

## **BEN MADDOCK**

TAPE 60, CR 72, SR 34, TC 7:00

7:00:08      Let's go back to where you came from.

7:00:24      It, it doesn't seem funny to me, but when other people look at it I've always been told, that, that it is strange, you know during my whole thing with the farm workers we used it a couple times because I was an orange grower. I can remember when the Tulare county orange growers association, having a, having a meeting and they were talking about the union, the whole thing, I went to there, I wrote a letter and said my name is Ben Maddock and my dad owns an orange grove in Woodlake, and so I want to come and be coming to the meeting, and I went and did that, and I used to get away with it a lot of times, walking in a meeting because most of the people that was involved with farm workers were Mexican, or Filipino and some of the time there were some volunteers but I could easily get into some of those meetings, and just not even say who I was.

7:01:26      Story - your dad was great but his kids turned out bad

7:01:30      well I one time we had an election, and orange election in in Woodlake, and it was an orange grower there and, he said Mr., you know, Norse Maddock was a hard working orange farmer and and he worked very hard all his life and most all of his kids turned out great, he just didn't know what happened to Ben. and I thought it was a great, I told that to the workers, and they just laughed because I told them, see cause if you're a little different than them all of a sudden they think something is wrong. and it's really interesting how I got involved, in this

whole thing. cause I had I had no intentions of of even going, I went into labor cause I after I got our of the service, I was in Fresno and and I wanna become a tile setter, a ceramic tile setter, and I did, but the I went to work with this company and we went to out down into Nevada and then I got after after getting through being a tile setter I thought I wanted to go into something else so I went into selling tile and that brought me into Portland Oregon

7:02:44 and then one day a friend says

7:02:45 yeah one day, it was this lady was going to this college and it was kind of college too that was a little off center and said Catherine there's a guy from Delano coming, I'm from the San Joaquin valley and I had talked to my folks about somebody organizing and to quote my dad says that there's a little commu, a little Mexican communist down there in Delano organizing farm workers and I thought well that'd be interesting to go see. And it was, I was really impressed with what he had to say, but it wasn't until a couple of years after that that I was, that I was working in, I kind of dropped out of society and I and I always tell everyone, I was becoming a bum, and I was just bumming around the country and I wound up with my sister down in Rich Grove right out side of Delano and the person when we rented the house, rented an apartment, is that the person next door to me is Gilbert Padilla, the treasurer, and so when my sister left Rich Grove, we did a lot of social things there in Richgrove, there was about three or four of us, but then we went to work for the farm workers, an kind of a challenge

7:04:09 You were always talking to Gilbert ... but you didn't know what he was doing

7:04:13      yeah yeah that was kind of (laugh) well we'd get with Gilbert. gee you should be doing this and doing that and one day he told me, well if you're so smart, why don't you guys come work for us. Well we did, we, I decided I'd go to work for them for a month, and I'd work in the, I was going to work in the newspaper, the Malcriado, and I told them, I can work for a month, somebody said they'd go to work for six months and I think one of the guys said two months. Well those guys never lasted that long, none of them lasted more than a month and I lasted 20 years

7:04:52      You crossed the line because you really believe in this

7:05:09      well I do because I I just think, see my dad was a small orange grower and less than 40 acres and my biggest problem was, I've seen the things that he, you know, he had to go work, because oranges are, it's a cash crop once a year and some years is good market, some years is bad market, but he had 5 people to, 5 kids he had to feed and, but I can see him working long hours and he had to do, he used to irrigate his thing, his orange grove at night and he'd get up early in the morning and go to work and work all day and sometimes late hours and I can just see, this there's gotta even for small growers, there's got to be something better, and for farm workers, farm workers who I knew that worked, that lived up the street from us, their, I've seen their fathers going out and come back and found out how much they were making, and very very little and almost now I hear of a guy down in Delano went and organized, I had read some about unions, in and other unions, but farm worker unions was the thing of you know, it's happen, it'd be great if it could happen.

