

FRED ABAD

TAPE 54, CR 61, SR 29, TC 4:00

04:13:41 Tell me about the strike and what you did

04:13:46 ... life was not easy and I said to myself how about the poverty (??) people with children how will they live with this kind of wages, so Cesar has a group you know, and he told his group to come a long with me, and they said no, and he said if you don't I'll go so they all came.

04:14:29 When did you join AWOC

04:14:33 oh that was a long time a go I cannot remember

04:14:39 tell me how the work was in the fields before the union came

04:14:46 oh, work in the field was very cheap dollar and hour 80 cents, how could a family of 3 or 4 live with this kind of wages so I said let's go and strike, that's the only way to improve the lives of this people, we are single men, I told the other guys, life is hard how much more could those people with children, is hard, so we went on strike and Cesar came to join us.

04:15:39 Where were your wives?

04:15:48 well you know, when I came to America, the Philippines was under under under America is not independent yet then, oh it was very easy

to come over just buy your ticket, that's all when the Philippines went independent it was harder to come

04:16:20 but they let you buy your ticket, but if you were married they wouldn't let her come, would they?

04:16:24 oh yeah, sure...

04:16:26 but no Filipino women came it was all single men

04:16:30 there was only two old Filipino women, but I was I was not married then, I was very young

04:16:43 do you remember when Larry Itliong had the union, what did he say to you to join, why did he think you should join the union?

04:16:52 well, Larry Itliong was was very intelligent you know and he said, good, how about building a union and I said sure that's good, that's very good I said but I don't know how our people, are feeling, but I talked to these people you know and they all came, they joined us. Larry Itliong was a very strong guy, I don't know why he died so quick I think I thought he was going to live a long life but because Larry and I know each other very well for a long time.

04:18:11 when Cesar and the Mexicans joined the strike some of the Filipinos didn't want the Mexicans to join them

04:18:25 there were two guys I forgot the name of these two guys and I told these two guys if they come with us the stronger we are going to be, why do you leave, my god I said use your brains. If you have brains you use it. That is the only way we can grow stronger and I was and it was very fortunate for Cesar, to come along, because in the long run there were more, some of us Filipinos, I was the youngest and most of the Filipinos were old, they were dying, they were going home, I was the youngest

04:19:29 once they came everybody got along ok?

04:19:33 oh yeah, sure I said don't be discriminatory, I said. Is very good if they come in and join us.

04:19:50 so then the strike went on for 5 years

04:19:53 5 years

04:19:56 do you remember the day the contract was signed?

04:20:02 yeah I was in the negotiating team, Dolores was the chairman and we faced the growers across the table, sure I didn't like it, but I took all the Filipinos, the workers who were mostly all Filipinos, by the time, if you don't work I told them they will come, and how do we live if we don't work? sure my god I said some some people will come and help us so this Salinas Filipino people, they brought us some vegetables, see

04:21:13 how did it feel to negotiate with the bosses

04:21:20 well, you know, oh well if you work for a grower, don't feel too low, you got to, you got to push them push them like anybody else, you know and they will recognize you, but if you stay behind them, they will not recognize you, we are a people just like they are, what the hell

04:22:00 Was it hard to do

04:22:07 no, for me no, no

TAPE 55, CR 62, SR 29, TC 4:30

04:30:12 what was it like to work under a farm worker contract, was it different?

04:30:20 well wages were higher, conditions were better, before before there was a contract or before we first growers most of my Filipino people they were kind of afraid and I said don't be afraid, the more you push them, the more they will recognize you, if you don't push them, and your children that you're afraid, they won't recognize you, hell you are just as human as they are, what the hell

04:31:08 the old way, working with a contractor

04:31:15 no I didn't work for a contractor

no?

no,

04:31:18 but most of the time most of the people had to

04:31:20 yeah many people worked for the contractor, I worked for Marcos ..
for 19 years in the farm, there was a camp, I live in the camp, we all lived in the
camp

04:31:36 did you keep on working for Marco after the contract was signed?

04:31:41 well there was a time when I went to Coachella, I worked for
Carrajella (sp?) in Coachella, and I kept going there during the winter time

04:31:58 Different after there was a contract?

