

## **Luis Valdez**

### **CR 161, SR 77**

05:18:14 Ok Luis let's start with that winter the first winter of the strike um, that scene I was referring to when the, when the first big impetus was over, the harvest was over and the fog had come in and it was cold and you were out there, what was, what was that first winter like?

18:31 Well the picket got me in the winter and I had started in the fall when all the activity was taking place and it became a matter of uh, serious concern that uh, the work in the fields had changed and pruning which takes place in the winter in the fog is different than the harvest uh, it is largely men although some women are involved and uh, so they were obscured by the fog. The crews were not nearly as large. It was cold and desolate and the spirit of the strikers visibly sagged. Going out everyday. You can imagine that heading out into the fog at five thirty in the morning when it's still dark and then going through the fog and looking for scab crews was very debilitating to a lot of strikers and so it was really necessary to pump up the spirits by having a lot songs and uh, sometimes just to keep the energy going and sometimes just to be heard, people couldn't see the workers it was important that they heard us. So we had the bullhorns out and uh, continued to speak to people uh, in the fields. As I say the workers were not nearly as numerous. But uh, we felt uh, the (??), the, the string of the Huerta getting smaller and smaller and tighter and tighter and something definitely had to be done uh, to uh, not just bolster up the spirit but to keep the strike literally alive and uh, it was during that time that Cesar began to uh, plan the march to Sacramento and to think about it. This was in direct response to uh, what they called the "Little Winter" El

invierno chico which hits uh, in February. And there is no work and there are no crews. We were very afraid uh, in the union that uh, the strikers themselves begin to take off. Uh, that there was no point of focus, that it seemed to us that uh, months were beginning to unravel you know the effort of the, of the strike and the spirit of the strike. So uh, we kept it alive as we could. Uh, we had uh, different people come up to visit us in Delano. We take 'em out and uh, show them what was happening but it was in itself not a very exciting

20:47           But you had to really work at it to make it was an effort and that really leads us to the beginning, the coming together of the Teatro. That came out of the same impulse of keeping the strike strong didn't it?

20:59           The Teatro Campesino started right out on the picketline in the heat of the moment right in, in in uh, October and November of, of the strike and uh, we had, we had the songs and and we had uh, the teatros which we performed on top of flatbed trucks and on top of panel trucks uh, in order to be seen. Uh, it wasn't meant as entertainment uh, and yet it was certainly an attention grabber you know in the fields. Uh, it focused on certain issues and I think the strikers probably enjoyed it as much as the scabs. Uh, but it was a matter of, of continuing to respond to that vacuum that was being created you know by the winter and by the fog. And so uh, the teatro took a definite root uh, in, in that phase of the strike. And uh, people began to see it for what it was which was uh, something, was an activity it was directly connected to our spirit. And so uh, we, we strengthened during that period and performed the Friday night meetings and of course were ready for the march to Sacramento when the teatro became a prime uh, element in the planning of the strike.

20:59 Now I know you've been involved in theater before the

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30:06 Um, you were talking a little bit about the beginning of the teatro and how it came out of the picketlines um, but people sort of think of theater and union they don't really understand how it was organic and how it was part of it and how it fed back to the workers and responded to them. Talk a little bit about that relationship between what you created and how people saw it.

30:26 I didn't know when I approached Cesar that he had a, a sense of humor you know that it was amazing it, again the public doesn't really know because they, they didn't get time with Cesar in, in private quarters but he told jokes, he told stories you know and he loved the concept of, of the teatro once I presented it to him. Uh, I was living in San Francisco uh, when the strike broke out. I was working with the San Francisco mime troop. And uh, Cesar came uh, to San Francisco and Dolores too uh, in the first week or two of the strike and that's when I approached him. I had already been to Delano uh, right away in the first week but uh, I, I didn't get a chance to really talk to him he was too busy. So I, I took this opportunity and, and chased him literally all the way from the Mission district to Oakland uh, over the Bay Bridge. And uh, at the end of the evening finally got a chance to present you know to pitch the idea and he said sure come along, the only thing is that you got to know he says there's no money, there's no actors, there's no place for you to rehearse, there's no time for you to rehearse even, do you still want to do it? And, and I said absolutely. What a great opportunity.