7:06:30      When you heard about Cesar you were skeptical

7:06:34 well, I think you're always skeptical when you, first place, you know organizing farm workers who you're organizing. I had heard something about the Filipinos they had been organizing, but they were organizing a lot through the labor contractors and through foremen. Well I'm not sure that would, would really work and well I guess when I got down there and and we really went to work and I remember about the fourth day after we went to work, well little longer than that, they were having a press conference, and I walked into the press conference because I was writing for the Malcriado, I was going to write the things down, Cesar chased me out because here I guess I didn't look like a farm worker or I one of the volunteers at that time that he had, cause the volunteers we had kids that were that had come because they needed something to do and we had other, you know, I guess from that time we had some hippies there and and coming from all over different walks of life. And so when I walked in, I finally one of the guys said, no he's a new person at Malcriado, so they let me go in, but it was funny that he said, no, no you can't come here.

07:07:56 you moved on from the Malcriado to become an organizer, you learned Spanish right?

7:08:08 well most people said that, but I can't even speak Spanish today. And I think I'm one of those people that that learned to use whatever you can to make it work. I really loved the farm workers, I mean I loved what I was doing, who else would give somebody with no with no background into this, I'd say, and when I got out of the Malcriado and other things I went when I went to organize, you know, all of a sudden they said, here's a contract, you got seven, eight ranches and I think it totaled up to, I had something like 1800 workers and I didn't speak Spanish and well here you got to administrate this contract. Well the first thing I

did is I got to find somebody out here that knows Spanish and that's what I would do in each ranch find if it was a man or a woman, child whatever and start doing it, because I always thought that if I can teach that person, by that person translating for me or interpreting for me, they're going to pick it up, and that's exactly what happened. I, doing it I, met my wife, through, she was a farm worker, and she you know she spoke English and, her, and a lot o people in her crew didn't. So she'd become and interpreter, and then you learn from that, and there's been many things. At one time Cesar sent me to a place called Egg City and I really thought it was a city, I thought well somewhere down to southern California, there's this city and I'll go find out where this Egg Ranch is. Well I found out the Egg Ranch was the egg city, it was between Moore park and and san rapal (??) that area, the Fillmore, and I got there when I got sent, I got sent on my birthday, so I went down and I got arrived there about 9 o'clock at night and I walked up the picket line and nobody spoke English, till I kept looking until I found a 12 year old girl that spoke English, and we started having meetings and, from then on and I had no problem. I think it goes on trust, I think people all know that whatever I did, I had I had really, I was very sincere about it

CR 73, SR 34

7:11:06      Were people suspicious of you

7:11:24      Yeah, maybe some would, I don't think, I really don't think anyone really did, I walked in and the first thing I'd say, I was sent by Cesar Chávez and I think the things that I said probably made sense, I mean, I was there, I'm there to help you, what's going on and I showed them, things that we could do and I become part of them, and I never beco, you know I guess the only time that I really

get co...cognizant of the thing that I I was the only one, but there was many times that I could be, I would be the only white face in a, in a sea of brown out there. And, but I never really had a problem with that

7:12:15      Tell me about Fred Ross

7:12:21      Fred? well Fred was a tremendous person, you know, he was a real task master, he wanted things done, and he knew how he, how they can get done to do it, like going through his training, the Fred Ross system. I think I learned only one thing, taught me one thing and that is that you never leave anything to chance. If I said that we were going to meet today, and we did just a week ago, well somewhere along the line I would call you, and say are we still on, then I'd call you again and the on the final day, about an hour before I'd call you again to say is it still on. He never left anything to chance, you don't wait, you don't just say, we're going to meet next week and the other thing is, if you're gonna have a meeting with people, the meeting had to have purpose, and he always taught you, you know, if you're going to, I think the house meeting, how to do a house meeting, is, I've never seen anyone else try to do it his way, and he taught it one way, is that, you know, when you meet, you help the guy get the people there, you, you keep on track, you never exclude anyone in the family, if you're gonna meet you made sure the family was there, if there's a wife or a husband, you always bring them into it, because it made it a family, if the kids are old enough, not really tiny, you would get them involved, again it's family, if you want to do something, then if you wanted them to come to a meeting, then you would at that time you would say, okay we wanna, on a certain time down the road we wanna have a meeting with everybody, but before you do that, now next week I want you to go out and get a meeting and, you go get a meeting and, you go get a meeting, and then you'll set

