forgot which ...

LC: Tried to force him to eat?

FR: Yeah.

LC: I heard about it the next day. And then there were some indirect threats, during that time.

MD: ??? – it was very exciting, at least for me, because, I was in the car with Cesar and he was in a very weak condition when we got there, and all those tv cameras there. And then ???, when the car stopped, and then all those people kneeling down, it seemed... were you there? Were you in the car too?

LC: No, I wasn't in the car, I was waiting.

MD: ??? these women were there too, and then when Cesar walked in the door he said "you son-of-a-bitch," there was really a lot of tension, and it was a very religious experience, right in the courthouse where all these flunkies, and bureaucrats, and all these people with their deep faiths were seen in the court.

LC: Yeah, there was a..... of course those courthouses were just precious, you know. I mean, transforming a courthouse into a church. Two thousand people kneeling and singing in reverence, and press from all over the world there, you know?

FR: Did those hearings last very long?

LC: No, no. In fact, they never started.

MD: They never started.

LC: The first day, the judge assigned it to another courtroom, then they had to come back the very next day – or assigned another courtroom and on the second day ??? Cesar's condition, blah, blah. But you know, during those days, and as weak as Cesar was – he never lost ??? He never – I always get the impression he's constantly taking in the feelings of people, and, even though a ??? are swirling around, you know. Well, this was on the ending of the fast itself, when the ABC national reporter was here and the ABC national reporter was here – the guy with the beard. I don't know – he's on tv every night, you know. But, for some reason, they had come late, or they weren't in the proper position, or something, and they didn't get a picture of Kennedy and Cesar breaking bread together. You heard about that?

FR: Yeah. What happened?

LC: And – well, see, I was in charge of the press, you know. Well they were, and I was also concerned 'cause Cesar was so weak, you know, so – they had formed a ring around him and people had locked arms, and they were holding people back. And so this guy came up with this tv crew and they were trying to break the lines, you know, and the people wouldn't let them, see? And I wouldn't let them pass, in other words, I wouldn't tell the people to let them through because I was concerned. And so, they kept pulling, the guy was really insistent and he was upset, and this whole ??? So I looked at Cesar and then Cesar looked at me, you know. He didn't wink exactly, but he just; I just knew that Cesar wanted me to let them through.

MD: Well, when we started the mass, there was, everybody and ??? was on that altar, all the priests, the guy that guy ran a restaurant, I began to say the mass, then I looked over my shoulder, and there's Pete from Joe's Pico City Restaurant, so finally I just had to stop and I used the loudspeaker and I said, "Everybody please get off the stage." And the

cameramen, please move to the side down. And this one guy, he got in closer, and Jesus, I couldn't even do anything there on the altar. And I said over the loudspeaker, and Cesar and Kennedy were sitting there, and I just said, "Would you please get off the stage?" "You, with the camera, would you please get off the stage?" And he turned around and he said, "I can't, I can't!" Everybody was. Everybody was talking over the loudspeaker and I was saying. When we had the mass with Kennedy. I said, "Would you please get off the stage?"; because we nobody could do anything, we couldn't start the mass. And this guy with the camera said, "I can't, I can't!" It was really funny, all the cameramen alone, there must have been a hundred of them, you know, from the tv? It was hot and they were carrying these big cameras. They fought like cats and dogs to get those pictures.

FR: Were either of you ever around there much, after mass? When they gathered around the fire or held the all night vigils inside the tent?

LC: Yeah. Well see, most of the night times I spent with the people the next day. for the next day. So we used the tents out there, and sometimes we had a meeting, we'd start out with a handful, and sometimes we got as high as 25 or 30 people. And we made the plans for the next day. So then we were, we went off to working. So very rarely did I have the opportunity to hear of what people were talking about.

MD: A lot of them were just letting out a lot of tension, telling jokes, talking about families, experiences in the past. It was a very informal type of thing.

FR: Around the fire you mean?

MD: Yeah. Very leisurely. A lot of joke sessions too, and a lot of stories, you know, talking sessions about "La Llorona" and you know, all those stories from Mexico, the legends and stuff. Oh yeah, I remember them talking about – I remember this one guy, one worker from, I think, Schenley, telling me about something that happened down in Michoachan – about some haunted cave – that they found all this gold there, and all these, and at nights during the year, ghosts would come out of there – some of these folk legends.

