

Monsignor Higgins

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00:30:08 Now Monsignor Higgins let's start out before talking about the UFW talking about the fields in the fifties and the Bracero program. What was the effect, what was the relationship between having a Bracero program and whether you could organize farmworkers?

30:22 Well let me go back a step and say that uh, I knew the Bracero program only from being a member of a commission set up by Secretary of Labor Mitchell and it was clear as we got in to the study of the problem that uh, you would never be able to organize farmworkers as long as you had a Bracero program and that was obvious. Uh, I give great credit to Mitchell for opening that problem up and uh,

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AUDIO ONLY

But I was extremely fond of Mitchell. He was a in many ways the best Secretary of Labor in, in recent years I think because he had a feel for, he got along very well with the labor leaders even when they'd criticize him you know. I remember one convention where George Meany chewed him out and went back with him to his hotel room and within fifteen minutes half the executive counsel was in there having a drink with him. Saying ah, you know George they said don't take that too seriously.

Well there is this uh, what did we used to call it in the union, the dog and kodiak, right. You go through the motions and then you say ? that.

END AUDIO ONLY

30:51 Monsignor Higgins let's, let's start over again with what you were saying about the Bracero program and it stopping organizing.

30:57 Well I said that my analogy of the Bracero program was um, from a distance because I served on a three man commission appointed by Secretary of Labor Jim Mitchell to look in to the problem. We finally made a report based on research by his staff and by our trips to the fields and as I said I, I give Mitchell great credit for being the first one in public life to make this an issue that attracted some attention. Unfortunately recall it, it would not end under his, his administration but it finally ended under Bill Wertz's administration when Bill was Secretary of Labor.

31:33 But you, you were saying that it really was a block to organizing.

31:37 Oh of course. It was obvious to once you saw what was happening that there'd be no way you could organize farmworkers when they could bring in an unlimited supply of, of captive laborers as it were you know.

31:48 Um, when, when the farmworkers started organizing in Delano in 65 the Protestant denominations came in very early to support and the, the

Catholic Church has a certain inertia in terms of getting in to action um, but you finally got involved as a negotiator, talk a little bit about that.

32:08 Well I was not involved at all in 65, I was three thousand miles away and I really knew only what I read in the newspapers. But I think it's perfectly true, the Protestants were the first ones in with the Farmworker Ministry, Chris Hartmire and his group. Um, I don't know what the attitude of the local Bishops were at, was at that time. But by the time I got in um, it was the late 60's early 70's it had reached the point where they was an effort made to get the United States Bishops to um, at the annual meeting to come out in favor of the boycott, which I strongly supported. Two of the California Bishops were at that meeting said well before you make a formal endorsement of the boycott um, let us look in to the problem see if there's any way we can mediate this. Meanwhile the president of the conference had appointed a five man committee of Bishops and that these two men were on it. The chairman was Bishop Donnelly of Connecticut who had had a lot of experience as the chairman of the Connecticut State Labor Mediation Board so he knew what he was doing. He called me and said what's happening out there? I said as far as I know nothing. Well he said then we're not gonna wait. So then he called the first meeting of the entire committee. We met in California and after that the committee became in effect Bishop Donnelly and myself and then Father Mahoney, you know Cardinal Mahoney of Los Angeles who was our leg man and who made all the arrangements so forth and the committee as a committee really didn't function much after that except through Donnelly.

33:48 You did a lot of the work of the committee. What did it feel like, I mean did you really think you could bring those growers and those farmworkers together and work something out?

33:57 Well our only hope was to get a contract and that was Cesar's desperate hope. He had no contracts so the only role that we were able to play was to um, go around and talk to the growers or try to soften 'em up a bit and finally um, it was agreed that on the part of some of them that they would meet with Cesar if we would sit in on the um, negotiations. Well I said and I'm sure Bishop Donnelly said well we'll sit in but we're not gonna participate in, it's not our business to negotiate contracts but if you want us to sit in for color I'll guess we'll do it, which we did a number of times and that was the uh, the only role we were able to play. Cesar was desperate for contracts and I think we helped him a little by giving it a certain respectability you know and it took some of the fear away on the part of some of the growers and we finally got, got some contracts. But he wasn't, he wasn't able to move at all.