Let me join you Cesar, right? And uh, and so he did and uh, and I went there and found out the conditions were desperate. That uh, every extra minute was really dedicated to planning the picketline and organizing the workers. So we uh, got the teatro going late at night. It was after nine p.m. after all the picketing and work had been done that we began to gather a small group and uh, I took some signs with me and uh, organized a uh, an improvisational session basically. I talked about the teatro one night, the first night and that's on film uh, but the, they didn't know what I was talking about, the workers didn't know. Uh, one woman raised her hand. I said are there any questions after I'd done my spiel and she said yes and she asked me uh, when does the teatro start? And I realized this is the audience. You know this is not uh, these are not potential actors and so I said well you, you're the show, you're the actors you know and uh, they were reluctant that first day. So I got the signs out the next time a couple of days later. We met in the pink house in the kitchen and I essentially started to improvise with the workers. I, I asked them to uh, to do what they did on the picketline and uh, they, they could do that so long as someone could do the scab. No one wanted to do the scab. So we got a couple of people that were inclined to be clowns to get out and do the scabs and they were you know shouting the epithets and stuff. And so then the strikers began to get into it. It was an amazing evening because it was like an explosion, it was like the birth of the teatro campesino. People were hanging in the windows and uh, they saw it and they grasped it and uh, right after that we began to do some of our stuff on the picketline and so it began to catch on.

33:10           And it, it really they, they owned it, it was their theater.

33:14           They were the theater. I mean they were the audience and they were the actors. There was no distinction you know I didn't want a distinction, why,

why would there be one? And uh, it, it was not for a purpose of, of presenting a show you know it was not for the purpose of entertaining anybody. It was for purposes of channeling energy and communicating basic kinds of information and it turns out the use of theater in this very direct way was an educational uh, device that uh, proved to be very useful. We were able to advance concepts like, like uh, union contract. A lot of people didn't understand what a union contract was so we dramatized it you know. We, we laid it out. When the Schenley contract uh, was finally signed we, we did a huge presentation where the Schenley contract was a character, said Schenley contract on the sign, it was (name of actor) who was performing and he had a big pencil and then the workers were like you know being protected by this contract and uh, we had concepts like seniority you know and people understand toilets in the field they understood cool water you know when it's hot. They didn't understand uh, more sophisticated, advanced concepts like seniority you know what is that. And so we made a joke of it you know one character says a grower to the a campesino who was Philippe Cantu I'm gonna take away your seniority he said me sonora no you're not going to take away my senora. And that always created a laugh. But uh, the teatro uh, served as an organizing tool and it, it made things visible that perhaps were a little difficult to understand at the beginning. Uh, I'll never forget a moment on the picketline early on when someone was on the bullhorn talking about the dignidad and a campesino came up to me and said uh, what's dignidad? He didn't understand you know dignity, what's dignity? And it was a good question because it stopped me for a moment. How do you define dignity? Self respect, uh, you really stand up for what you feel is right and uh, you got it you know. But uh, we did an acto about it later you know about dignity and uh, this is what we were fighting for.

35:12        So it's educational.

35:13        Yeah.

35:13        But now the teatro was, was part of a whole cultural explosion there you know I think about Andy Zermeno's cartoons and El Malcriado. I think about the posters, the murals that came out. Talk a little bit about how culture became a tool in general, not just the teatro but the whole use of culture.

35:31        Without any money the union uh, had to survive on the basis I think of, of uh, cultural traditions and the generosity of Mexican culture in terms of food, in terms of gestures you know the abrazos , the, the support that you got uh, for being part of the larger family of the Huelga. All of that began to express itself in cultural terms uh, first and foremost are the religious uh, rituals, the aspects you know that, that Cesar embraced. Um, and the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the masses, the baptisms. All those were personal cultural events within the strike but they were also politicized because they were Huelga events and in that way too music really quickly, very quickly became a part of the movement. The first corrido was written as early as 1962 about the union uh, by a woman named Rosa Gloria and uh, when I joined the strike it was uh, a very natural expression that corridos had to be part of the movement and uh, so the teatro uh, became the musical branch you know the organized musical branch of, of the Huelga and uh, we began to translate uh, *Solidarity Forever, Solidaridad Para Siempre* uh, *We Shall not be Moved, No Nos Moveran* um, *Nosotros Venceremos* which is *We Shall Overcome* and uh, we literally translated in some cases you know and adapted the music and people caught up to them they still sing those songs. They're, they're again an intrinsic part of, of the cultural expression. The corrido, the ranchera and

even the hymn you know the, the um, the various hymns that evolved really acapella because the

37:15        *De Colores* was a religious song.