FR: What's "La Llorona"?

MD: It's hype in English is like a boogey man. If a little baby Mexican child misbehaves, the mother says, "La Llorona is gonna get you." And she's like a witch, or like a ghost, and

she's supposed to have watched her child during a catastrophe and she goes around weeping, "Llorona, Llorona"; weeping for a child. And if the kid misbehaves; "La Llorona" is gonna get'cha.

FR: Oh, I see. ??? ???.

MD: It was very interesting. Typical Mexican ??? ????. Depends what group you're with. If you're just with men, they're really funny, chistes rojos. ??? told a lot of these ??? on the boycott too, telling all these jokes, it was a good release of tension too.

LC: Well, I just remember being constantly amazed at how many people could come from such a distance, and be so relaxed. And needed so little to be able to stay, you know?

MD: So much of it is tied up with the personality of Cesar – an indigenous?, and the people that came to see him, and they just believed that there was no doubt in their mind, . What am I doing out here, ??? hang-ups ??? the leadership of the union.

FR: ??? ????. that this was a real religious experience. ??? Cesar ??? the poor and the ??? have no hangouts

Did you keep that register?

LC: Uh-huh. I just gave it to ???, the archives, back in ????. We finally had to discontinue that after about 10 days or so. Because it was – we didn't have to discontinue it, I don't know, there was so bitching about it, on the part of a few people.

FR: By keeping a register?

LC: Yeah, because it was done with a pen and a piece of paper.

FR: Well what you were trying to do is to get people who hadn't signed it before to sign it. So you were trying to get a daily.....

LC: No, no. I tried to make it like a desk register. People who came wanted to have it recorded that they were there.

FR: Exactly. So if you'd been there for 3 days....

LC: No, that would be ridiculous.

FR: Then that's what the opposition was.

LC: Yeah, right. I never knew him to tell quite what the problem was, but I knew that there was. If I heard it once, I heard it a hundred times, you know, about that sign-up sheet.

FR: Oh boy.

LC: And so – I don't think....

FR: Well, I want to ask you Father; at those nightly masses, did you always have somebody speak – you know, besides yourself, or besides some other.....?

MD: Yeah. Well, usually, Jim and I, well of course, Jim didn't come 'til later – I mean some non-clerical It would depend on who was there. Like a – well, one of the things we did was – we always asked people to bring what their intentions, who they would like to pray for, and people would usually say something like I'd pray for so-and-so. Like ??? Cordoza, and I think some other Mexican Pentecostals came with a little singing group – and they sang – and one guy commented on the scriptures, it would depend who was there. And then I know that one night Dr. Lackner came down and he read from the scriptures, and he explained the significance of the fasting, from the Jewish old testament point of view. So there were different people ???... Jerry Cox came down from Santa Rosa, Monsignor Cox; he gave a little talk. And different people like this.

FR: When I was there you had me say something at mass.

MD: Right, yeah. I wanted to have other people.

LC: Yes, there were. Remember Mark, I can remember ??? giving kind of a ???.

MD: Oh yes.

LC: What would you call it? Kind of a statement about ????. I remember ???, Rudy Mendez, ??? Armata. I think Bob Bustos, one night, I'm not sure.

MD: Yeah, yeah.

LC: I don't know how it grew up; or what, I think it was at the end of mass, we kind of started a pattern where people would – before people left – they would kind of, just explain very simply, what they thought was happening there. What the implications of this whole thing were. And I think it was even some ranch committee heads, I don't remember who exactly, but I remember that kind of a thing.

MD: Well, it was a very, it was a very ??? positive thing, and people were participating one way or the other, by bringing stuff or singing.

FR: When did that business about, of the relics start?

LC: Very soon. Maybe the second or third day. I can remember some of the first ones. I remember Alicia was staying with us and she had made a flag in school. And she asked if she could bring that and present it to him.

FR: Oh yeah?

LC: Yeah. I mean....

FR: Was this a natural.....

LC: Well, of course she was living with us until she went to mass the first night out at the Forty Acres and she saw other people doing it, so could she, you know. And she made this for Cesar ...

MD: A lot of those kids were bringing stuff.