34:57 Well then, but I'm trying to think about what your committee did, you really did create the environment didn't you?

35:02 Well in the sense that we, we went around and we met most of the growers, informally. Uh, made it very clear that we believed that the workers had the right to organize, we weren't there to kid them but uh, said we would be fair and uh, try to be helpful. Well it reached the point where the growers had enough trust in us that they didn't want to meet with them unless we were there. I remember um, in one case um, my memory's getting

very poor, I can't remember the name at the moment but um, I was sitting here in Washington uh, minding my own business, I got a call on a Sunday afternoon saying this grower saying negotiations are starting tomorrow morning at ten o'clock, I'd like you to be there. Well I said it's two o'clock in the afternoon here and well he said there's airplanes you know. So I got out there. But he didn't want to have a meeting unless we were there. That was mainly the role we played. We made it very clear of course to everybody where we stood, there was never any doubt about that. But there was enough of respectability attached to it that it made it easier for some of the growers to sit down with them.

36:10 Because I've had growers tell me that, that they felt that the Bishops committee was, was a form of pressure that you were so obviously on their side that.....

36:19 Well yeah the growers thought that we were, we were trying to uh, bludgeon them in to, but that's not really true. But uh, there was never any doubt where we stood. But at the same time they realized that if, if there was gonna be any movement they didn't want to have any movement without us being there, they wanted some witnesses so to speak because they'd had a few experiences I think when negotiating with Cesar or maybe with Dolores where things got out of hand you know.(Laughs)

36:49 Well I don't know if you have anything to compare it to because your not a labor negotiator but, but the farmworkers had an unorthodox style of negotiating.

36:56 They certainly did.

36:57 Tell me about it.

36:58 Well um, I'll give you one example that comes to my mind right now. Dolores would normally bring in a group of uh, rank and file workers, sometimes a big group and uh, she would of course uh, periodically call for a recess so she could translate to the workers what was going on. I don't know very much Spanish but uh, others who were present said that she wasn't, she really wasn't telling them at all she was just talking about the weather or something you know this was one of her, one of her techniques.

37:31 Look, this may be a digression but.....

37:32 But she'd drive the growers crazy by bringing these big groups it's very difficult to negotiate when you've got thirty people on one side you know. (Laughs)

37:38 Well one of the growers said that, that he thought that, that Dolores was, was confrontational and.....

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37:48 Um, the Bishops Committee started off as, as this, providing this setting so that the growers would feel comfortable talking to the

farmworkers but later on you provided the setting where two unions talked to each other and that was different wasn't it?

38:02 Well with the fight between the Teamsters and the UFW that was a very interesting uh, period or episode in our negotiations. In fact Fitzsimmons was the president of the Teamsters, I knew him of course here in Washington. We had a number of shouting matches with uh, with Fitz here in Washington uh, but finally uh, as you know an agreement was made that the Teamsters would get out of their contracts, these "sweetheart" contracts they'd signed. So I was in effect made the, the intermediary to make sure that this thing kept on track. Uh, it was a very, very interesting period um, uh, fortunately um, even though we had bloody fights with the Teamsters we remained friends because Fitz was a friend of mine and he, he was not the type of fellow who would walk away from you. But uh, as it turned out that, that initial agreement didn't work out well as you know the, it just collapsed. But um, we played a role in that and I did personally as the one who was supposed to make sure that it stayed on track.

39:11 And you told me that Fitzsimmons said he couldn't work with Cesar because he was violent.

39:14 Well, at one point Fitzsimmons called a meeting of his regional seat reps a sort of executive off the record meeting and invited Bishop Donnelly and myself and Father Mahoney, Monsignor Mahoney to sit in on it. So we sat up on the stage or in the podium with uh, Fitz and the others were down in the crowd and at one point Fitz got a little carried away and said that um, couldn't work with the farmworkers because they were violent,

they went in for violence. Well I found that very amusing and I couldn't resist saying to, to um, Fitz though I think he was very angry that I, I said I understand that Cesar believes in nonviolence, he's a Ghandi follower. I said I have not, I don't believe in nonviolence, I said I've always admired the Teamsters for their selective violence and I'm, I'm embarrassed to see you walking away from this. Well he didn't like that of course. (Laughing)

40:08 Um, but was it a different, when you negotiated between the two unions that, was that different feeling or the issues were different weren't they in terms of what you had to get done?