them up and then you'd follow up the person, you'd follow up and just make sure everything went and if you do all the things right, you're meetings are successful. If you try to do shortcuts, then there aren't, that's where Fred was, Fred really planted a big boot, because he really wanted you, because, and you had to have a lot of un animo you got to have animo, you gotta, you can't be monotone you gotta get out there and do it. And he was good, I mean, Fred was a person, he and he did the same thing, and did you know, up until 1975, when the law came in, Fred didn't speak Spanish either, and all those years that he worked out in the field where all those labor camps and all those people, he didn't either and he finally learned so he could do a one on one. I can remember on the languages it wasn't until I went to Florida with Coca Cola that I was, and I and I, got into a meeting, big meeting, and I I never knew if I could organize in English I got into Florida and found out I could, because one time it was all the, we had all the black workers there, the American blacks and I could do it, but I can remember right after that I went to another meeting, and I got up and I was ready to say the same thing and get really get them going and I turned around and they had an interpreter because all of a sudden these people came from Haiti, and they didn't speak the language either so.

7:16:11      The big change was the law in 78, what did that do

7:16:30      It mean that for the first time, for all, up to that time, we, I came from back in the boycott in 74 and and I helped and we helped get people go to Sacramento to to get the law, but what it really meant was for the first time we're gonna get recognition, all you, what you had to do now, the law says we had the right to organize, the said you had the right to hold elections, and so we went on to, that's what we started doing, we we during 1975 and we went and had those

elections, and we were able to go back and win, we won a lot, but we lost some, and so but people got a chance to vote.

7:17:24      Talk about that first election

7:17:27      we had one that one of the first ones we had was at the M. Caratan ranch, we did a very good job, that no one, it was really come down to the, the call was gonna be between us, the united farm workers and no representation. The teamsters tried to get on the ballot, but they couldn't, they didn't have a shot, and all along out whole thing was, we wanted to prove that in 19 you know in 1973, when the contracts went up and the teamsters come in, we wanted to show all to the world, that there that was phony, they were out there and they had people sign up, didn't know what they were signing that for. We had a group of Yemenis, southern Yemenis workers there, and it was really really strong. I mean they had no, they had no, intention of going to the growers, they were, they were socialists because their country is socialist, and they, they it was, it was strong, when you, they had some northern Yemenis in the camp and they almost ran them out, because they were they were kind of for the grower and

7:18:55      How did it feel when you started counting the votes

7:18:59      well one thing, when they counted the votes, we wanted, I wanted the press inside, because I really wanted everyone to see, cause I I didn't know if we'd win or not but I know this, I really wanted the workers to see whatever happened, but when they started counting the votes, my heart, I kind of wanted to get out of there because we lost, we went down about 15 and I can just feel, what would Cesar say if I loose this election, right? But it turned around, we won three to one.



As as it went longer and started going by and I knew we made up to 15 and we started going up, then I couldn't wait to get outside, I mean I just started yelling, the adrenaline, really running cause you know you won

7:19:50      What did it really feel like

7:19:57      I just, it's hard to say I guess I I guess I could have cried just as much as I probably went out and said and smiled, I think the relief and even the workers you could see it in their eyes as you, you know, if you looked the tape, the workers, they knew what it meant, and I guess and the grower, they knew too. For the first time that they always said that the workers didn't really want us, well a 3 to 1 victory what could he say. I mean he could sit there and say anything he wanted but it wouldn't ring.

7:20:38      He said did they know what they were voting for

7:20:41      well that's about the only thing he could say, well yeah we told them, do you want to go with the grower or you want to go with the union, well that's, they made up their minds and no that wouldn't ring up and down the valley.