LC: Well, I'm sure that that was.... And I remember Marian – because I remember it was such a – she asked me if she thought she could do it. And she didn't have anything, this and that – remember, she found a picture of Pope John?

MD: Oh, yeah.

LC: The 23rd. Wasn't it; John the 23rd?

MD: Yeah.

LC: And then when the time came, she was so nervous. She'd never done anything like that, and well, you know, little things I remember because they criss-cross.

MD: Things were happening all the time.

FR: Did they at first present those to you? Or did they just come in and put them down or what did they do?

MD: They put them on the altar, I think. And then there wasn't enough room; didn't they have a table there or something?

LC: No, we started with a table. No. During the offertory they came up and they would give it to him, and he would hold it up so everyone could see what it was, and if a family was presenting it, you could give the name of the family, right?

MD: Yeah, yeah.

LC: Of course then it kind of broke down, because people were giving so much.

MD: When we had those ??? we had to go outside, do you remember? In the afternoon; and they were bringing stuff in. Flowers and everything.

FR: Some of the stuff was hanging up on the wall, huh?.

LC: Yeah. Most of ??? there was a whole wall that wall was almost solid.

MD: Yeah, different colors.

LC: A bunch of statues, and crucifixes, and books. I remember, ??? gave the flag ???.

MD: She made a lot of stuff. She made the vestments...

LC: The ???.

MD: Yeah, yeah.

LC: ??? . And you know, that's another thing that happened, people made tablecloths. Altar cloths.

MD: She made altar cloths. I still have that one.

.LC: And vestments.

MD: Yeah, yeah. She made a beautiful vestment with Guadalupe on it. ???, I don't know if I'll use it again this year.

LC: Another example seems to me, is how people can become involved and ??? what they can do best. Given an opportunity, given a vehicle, given a way to participate. Like all of those women that became involved in helping to prepare for the masses and keeping the place clean, and washing the altar cloths.

MD: They would wash the ??? and stuff.

LC: And then all of the cooking; you can imagine ??? sometimes we had out there, a thousand people come in; or 800 people come in. ??? trash ???.

FR: ??? a lot of trash?

LC: Yeah. It took ??? of people, who ??? every day..

FR: How many days was he on ???, was it twenty-five?

LC: It was twenty-five, yeah.

FR: The people were fed one meal all day?.

LC: Everything was done ???.

FR: Oh, out there?

LC: Out there.

FR: One meal out there then, huh?

LC: It got to the point where they were giving out this, menudo, and tortillas, I guess.

FR: They ??? all the time, huh? Or was it night?

LC: It was at night.

FR: Was it toward the end? Coffee and cocoa was being served all the time, huh? So when he got up in the morning, there'd be coffee there.

LC: I remember ????......it was heavy, it was almost like a penitential broth and coffee, chocolate, something like that.

FR: No sandwiches? ??? sandwiches, I just wondered.

LC: There was one day, when he went to Bakersfield., because we had so many people had come back, from Bakersfield..

FR: Those on the staff and so forth; you mean the strikers?

LC: ???.

FR: I mean the ones that were living out there in tents, weren't preparing out there, they ????. Weren't they?

LC: I don't know.

FR: I mean there wasn't anything to cook ??? out there, really. With the families and all that was there?

LC: No, there wasn't any. There mustn't have been a few places to go.

FR: What would the people do out there? Would they stay around during the day too, or would they kind of drift off, like going to town and other places, and come back at night? Most of them, or did most of them stay around? When you're handling big crowd?

MD: Well, it was really toward the end that they camped out at night, wasn't it, LeRoy?

LC: Uh-huh.

MD: And a lot of those people worked for Hollister and for the most part they, during the day they were at the trial in Bakersfield.

LC: They were at the trial?

MD: Yeah.

LC: Well, they were preoccupied during the day, then at night.....

MD: Well, they had meetings too; so many things were going on at the meeting hall..

FR: People would come in, even from a long distance for the mass, then they'd stay overnight and leave.

LC: Yeah. A lot of them. A lot of them.

FR: There were more people around during the day, ????. ??? then they'd come surging back again at night..

LC: Right. And you know, one of the things that I remember, because; remember, you had a tough time with this, or I did. There were so many different people each night, that. Father would have to almost re-explain, what was happening.

FR: Sure.

LC: You know..

FR: Fill them in!