40:19 Oh yeah. We, we never negotiated with the growers at all, we were just observers. Uh, but with Fitz we were determined to um, to help Cesar carry, carry that fight through because what the Teamsters did was intolerable, signing these "sweetheart" contracts. We never made any secret of that with the Teamsters. As I said we had a number of meetings here in Washington and um, then George Meany got involved, he appointed um, Joe Keanan who's now deceased and Paul Hall of the Seafarers who is deceased. They came out to California to try to act as an intermediary and uh,.....

40:57 The Seafarers brought some muscle out too didn't they?

40:59 Well they did at one point and then when we were meeting in Salinas um, uh,....

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41:21 Um, we were just talking about working the, trying to work the situation out with the Teamsters in Salinas but three years later in Coachella it came back and it was, it was even worse then wasn't it? Wasn't that the biggest confrontation?

41:32 Yeah well that, when the, the Teamsters brought the "goons" in um, and that never bothered us we weren't the picket all the time but they never, never made any threats against us but as you know they beat up on another priest who had happened to be involved when he was having lunch in a restaurant when the Wall Street Journal course found out and then they knocked his teeth out. But there was never was never any threat of physical violence against us. Uh, if there had been it would have been very interesting because I, we would, I would have gone right to the top on this. To um,.....

42:05 You know there's, there's a piece of film for *Fighting For Our Lives* where you and Cesar are at a Press conference in Coachella. Cesar's talking about the incidents and he's, he's talking about how happy he is that the farmworkers have been able to keep that spirit of nonviolence. Was that, how, how were they able to do that?

42:22 Well that was one of Cesar's great contributions, he did manage to keep them nonviolent. He did it initially by the fast you know the first fast was to uh, for the benefit of the workers to keep them, no there, I never saw any violence on the part of the farmworkers. There might have been a little now and then but I never saw any.

42:40 But still were there many, I mean, but that moment in '73 in Coachella that felt like war in the field.

42:45 Well yeah you go out on these lonely roads out where in the fields and you see nothing but these big goons from Los Angeles there you know. But uh, I never saw any actual violence on the uh, on the picket line. There might have been some but there was violence against the priest in the restaurant of course.

43:03 Um, we were, we were talking earlier on that there never was any doubt where you were in the matter, that you believed in people's right to organize and that's why you were there. Um, talk a little bit about how you feel the church in general operated, how you felt what the right role for the church should be in a situation like that.

43:22 Well I, I prejudiced because I think, I think our Bishops Committee played the proper role that we might of made mistakes here and there but in general I think we played the proper role. It was, we were pro-union but neutral as between themselves and the growers. We never got involved in trying to work out the uh, the terms of the negotiations. Secondly I think that um, and here I'm prejudice also because of my own experience and my own attitudes, I never felt that we should be completely beholden to Cesar if we weren't working for the farmworkers we were our own people, we had to have our own independent thinking and I think that some of the clergymen, including some priests and some of the uh, Protestant uh, people involved went too far in uh, just kind of letting Cesar

tell them what to do on every point. I uh, I just wouldn't, wouldn't do that and I think Cesar knew that I wouldn't. He never asked me to but I wouldn't have done it anyhow. I didn't think that was our role. We're not working for the farmworkers, we were working for ourselves and our own organization.

44:25 But one of these situations that we were talking about was that you were given a choice, for example when Cesar went to the Philippines and there was a problem in the Philippines....

44:31 Well when....

44:32 Where was the church on that?