7:20:58      What happened from there on

7:21:01      Well from then on, we lost some and the teamsters won some, and and so you know I think, and the growers got got a lot more active against them, because we had a lot of unfair labor practices, and and those things

TAPE 61, CR 74, SR 35, TC 7:30

7:30:10 The elections were a double edged sword weren't they

7:30:26 yeah ,well because up until that time everything were were doing was for recognition, ever since when Cesar started, he started a union to get it recognized, get people to understand what it was, well once we got the law in then the growers, then turned to to the law itself, how do I take them to court, how do I get things in the court and how do I stay, keep them in court for many many years, so and it costs money. Well, if a grower could go out like like Giumarra, we had an election there, they created a lot of unfair labor practices and and it's fine you know but, we didn't win the election, so you go to court, and you get in overturned but its many years down the road. There was an interesting one, there was a guy that was fired from Gallo during the first, and it took him, you know the election was in 75, it took him almost 14 years to win this case? yeah he won 90 thousand, 100 thousand dollars, around there, he won his case, so what he didn't work there, we lost the election, so all those things, you know, that's exactly what they were able to do, and that was a downfall

7:32:07 Things were good until 81 and then they got worse

7:32:14 that's right, you know, one time we had, we had 95 percent of the citrus under contract and in Ventura county, one decision took it out, decision was that an association, a grower could pull out of an association, well S&F growers all the growers pulled out and we we had an association, we had a contract, and we had the workers, we had nothing to pick, cause all the growers pulled out. So, all they had to do is, if you had an election, then they just quit the association.

7:32:54      What effect did the Deukmejian election had

7:33:00that's just like you know...they started putting the anti people on the board, and it was interesting, we had a set up, I can't remember the person's name that was on the board, but we had a majority. The very first thing Deukmejian did is offer him a judgeship and he bailed out and he got to put his appointments in, and after that it just became less and less. But it even goes back to the beginning, the very first, we had the election in 75, well then in 1976, what did the legislature do? They defunded the act and so it took a long time to get the money back into the act and then so we lost ground there, but it's always been, no one's really wanted to accept the right for farm workers to organize I don't care where it is, any part of the country we've had some victories, but we've many more setbacks

7:34:06      They defunded the act and that led to Proposition 14

7:34:21      during Prop 14 in the last weeks of it, Cesar decides to challenge, that I'm going on the fast and whenever things got when they were tough and he used this to help himself, so this wasn't one of those fasts were we made it public, him and I we decided we go on one, well it was 15 days and I'd never been on a fast in my life. I did it and I told him and he used to laugh because he would he would drink some tea and honey, and those things and so I'd do the same thing, but I didn't like it very well, but I always carried. We were on the we were on the, campaign and I and every house we went to during the day, well they were having a sandwich, so I'd take a sandwich and put it in my pocket, just to remind myself that I could eat if I wanted to, now I probably wouldn't look very good if I did that so, that;s the way I got through it. The night we lost the election, I probably did the worst thing in the world, I went out and eat two steak sandwiches and really dearly

paid, because I don't think that was the thing to do. And Cesar, he broke his fast too, we both almost died that night

7:35:43      The 80's was a bad period, you could say it was Deukmejian and also that Cesar didn't push all that hard

7:36:10      well, I think one of the things that we did wrong and that's my, well one of the things we did in the 80s, was that we we did something that was was I thought was good. We broke we, cause people said that Cesar ran everything, everything went through him, so what we did, we broke the crop into divisions, and I had happened to have the citrus division, and I and I and I was had complete control, the organizing, and the contracts and it put me in Florida and one one of the things we wanted to do in Florida is we wanted to expand, go into more, because when we won the other contracts, back in the 72 or 70, at that time we went to Florida right away with Manuel Chávez and we won Coca Cola and couple of others, but we want to do that again, but one of the biggest problems we found and that I had was that we didn't really want, it didn't seem that we wanted to get out of California. I think we should have and I think we should have drove it was hard, and long as we could because, that you would have you would keep the moment from going into other places, and then when California farming you could really turned around

7:37:47      in the 80's Cesar got interested in other things that wasn't organizing like building houses and those things and direct mail, didn't that make the union a different place?