LC: Right! Because, there were just so many different faces.

MD: Yeah, there were.

LC: So, a lot of people just came in and out.

MD: I guess many of them, a lot of these guys were living in the backwoods, ??? after Hollister, and to Stockton and these places, to get people to come.

FR: Manuel was, I know. Did Marshall go out the same time Manuel did? Or did he go just before the trial?

LC: He went mostly just before the trial.

MD: I think they contacted the organizers too. And I think the organizers started coming in. There was a lot of people coming back.

LC: Well, I remember after ??? I said, oh my god, you know what's gonna happen at these masses? They're, it's just going to, it's just going to peter out, and we're just going to be out here with a handful of people.

MD: It turned out beautifully, didn't it?

LC: ??? started growing larger and larger and larger. I think it was maybe a Saturday night; I think it was a low night, low, I mean maybe only hundred, a hundred fifty people there. It just kept getting bigger, you know. I thought it would become all repetitious. Oh, let's be honest too, a lot of people began coming because they thought Cesar was going to ??? the fast, you know. I mean, it became curiosity, and anybody, but some curious, they wanted to meet ???.

MD: Yeah, sure!

LC: And then also, a lot of people came because they wanted to see what he looked like.

FR: Uh-huh.

LC: How weak he was; and he did become very weak.

FR: Well, did he actually have very much time to himself, there? Staying up to the wee hours of the morning?

LC: I can't imagine that he did. But, you know, maybe more than I realized.

FR: ???.

LC: No; not after awhile. No matter what time I went there; and I certainly went during the day, because ??? ??? ???.

FR: Why, did he say he wasn't sleeping very well at night?

MD: Discomfort, ??? and all that.

LC: Yeah, because of lack of coffee and things like that. That's right, I remember when he began drinking coffee. But that was after, I guess when you reach a certain period.....

FR: And Helen was out there most of the time, huh?

LC: Oh, yeah. And Richard, and Richard, yeah. And then we had, what would you call them, guards, but I mean, they were like night watchmen. I remember we began organizing shifts for the night watchmen. Well, because Richard couldn't do it alone.

FR: But there was always a group around that fire every night too.

LC: ?????..... Well, of course, you know how it is, a person doesn't understand ???.

FR: And that fire was actually near enough, to where Cesar was, so where he could, when you were laughing and singing and so forth; he could hear it all, couldn't he?

MD: I don't know because that adobe ???.....and the hallway, the hallway was there.

FR: That's true.

LC: I don't know what he could distinguish. I mean as far, the fact that there was laughter, the fact that people were talking; I would think he could; I don't know though. I would think he could. Oh, he had to

FR: He could probably see the fire; if he looked out that door, he probably could see the fire.

LC: It was right almost in line with ??? yeah. The thing is that I remember at one time he said that he didn't sleep well because people were up all night long, talking.

FR: Yeah.

LC: He kind of gave you the impression it was right outside his door.

MD: One time ??? earlier ??? wine out there and they were talking really loud.

LC: Oh yeah, that's right, that's right.

FR: ??? very sleepy.

LC: In fact, I think then we began; then I think it was kind of a , I think it was a

FR: ????????????, he took it into his own room.

MD: Oh, did he?

LC: Um-hum, that's right. That's right.

MD: Well they were cold they told him.... More or less, ??? after Father ???. any time they could hear the beer cans popping. ????. Even though they weren't supposed to be.

LC: Even though they weren't supposed to be; yeah. I remember they had a discussion about that.

MD: You should have seen ??? You were there too ???. The fire water came out.

FR: ????.

MD: At the end of yesterday's session, Father made a comment that they were going to have the memorial day out there, to remember what happened ???. Yeah. But then we had to go to the executive board and all that, ??? or something.

FR: You seem to feel that, well, that there might have been opposition or bad souls, or bad feelings.

LC: Well, we're not too sensitive about this Fred, I don't know, see, you've got to put it down in perspective. It does seem incredible to me, that the one thing that was so significant, as far as ??? of the union, ??? and the pressure....that one year later we would ??? ??? sit by without even, well, if Bonnie hadn't asked to have the mass on the day that Kennedy came, you know. We would have had nothing I guess, huh?

MD: Yeah.

LC: Because obviously, Cesar wouldn't have been in a position to bring about something, you know?