44:33 When the, when Cesar went to the Philippines the Washington Post had a stringer in Manila. It became a front page story. I couldn't believe it when I read it, that Cesar had uh, come out in favor of Marshall Law. I just couldn't believe it so I, I got a member of our staff who was an expert on the Philippines and I said get me a bushel basket full of material on the Philippines. I sent it out to Cesar immediately and I said Cesar, this is none of my business but if this story is true you're in trouble and I can only suggest that you get out of it as fast as you can. I never heard from him. He never, in all the years I knew him he never mentioned it. But then some years later there was so much criticism of his involvement in the Philippines mainly from Protestant groups, missionary groups that he decided to have a meeting in the public school in uh, Delano, which was supposed to pacify the parties but it had the opposite effect. When I got there there were pickets outside on both sides, anti-Marcos and pro-Marcos. I get in the hall and

Cesar was on stage with two or three um, people from the Philippines who were trade union leaders, so called. As far as I knew they were Marcos people and um, I was asked to come up and sit on the stage, I said no way would I sit on the stage with those people. I said I'm opposed to what they're doing and I said I not only won't sit on the stage, I'll probably have something to say from the, down here in the hall, which I did later on. Well then at the end of the meeting, which was a complete circus, it accomplished nothing except to cause more trouble, Cesar had a dinner at a local Mexican restaurant in honor of these uh, visitors and he wanted me to come. He said Chris Hartmire had asked me to come. I said well I'll come but I won't sit with them because I don't, I don't agree with them, I think Marshall Law is a bad thing. These people represent Marshall Law. So we had the dinner and it was an uneventful dinner except for an unpleasant conversation I had with Chris about my attitude on being independent of Cesar and there was no way I was going to agree with him when I disagreed with him.

46:34 Um, let's stop for a minute. Um, did you come out when Cesar did his last fast in 1988....

CUT

46:39 Ok let's talk a little bit about what you thought about...

46:41 Well from the little I heard and read about it I was afraid he might die on that strike.

46:45 Could we start over again 'cause I was sort of....

46:47 Well we were talking about Cesar's last fast. I went out to the Indian fest with three or four labor leaders from Washington. We went out together on the plane. They wanted to show their colors and I went with them and Cesar of course was very weak that day but he came out of it. But everything I read scared me. I thought maybe this time he had gone over the, the hump you know and that he might, might not go back. But he did and within a few months he was, seemed to be back to normal again.

47:15 That fast was, was sort of the end of a, of a long campaign that involved the boycott working on pesticide issues and....

47:23 Yes.

47:24 What was your general impression of, of the way they were trying to operate in the 80's? Was, was it working?

47:30 Well I think the answer will vary with the people you ask it of. My own feeling was that uh, it was time to um, not to give up on boycotts but to ease up a bit and to get back to normal organizing. I never thought that the uh, you could keep this boycott alive forever. And particularly when they went in to the high tech boycott.

47:56 Do you want to stop and tell this over?(Background noise trying to figure out if tape was still rolling)

48:11 I, I stayed out of it because it was none of my business to be, to be giving advice to Cesar, but my own personal view was that the high tech boycott was not gonna work, that it was um, um, a charade in a certain sense. They didn't believe that of course. They, they were very critical of me when I suggested it to them in conversations. But I always had the feeling that that was not going to solve the problem. Uh, that they'd have to get back to normal, regular organizing and which I think they're doing now and I think with some effect. But um, people can get mesmerized by the idea of boycotts. The first one was successful and it was an easy thing to do because most of the people who were um, getting publicity for being on the boycott never ate grapes anyhow except out of a bottle. And they liked to, enjoyed having these nice parties on Park Avenue to raise money for Cesar. It was a nice thing to do. It didn't cost any money, very much sweat you know and it was very popular. Well that was good, I think it had an effect. But you can't keep that up forever, at least in my view. But it was none of my business to tell Cesar that although I did tell it to uh, Dolores and Artie at one time a few years ago and, and they, they were not happy with what I said but I said it.

49:24 Well let's switch gears for a little bit. Um, there were some things that didn't work but there were a lot of things that the farmworkers and Cesar did that did work and, and there was a certain strength to it. Talk about what you think they did that really worked and why it worked.