7:38:03 well the direct mail made money, raised money and one thing you gotta do if you're going to help farm workers is you got to have money, when this contracts started declining, you had to raise money and the direct mail was a way to do it. Getting into the houses, again that was under the farm worker, how do you call it, the service center and they, again it's a way to help farm workers, you know, the whole thing, the whole thing is do we need to help farm workers and there's many different ways, if you back to the early contracts, you go into Fresno county a very hard heart-rendering thing was to go out in the west side and walk into the houses and find that they all had dirt floors and found out that you had houses with dirt floors, but the community bathrooms for men and women, and they all had families, housing is still in the great need today.

7:39:17 Yes but it was a change in focus and a lot of people left the union, but you stayed

7:39:34 well I guess maybe I wasn't so high idealist as some people, I stayed because I still think there was a way to help farm workers even today I think there's a way to help farm workers. You know one of the things we haven't talked about is, the hardest thing I found on farm workers was that it was not like in the steel mills, you go out to the steel mills you organize the people and maybe they'll be somebody retiring and a new one come and you organize that one person. But during during my whole time with the farm workers, men it was wave after wave after wave, the first wave used to come into the fields, now a days, you know, the only people that stay in the fields was the newest people from a new countries, the other ones once people found a way to New York and found a way to Chicago, because I there used to be airplanes in LA no the immigration wasn't at the airport,

in the person can go fly to Chicago and all of a sudden they get jobs and then when they go back to their villages, they would there's a trail now into the

CR 75, SR 35

7:41:17      The subject was Cesar

7:41:21      I mean he knew,

7:41:25      Cesar knew one thing that, and he would do this all the time, if he wanted something he already knew who he wanted to do it and he knew that he would do it because, what he would do, he'd make you talk yourself into it. Many different things that I would, would I'd know that later you can feel, men he knew what he wanted. And that was like one time right from the start with the farm workers I was I worked in the Malcriado, then they formed a new division called, el caliografico, and that's the buttons and the pins and that whole thing and he wanted somebody to take it over and so we went through a three hour meeting up in La Paz one day and sitting there and sitting there and finally you know cause I told people from my background, that I'd sold some stuff and this, and all of a sudden, when I said oh, I'll do it, the meeting was over, he said oh okay meeting's over, and he knew and he knew that he that man he tightened that noose. Then I know other things like when, in organizing, a lot of times he could he would want some things done and he'd get people to start, you'd get in a meeting and and bring you along and all of a sudden when you hit a certain point, then it be over because he got out of you what he wanted. And everyone I wasn't the only one, he would do that with many people.

7:42:58      But you wouldn't feel manipulated

7:42:59 Oh no, well you never feel, I never felt manipulated, I always felt that that that's why I said it and that was probably the easiest way to get me to buy into it that if you go throughout the whole process and he paints the picture, who you should be, and I thought that was very clever, cause he would never directly tell you to do something, he would al, don't you agree, that we should do this. If you don't mind, would you like to do this for me, and yeah is it good or bad you do it

7:43:40 You didn't want to move to la Paz and he wasn't sure what other thing you were good for

7:43:49 well that's right after I went to, after I was working with him.. the Taller Grafico they moved up to la Paz and I definitely didn't want to go up there. It's too far away, again, it it was doing something that maybe you would do commercially, you'd work , away from the workers and I wanted to be there and so that's when he told me, well I guess stay in Delano, but I had to become and organizer and working on the ranches. And I told that and he didn't think that would happen, but within two months I had more people around me, than anybody else

7:44:27 Frank Ortiz

7:44:32 Well it was the same thing he just told Frank, Frank Ortiz was the guy that was running it and said, ah send him out for 30 days, he'll die.