FR: Yeah.

MD: Yeah. That's true, and I could kick myself about that because, you know, I am also very sensitive too because I have run into situations where I've offered to have a mass, and something like that, like at Three Rivers, you know. People have come up to me and said, "We have to have a mass up here." Well, you see, Cesar asked for it, and ??? people said, "well, make it short" and something like that. And so when Bonnie brought this up, I was glad that she brought it up because I feel kind of bad about pushing religion on to the strike, you know; but the only thing about Cesar was, when I told him that Bonnie had asked about this, he said, I said, you have all these meetings going on, ??? all the time." And he says, "Forget about it, let's have a mass, all that stuff can wait." but really, that was the beautiful thing about Cesar, because there is, I think Cesar mentioned that there are some people who are very squeamish about this sort of a thing.

LC: Yeah. Because I'm thinking, I'm thinking in terms of really, the mass. A hard grade, or a much broader celebration of that anniversary, then plus the ??? probably had something, you know, because

MD: I think those same people were quite squeamish about that too, don't you think?

LC: Well, quite frankly, I tried to get something organized for a week ??? toward the anniversary.

FR: You did?

LC: Yeah.

FR: And?

LC: Just didn't, just didn't; I'd made up my mind I couldn't carry the ball. I couldn't you know, I mean, I wouldn't. Well, it seems you just get to the point, where you can't, well, I can't; this is what I considered opposition ????, you do it for so long, and then ??? . And Richard had to take my place at the service center, so, I couldn't.....

MD: Yeah. And you were busy on that other thing.

LC: ??? . I wanted to work under, I wanted to work under some type of official ???, you know.

FR: Did you talk to Cesar about it?

LC: Eventually I did, yeah.

FR: And what'd he say?

LC: Well at first I talked to Richard about it. Then I talked to ???, then he said that he talked to ???, and he gave me the impression ??? the board. Or some members of the board. It wasn't safe enough; it would be running too much of a risk.

FR: Oh, a security thing?

LC: A security thing, yeah. And I took the ???. But I took the position anyway, that what happened minimizing that problem, all of that energy had to take, we had to hear ourselves through meetings, as best we could, the security risks. And take whatever means necessary. But that was not ???.

FR: ???, not there ????, and ??? the hall, actually. I don't understand.

LC: I don't understand. The point is; you can't use security; the security becomes the reason why Cesar can't move or be allowed to participate in something as important as ??? like this, and we've got the wrong thing turned upside down, see? The security has to be there, but it has to be there for all those things that Cesar has to participate in.

FR: That's right.

LC: Even if it requires two hundred men, let's say, okay, then that's what we'll require then. Well, anyway, it's pretty hard to argue against that, I mean, you know, what it sounds like, you know, minimizing. And then I brought it up to Cesar directly. And after ??? instant, what I thought would be a proper thing, ??? for the anniversary. And once he understood I wasn't really focusing on him, his own personal thing, you know; but some neutral thing that he could participate in. A pre-flash; I thought he was going to ???, I guess it was very late, within a week, ???, you know.

FR: A week from the anniversary?

LC: Well, you see; no. You see, my, I was making, I was saying, we don't have to have it on the exact day as ???. Let's choose like, the first of April. In other words, right around Easter time, which it was, you know. But ???, and have it like that, you know.

FR: Yeah.

LC: It doesn't have to be ??? the day; I don't think that's important. But he didn't buy it, except for that flash, ??? the possibilities, but they ???.

FR: What did Jim think about it?

LC: I never talked to Jim about it. You see, when I got the idea; I was up in San Francisco, in the bay area, working ??? ???. And Marion and I had a long talk about it, and the more we talked the more ??? I became, you know. So then I called Richard right away, and his initial reaction was positive. So I thought, ???, to let me know what area he wanted me to work in. And then three days later, two days later, I called him, and he didn't call back. And I said, well, we've been discussing it, ??? and security problems and he agreed.

FR: And those threats and ??????? ?? a lot of positive things that could have happened.

LC: ??? ??? ???. In other words, I didn't feel, to be perfectly blunt about it; I just thought, I just think there are enough people in ??? who would rather just see this kind of thing as dry, and run away with, and they don't want to be a part of it.

FR: And the rest of them; they're all out on the boycotts someplace.