49:38 Well first of all I'd say that Cesar was undoubtedly a genius. No, nobody else in, in American history had done or could have done what Cesar did. In, in uh, and part of it was the boycott, part of it was his, his

genius in organizing. I, I think the, the um, the main thing he did was to establish a union. To get, to get a basic union established and um, get some grievance procedures built in to it, health insurance etc. So it was a great, great contribution and I think he will go down as one of the um, truly great figures in the history of the American Labor Movement. But um, I, I was a long distance from their day to day operations so I don't know exactly how it worked out in practice but there's no doubt that no one else could have done what he did. That's why I'm always amused when um, his uh, critics on the loony sides say that um, that he uh, got in to the movement you know because of Saul Alinsky and Saul Alinsky was a Communist and of course no Communist party would ever tolerate Saul Alinsky in its ranks you know, there's no way. And secondly Saul tried to talk him out of starting a union as I recall it. But Cesar had enough intuition to say the way to go is to a union. If he hadn't done that there wouldn't be a farmworkers union today.

51:00 But what characterized the farmworkers union was that it wasn't a traditional union....

51:04 No.

51:05 It was something else.

51:06 It was a movement. It was um, ethnic. It was religious. It was uh, labor. It was everything mixed up. Uh, I remember we never had a rally in the Coachella Valley without having a, a mass you know out in the park in the evening and uh, in one occasion, Joe Keenan, representing George Meany and Paul Hall representing uh, George Meany were in the, in the

audience. Keenan was an Irish Catholic from Chicago who had never seen a mass like that in his life you know? Paul Hall was a Baptist from uh, Mississippi who was sitting in the back of the crowd smoking a cigar. So when we broke up we went in to somebody's motel room to talk about the Teamster problem and I said Paul what did you think of that religious service today? He said the best damn organizing meeting I've ever been to in my life he said.(Laughing) So they were able to combine, there were kids running all over the alter, there were dogs all over the place, but it was part of the culture and they couldn't have done it without that.

52:08 It was, it was integral right?

52:10 It, it mystified many of the traditional labor leaders, they'd never seen anything like this you know. It was one of the reasons I think that um, it took George Meany awhile to appreciate um, you know Cesar. This was not the way you organized in New York City you know with the plumbers.

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TIME CODE HOUR 1:00:00

1:00:01 Um, let's talk a little bit about what, what you think the move to La Paz meant, moving from Delano to La Paz.

00:07 Well as, as I've said to you privately I, I tried desperately and I think successfully to stay out of the internal affairs of the union. Uh, none of my business to tell them where they should live or work or what else they

should do. I personally found it rather odd because it, I, I was afraid it would isolate them too much from not only from the reality of the outside world but even from the workers to a certain extent. It, it was kind of distant. But the bigger problem which I think um, history will prove had something to it, was that they became so imbred that it led to some defections among them. They uh, they uh, all the sudden you found people who had been very loyal to Cesar and uh, had worked very hard for the union disappearing. And uh, one of the things I always regret was you never knew why and there was no point in ever asking 'cause neither side would ever tell you. But it, it mystified people. Now whether that was due to their isolation and being too close together at La Paz or due otherwise I don't know. But um, the movement was hurt I think in the public mind to a certain extent by the sudden defections, no that's too strong a word. The sudden resignations or retirements of key staff people and all of the sudden their not there. People whom I had known very well.

01:33 Just by way of contrast, what was it, cause you, when you first arrived the union's headquarters was in Delano, what was that like? What was the atmosphere at Forty Acres like when they were there?

01:44 Well it, because it was not as isolated as La Paz it was a little more open I thought you know. But I never saw very much of it, I, I was, I was in and out a lot but, but never got a good look at the, how they operated.

01:58 Um, let's move on to um, Cesar dying and going back to Delano for that remarkable day of his funeral. What, what did that mean to you?

02:08 Well it was the most impressive funeral I've ever attended in my life or ever expect to attend. Took a long time. I was staying in uh, Bakersfield with Father Gene Boyle who was close to Cesar and he, he drove me over to um, the funeral but I wasn't able to walk so I sat in the um, the auditorium, the tent. I thought they'd never get there. Seated there several hours before anything happened and then all of the sudden I heard them at the door and the, the corpse or the coffin was there but it took another half hour, hour to get the coffin in. It was an extremely impressive funeral.

02:46 In terms of what you'd been through with Cesar and knowing that that life and that period was over, what did it feel like to you? What, what went through your mind while you were waiting?