7:44:44 Frank Ortiz was a farm worker that was running Delano, and when we when I left the Malcriado, I didn't want to go to La Paz and so Cesar gave me to Frank and said, run him out there for 30 days, then he'll be gone, well you know when I first came they said, I said it'd be a month and I lasted 20 years and that was part of it. No everything that I did, was, I thought was great and, and I and there's so many stories that you leave, you really leave out if you start talking about what happened, there's just, there's just a lot of them, they I was at the I was at the the, the village when they shot at it, they used to shoot at the 40 acres, you know, you go, I went to a field in the 1973 election, I mean 1973 strike was out at Teneco (??) and you're standing there and all of a sudden a worker pulls out a gun and shoots, luckily no one got shot, but during the same time we had people, you know, the strike ended, over two people getting killed that year, one in Arvin, both down in, one in la Mont and one in Arvin.

7:46:07 You worked with Cesar, sometimes it was sort of a rough relationship, wasn't it?

7:46:16 I always thought, yeah it was kind of a you know, it was a very rocky sometimes because I I spent

7:46:32 Working with Cesar was very rocky, in my I guess, with me, because sometimes we'd agree on things, sometimes we didn't, and specially when we were traveling, you know, in Prop 14 we traveled, I was the head of security that time, and it was fun, there was, you know, it was fun, but there was still, there was, you know, he liked to do things that he had, he needed to do. But smoking, I can remember a couple of times when I wanted to get him mad I just smoked, and he would get mad and throw me in the back car, so you know, if you wanted to get away.



7:47:19 He was very unusual person, wasn't he?

7:47:22 well, you know, I've been around hundreds of people, by him, I thought I had the opportunity at that time, I met Jimmy Carter president of the United States, I met him, and I met people that I would never have met without being associated with farm workers. And so, but being around him you know, you're part of history. He had the uncanny way of knowing what was going to happen, you know, it was looking at things and he knew what had to happen, his last fast, if he could have lasted three or four more days, I think we coulda won the boycott, I think maybe, if he would have started to fast, you know a year, you know 6 months later, maybe he would have been further long in the boycott and could have won it, but it really come, I'm saying we went from no, hardly any, anyone knowing about the boycott to at the end he had all those people. During that boy during that fast he was named the the person of the week on one of the, ABC

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7:48:52 No I want to meet with workers 200 miles away and say we're coming because he couldn't sit still, background noise

7:49:01 One more time about Cesar could talk you into anything

7:49:02 anytime Cesar wanted something and you know he'd pick the person that he that he wanted that to do or thought they could do it, he talked him into it, there's no, he never missed, if he wanted you to do it, and finally and there was

hundreds of times when I did something and I finally said you got me again, and maybe I didn't want to do it, but you find up doing it, like you know he could never sit still, here's a man that he did a lot of cat napping but then he would go, he reads, the man is a reader like I've never seen anybody else, he'd read a book at night, still think about what to do the next day, and I know a coup, just an instance when he was in Florida one time and something happened and we had no meeting and the first thing he got he said, well let's go for a drive, we drive toward the keys got half way down and he decided he had some great thing he said oh I think I want to talk to the workers on this, so we stopped at the telephone half way down to Key West and set at a meeting in Fort Pierce which was way the other direction and we went back and had the meeting. I mean, he couldn't seat still, he was always thinking, and always a lot of people said, he had ideas, and he got those across

7:50:30      Why did you leave

7:50:40      No it was time to go, my time was to go, I was 55 years old and it was time to go, I because of the farm workers there's no real retirement and those things so it just time, I think things were changing again and I didn't think I was going to fit in that change, Chris Hartmeyer had just left and I didn't really like that and I think sometimes you see the handwriting on the wall and you say well it's time to go and go on down the road, life's too short to, to... I think and I always said when I first came, as long as it's fun I'll stay, and at the end it wasn't that much fun. But 20 years out of one month's commitment I thought was great a lot of fantastic things happened during that period of time. And would I do it again? yeah I probably would

7:51:48      What experience with Cesar really stands out

7:52:01 I don't know I guess the thing that stands up the most, that when I was elected the third vice president, here's a non farm worker (PIC ROLL OFF) coming and joining and not not really thinking, not thinking of getting there, but the day I was elected to that position I thought that was fantastic.

What year

82 around 82, 84