MD: Right, sure. I remember during the fast, I remember during the fast – that a lot of guys like Larry and Tony were sort of a little bit too soft, and they weren't participating in the ???, didn't even want to participate in it, you know. It was sort of like ??, whatever thing that was going on. Somebody invited me but I didn't want to go in because I didn't organize it.

LC: Yeah. It was the same when Kennedy came. ??? with the pictures. Oh, ???.

FR: Yeah. They said there must have been about ten thousand people out there.

MD: The paper said it was three thousand, but it was over ten thousand.

LC: Some of those estimates were made three days in advance. I heard so much about working in those medias, their deadlines and all that. And those stories, many of those stories were written two hours before we had gone out to the park that day. And so they said, "Well, how many do you think will be here?" And I said, oh, ten thousand, some said eight thousand, a lot of them said ten thousand. Oh, I know how many were there, because I had it worked out on a square footage basis. I knew how many square feet, and I knew how many people in that square foot.

FR: Yeah.

LC: And you take a look at those crowd shots, and oh, man. Well, I know that there was ???.

FR: Can you think of anything else?

MD: I know that on one occasion, Jim got a tape recorder and brought it in and had some long, long ???.

FR: Were you there when that was being done? Can you remember any of that? He ??? that ??? upside down, I think he might have set it to ???.

FR: Who has it?

LC: Well, ??? ??? ???., you know. Jerry and Dave, at the law office.

FR: Oh yeah? Do you remember what they talked about ??? ?

MD: I just remember one thing that stuck in my mind was – Cesar went back to his old organizing days; and his old philosophy of helping people, and I know that, and also one of the days, that Jim just talked about, was the relationship between the organizer and like women. He was saying, when you're organizing, he was saying how he helped some gal out in Madera, helped her get her welfare check, and she just couldn't believe that he was doing this for an ulterior, you know, without an ulterior motive. And she was so shook up, she was angry at him, that he wasn't doing this in order to get to sleep with her, you know. And then, she accused him of being homosexual. And then when she saw that – I don't know if Cesar had heard him – that he'd gone out of his way – and then she finally retracted it, but I'll never forget that story. Because it was really a story of a man who – when he was going out to help somebody – the people that he was going out to help could not believe, could not believe one man, that would be willing to drive thirty or forty miles to simply to get a check for somebody because he wanted to help them. Well, that just stuck in my mind, because I was there that day when he was describing it, talking about that incident.

FR: In other words, he probably ?? that we thought too.

MD: Yeah, that's it. That's it.

FR: She was offering herself to him and he didn't ??? ???

LC: That's just called cultural ???.

FR: Yeah.

MD: But he went on for hours on that. I have a tape, which I don't know if it is very clear or not, but when you hear who's ???, doing a paper, a thesis called "Cesar Chavez, the Communicator." And, so, I sent that tape up to him. And I could ask him if he still has it. Maybe – it was that day, I think it was about a half an hour or an hour.

FR: Oh, you have a tape recorder?

MD: Yeah, I had my tape recorder that day. I don't know how clear it is, or how it came out. So, I'm gonna get that tape.

FR: I wish you would, Father.

MD: Yeah.

FR: How long ago did you give it to him?

MD: I sent it to him about two weeks ago. We were together on that ??? campaign, and ??? asked me if I had the tape. ??? the tape recorder, and ??? ??? gonna take it to tape Jerry Cohen on that tape. ??? Mendoza at a barbecue, right before I left for Toronto, and he gave it to one of his assistants, and he never brought it back, apparently. So, that's what happens when you loan ??? to a ??? guy.

FR: What size tape was it?

MD: It was a cartridge. ????. I think it was a half hour or an hour on each side. Some are an hour on each side, some are a half hour on each side.

FR: Oh?

MD: You just turn it over, you know, and put it in.

FR: I see. ????

MD: The machine is about this size. And it has a speaker here.

FR: I'd like to get that thing. I'll check with Jerry and see

MD: I'm gonna watch the basketball game in ten minutes. It's supposed to be the priests against the parish??.

FR: Ok, well, thanks a million.

MD: Ok, if we can help in any other way just let us know.

FR: Yeah, well I'd appreciate it, if you can get a hold of that that guy and get that tape back.

MD: Yeah, I'll give him a call.