04:32:04 oh yeah, sure it was better because they cannot push you around

04:32:12 What happened when the teamsters came in?

04:32:22 yeah, but they left.

04:32:32 but were the teamsters as good a union?

04:32:36 well maybe they are good union but, we have the AFL-CIO better.

04:32:42 were you in the 73 strike?

04:32:45 yeah

04:32:56 when did you meet Larry Itlion for the first time

04:33:01 no here here in Delano, yeah Larry Itlion and I had been good friends, you know

04:33:11 do you think that Filipinos would have won by themselves or did it take the two groups to win the strike?

04:33:17 well, we could have win, we could have won it because, nobody was going to work, if nobody was going to work, sure the growers will come along and they will come across the table and we're going to have the contract, don't be afraid I told them.

04:33:44 what do you think about Cesar

04:33:51 it was very fortunate for Cesar to come with us you know because we Filipinos, were old people, I was very young myself, and the Filipino, the old Filipinos they went home, they died, and Cesar and his group were in the majority, but there were two guys, my people, that they didn't like it, I told them you are crazy, they come along, the stronger we are, if Cesar is going to be the head, sure, they are more, they are in the majority. What's wrong with that anyway?

04:34:50 What were the other Filipinos like?

04:35:08 well there are only three of us Filipinos here now,

04:35:16 what were all those other people like the ones that were with you in AWOC?

04:35:21 they were after I talked to them for a while you know, they agreed with it, I told them sure if we are going to have a strike, raise the wages and the working conditions will be better, because if there is no contract, there is no negotiations, the growers will push you around like nobody, you know, and they agreed.

04:35:57 what do you think about Cesar dying so suddenly?

04:36:04 yeah he died very, about little over 60, I think

04:36:12 do you think he made a difference?

04:36:20 well Cesar and his group are many you know, they are in the great majority and Cesar was a good guy and very honest, they believe in him, we believe in him, we believed what he said

04:36:43 do you think it could be possible to get the contracts back again?

04:36:49 oh, with Philip gone, Cesar gone, who is going to be the leader? that's very hard.

04:37:06 they were very unusual men, very strong men

04:37:13 see you got to have a guy that is believe by the people, to be a leader you know, but if a guy is not being believed by the people, very hard

04:37:37 and that's important

04:37:39 oh yeah, very hard

04:37:48 what's the most important thing about you being part of the struggle?

04:37:59 well, I didn't I didn't think, I never thought just like two guys when Cesar come along they left, and I told them you are crazy, sure if they come, the stronger we are going to be, but you know what these two guys had in mind? to put something in their pocket that's why they left. Because if Cesar came, they could not do that anymore

04:38:41 Did you think that you would win the strike and have contracts?

04:38:52 I believe in it because if nobody was going to work their crop is going to spoil, everything is going to spoil they wouldn't make no more money. So the strike was very good.

04:39:12 is it important for people to know how the Filipinos started the strike?

04:39:17 oh yeah but, I don't know, some some people think the Mexicans started the strike, but they didn't they didn't really start the strike, I did start the strike, and Cesar had the group, and Cesar told his group, they will come to join us, and they said no, and Cesar said if you don't I'll go, so they all came.

yeah it worked

That was very good

04:40:10 what do you think about the village they built, was that a good thing?

04:40:15 well, I was in the negotiation, I was a member of the negotiating team you know, and I told these growers I said, I tapped Cesar's back and I said Cesar I want to say something so I stood up and I said I came to America

04:41:13 tell the whole story

04:41:28 I told you, I told the growers I was very young when I came to America, and I had worked in the farm all my life, in America, why can't you give us a home? to retire and this is it, they didn't like it, but I said, who made you rich? some of you became millionaires, the Filipino blood, Filipino, the Filipinos made you rich, made you millionaires, give us a home, so this is it.

04:42:27 Do you miss the people that came with you and now are gone?

04:42:32 oh yeah sure

04:42:35 it's a different world, now

04:42:38 there are only three Filipinos here

04:42:42 did the farm workers union treat the Filipinos well?

04:42:52 oh yeah because Cesar was very very nice guy, you know, he didn't have no discrimination.