

## Dolores Velasco 1975–1993

At the motherhouse of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Baltimore, Maryland, the first SSNC Social Justice Fair was held on February 23, 1974.

Many very caring people came to share with others how they helped other people. One of the guests was Peter Velasco, third vice president of the UFW and newly appointed director of the Baltimore boycott office on Lombard Street. At that time we were boycotting Gallo wine and iceberg lettuce. This was the beginning of a long and beautiful relationship.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame took special care of the people who worked and/or lived at the Baltimore boycott office. Among the boycott volunteer staff were John Proctor, Tom McLaughlin, Trina Nagele and the Cantu family from Richgrove, California—Luis and Eva; Lupe, age 12; Jose, age 10; and Stella, age seven. Every week Sister Dolores Ann was sent to the boycott office with food and money for the Cantu family and boycott staff.

On April 25, 1975, at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, there was a gala premiere of the film, *Fighting for Our Lives*, which was followed by a benefit dinner sponsored by the Baltimore boycott staff. The master of ceremonies was our dear Monsignor George Higgins. Our guest speaker was Cesar Chavez, president of the UFW. It was a well-attended and spirited event, thanks to the Baltimore boycott staff and the School Sisters of Notre Dame, who donated the use of the college theater and dining room. We raised \$7000.

After the Agriculture Labor Relations Act was passed on June 3, 1975, Peter was recalled to California to organize workers in Santa Maria. It was here that he and George Stephen (UAW-Canada) were attacked by six Teamster thugs on Thursday, August 21, 1975 at Koyama Farms. The Teamsters, who were carrying knives, kicked Peter Velasco, age 65, in the neck and back. On October 14, 1975, six UFW representatives were arrested: Paulino Pacheco, Fred Ross, Jr., Pete Velasco, Martha Haskin, Mary Harlander, and Father Joe Tobin. Their crime was talking to the workers about the union before work. The grower got so angry he insisted they be arrested. He dragged Brother Pete Velasco 75 feet while the deputy sheriffs looked on, doing nothing to protect Peter.

During the summer of 1975, I made a very serious decision. Sister Dolores Ann, SSND, became Miss Dolores Ann Neubauer. My religious community, with whom I served for 21 years, could not have been more supportive and understanding—even to this day.

On November 13, 1975, I left my family and friends in Baltimore at 7 a.m. and arrived in Santa Maria at 3:30 p.m. Mary Jean and Leo Nieto, full-time volunteers in Santa Maria, welcomed me into their home. Once again I had the privilege to work with Pete,

organizing workers in the fields every early in the morning. Then, during the day, I worked in the Santa Maria field office.

On Friday, December 12, 1975, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pete and I were married at the Agbayani Village by Reverend Raymond Tintle.

And we lived happily ever after.

Postscript

Peter always ended his speeches in this manner:

*Mabuhay! Mabuhay!*

*Viva La Causa*

*Viva Cesar Chavez*

*Viva Campesinos*

*Viva Me!*

#### In Memoriam

Peter Gines Velasco

August 18, 1910–December 1, 1995

“Brother Pete was never embittered. His bright smile and boundless enthusiasm and optimism spread contagiously among everyone around him.”

—Art Rodriguez, UFW President, December 5, 1995.