02:57 The end of an era. That's not to say that the movement would die. Not at all. Or that's not to say that the new leadership is not up to the job. But you knew that Cesar was such a dominant figure in the movement and in American History that that was the end of an era. We would never see anything quite like that again. And, and um, I don't think we ever will, there'll never be another Chavez. There will be I hope successful leaders of the movement but each one will have to have his own style or her style and uh, I would think it would be um, a feudal exercise and very bad for the movement if they tried to imitate Cesar. He can't be reproduced. He was himself and they have to be themselves. So that was the feeling I had, that you were witnessing the end of an era and I think that was the, the um, the reason the funeral was so big. It was the biggest funeral I've ever seen in my life. Uh, people knew they were at something historic. Um, but uh, I

thought there'd be no end of speeches but you expect that at that kind of a memorial service.

04:04 But it, it was a time for everyone to sort of think back in terms of their memories of it. What, what are your strongest memories of Cesar?

04:14 Well my fondest memory was the privilege of knowing a great man, a truly great man. We didn't always have full agreement um, although we never had any open disputes but I did not agree with uh, Cesar on, on the way he handled the staff problem of people leaving and never explaining it and that sort of thing. Uh, I, I didn't agree with him at all on that um, Synanom program that he had. It, it was none of my business but I just thought it was a reckless uh, foolish thing to do, which was bound to cause trouble but aside from that I knew him as, as a very great man and he, and I must say he was always extremely kind and good to me. But um, that era is gone and um, I'm, I'm glad to see that uh, Arturo and the new leadership is now back to um, what appears to be successful organizing and they're not trying to uh, to live in completely in, in, in the shadow of Cesar as though they had to re, replicate everything that Cesar did, including the, the, the boycott. They're still doing the boycott but it's they seem to be getting down to organizing more. But uh, Cesar was a unique character and uh, with his strengths and weaknesses of a, of a great man. Uh, as we said earlier I think, I think he was not what I would call a good negotiator uh, and he was uh, secretive to the point of um, being um, driving you crazy on such issues as his involvement in the Filipino crisis and when he, when he came out for...

05:55 Well let, let me put it this way let's talk about him being gone but him having left something or given people something. What do think, what do you think farmworkers or people who worked with him or American society got from this?

06:09 Well I think that they got what they could have got only from Cesar. Number one an awareness of the plight of the farmworkers. The establishment of a union, there never would have been a union without Cesar and if he had stayed with Saul Alinsky the, he, he would be an unknown figure today. So he, he proved that it could be done. It took a long time and it's still a long, long way from being a successful union but nevertheless he did it and no one else had been able to do it before that. So I think it was a great, great contribution. Uh, I'm not sure that um, that the emphasis on the movement as opposed to a union is something that you can perpetuate forever. That was a period in, in American history which lent it very easily to that kind of movement. Uh, there were hundreds of um, college students around the country anxious to get in to that kind of a movement. I used to say that there were more nuns floating around uh, the, the, the then there were in the convents. Everybody wanted to go to jail. They're not there today. The college students are not there, I don't know where they are now but they're not there. And you couldn't get them back. And you don't find the same involvement on the part of uh, religious leaders that you found then. It was a part of that 60's movement era. I don't think you can replicate that just by willing it. It, it's parts of it you can of course, they'll, they'll never completely um, ch, change in to.....

07:38 But can you build on that experience?

07:40 You can build on it, yes. And uh, what always mystified me, not mystified me but intrigued me I suppose is the word, is that the, the liberal supporters of, of Cesar, many of them who had no interest in religion at all tolerated so much of the religious emphasis. It never seemed to turn them off. But you always had the Lady of Guadalupe banner at the lead of, head of the parade. You always had to have mass everyday. I was always intrigued that no, nobody seemed to take offense at that. Uh, or at least if they did they didn't say it. Uh, on the part of the people who had, didn't share Cesar's beliefs. But um, it was, it was an integral part of Cesar's leadership, there's no doubt about that. And that's why he was so gratified that we finally got him an audience with the Pope, which is a story in its self. Uh, that took a long, long not, didn't take as long to, to, to schedule the meeting but uh, Cesar was in Europe pushing the boycott and I got word, I was in Rome as an advance man so to speak and Bishop Donnelly was there, I got word that the audience would have to be moved up a day because of the scheduling problems with the Pope. I couldn't find Cesar. I spent the whole day on the phone. I called La Paz. I called Washington. I called all over the bloody world, nobody knew where Cesar was. But I finally, finally found out he was in Sweden. I called the Labor Attaché at the American Embassy in Rome and asked him to call the Labor Attaché in Stockholm get message, get word to Cesar that he'd have to be there a day early. He handed a message in to Cesar at the meeting he was attending with Swedish labor leaders and I'm told that Cesar crumpled it up and didn't, he didn't like labor attaches, why I'm not sure. So I had to get back to the labor attaché again. I said get a message in there and this time tell him this is serious.

Well then he got the message and uh, he had to work miracles to get from Stockholm to London.....

09:41 But that was a very important moment for him.

09:44 Oh yes. He had to go by way of London. I went out to the Rome airport, not knowing where he was and at three o'clock in the morning I was the most relieved man that this world ever saw when I saw his party come off that plane. I had no idea where he was.

09:57 So what, what did Cesar tell you after you had the audience with, how did he.....

10:01 Oh he was, he was thrilled of course. He was thrilled. There was one funny little incident involved in the audience as usual in an, an audience of that kind they exchange gifts. So the Pope gave Helen uh, rosaries and medals for the kids you know and Cesar gave him the red banner, the red flag but across it for the first time that I'd seen it they had sewn the word Huelga for strike. Well the Pope spoke Spanish but he didn't get the word Huelga so he turned to his interpreter, he said Huelga, que significa huelga? And said in Italian, shoporo, strike. The Pope went oh. Everybody in Italy was on strike that day, the railroads, the buses. He didn't, he didn't want to think that he was getting involved in that. Well to show you how efficient the sometimes inefficient Vatican is that's the one photo we never got.

10:49 The Pope with the flag.

10:50 Yeah. I saw the, the, the master of ceremonies wave to the, point to the photographer. We couldn't, we never got that photo. (Laughs) But anyway it, it was a very moving experience for Cesar and for Helen. Uh, I talked to Helen about it a year or so ago and she was very moved.

END OF FILM INTERVIEW

AUDIO ONLY

Then they went down to Assisi, we drove down to Assisi because he had great devotion to St Francis of Assisi and while we were there the uh, the group of American Bishops were there on a retreat so we had lunch with them and Cesar spoke to them and then one of the American priests who knew Assisi real well took them on a big tour of all the Franciscan things. So it was a great experience for Cesar. I was delighted we were able to do it but I, I almost died of a fright that he wouldn't make it.

It almost didn't happen, right?

I didn't know when I went out to the airport in Rome I had no idea where he was. I said I'll sit here till he comes.

Well I think we're about done here after these final quotes. You spent a lot of years in Rome didn't you too?

No, no. I was there during the Vatican Counsel, I, I never studied there. I was there during the Counsel and I've been there many times on other business but I never lived there.

Somehow I got the impression.....

But one of the funny things, when we finally finished the audience we went to a restaurant nearby and it was very crowded and you, you couldn't get a seat. Uh, so we had to wait about twenty minutes and as usual in an Italian restaurant they had a lot of fruit out in front including a huge pile of grapes. (laughing) Cesar ate more grapes.....

Now that's a picture I'd like to see.

Yeah, he was starved.

Right. And Cesar points to the photographer.

He was starved. He just, he kept grabbing the grapes.

It's funny you know um, it doesn't matter if there's a boycott on or not I can't eat grapes, I just can't do it. But that's a great story. That's a great story. I would, I would pay anything for that one.

You know Cesar, Cesar would go on fast but he had a terrific appetite. When he started to eat he really ate and he kept, kept grabbing these grapes.

I remember after the fast of '72 in Arizona ??? came up from New York and she brought him a bag of bagels because she knew he liked bagels. So after the fast he had bagels.

Well he had a voracious appetite once he decided he was gonna eat you know. He almost carried the fast too far though I think.

That last one really, the pictures of him.....Um, I mean you know the first time he fasted he'd been twenty-five years younger.

I have no doubt that it, it in some way contributed to his, his death you know. He died relatively young.

He did but I mean you knew you lived your life...

Oh yeah. Well he wouldn't have done it any differently. If he were alive now he'd be on a fast again.

END