37:17        *De Colores* was a cursillista song that I heard for the first time in Oakland the night that I chased Cesar across the bridge and uh, when I was in Delano he says do you remember that song that they were singing in the church in Oakland and I said uh, yes I do, I do remember it. And he says well do you think the teatro could sing it at the meeting? So we learned it and it became part of, of course the spirit and the identity of the Huelga. The same way with the uh, campesino applause you know an organized applause uh, we introduced that and you know uh, these things were just, we didn't think about them we just did them because they were part of our everyday life and it seemed the most natural thing to do.

37:59        And even though the teatro was primarily a visual organization the same thing was happening with pictures and comics and graphic images too.

38:07        We got a lot of uh, ideas directly from Andy Zermeno and the, the sketches you know that that the brilliant really, the brilliant cartoons that he created for El Malcriado, the Patroncito, the (??), Don Sotaco we started dramatizing these. You know Felipe Cantu the actor, the campesino actor became Don Sotaco you know and uh, and Don Quixote was great. He was a character. I mean he was made for teatro you know but he was a cartoon first so we just utilized him as a, as a cartoon type. The patroncito uh, by all means uh, almost a comedia type you know with the nose and the glasses and the hat and cigar. That's all we needed and

the sign and people knew instantly oh that's the grower you know. So there was that cross feeding and uh, by the same token I mean uh, people brought stuff. I brought stuff from San Francisco that I collected uh, over the years. Pictures of Zapata, of Pancho Villa and I worked on El Malcriado and did a number of covers and uh, articles and translated and so all that stuff went into El Malcriado. So there was cross feeding, there was cross feeding. People brought songs. They brought implements. They, they brought different versions you know of, of art work utilizing the the Huelga logo became part of the identity and the, the atmosphere of the Huelga. Filipino Hall was transformed by posters and by uh, by paintings and uh, you know and different banners that people created with their own hands and so it was a direct cultural expression you know sustaining us and uh, it was that way too with the early the early strike camp which was an old farm labor camp that uh, that we used and uh, the strike store was there and our first kitchen was there and uh, you know we'd paint on the fence and, and do all kinds of stuff just to create the atmosphere.

39:43        Now part of that synergy was that um, what was happening in Delano was really energizing people in the cities that, that you can say the teatro was inspiring the theater movement in the cities and so, so it wasn't just sucking energy into Delano it was spreading energy out wasn't it? Wasn't that part of what that huge kind of identity was?

40:04        We started to tour uh, with the teatro campesino right after the march to Sacramento which was the spring of '66. Before that I mean it had been solidly Delano and with the march to Sacramento we were exposed to thousands and thousands of people from the Bay Area and from all over the country that uh, were with us and uh, that was uh, very encouraging, a real boost for us. And out of that



came uh, invitations and so the teatro to perform and so we always had problems finding wheels because there were no cars and we had no car of our own so we used to borrow a station wagon you know when ever we could and uh, and head up to San Francisco, to Berkeley uh, Stanford I think uh, sponsored our first show and uh, we didn't even have banners. We didn't have anything. We just had our masks and we had a few signs and we set them out in the open and people could, there was no back stage, people could see us and so we, we started, we got into it, right? And people saw the immediacy of it. They saw the fact that that uh, we were related to very specific hard core issues uh, that the Huelga people and uh, so it was reminiscent really of an old kind of theater in a new form.

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41:33        Because the cultural expressions that was uh, emerging out of the Huelga was, was um, so Mexican in way you know it, it uh, it became uh, a real rallying cry for anyone that could identify with it. And the teatro started to tour in the fall of uh, 1966 uh, to the universities drumming up support for the boycott which was starting to take shape and uh, we took the Huelga actors, we took the music and started to hit all the state colleges, community colleges, universities whatever, all the way up and down the state and up into the Northwest. And the, the response was electric. We could see that uh, there was a presence on campus. That there were Chicano organizations that were beginning to form and uh, to use the Huelga in that sense to, to organize and to focus the attention of other students and they used the symbol of the Huelga eagle as, as a way. And to some extent uh, in, in the short term the use of teatro itself became an implement in in the uh,

organization of Chicanos on campus. The visual imagery came naturally. The idea that uh, murals could reflect the same idea. That posters uh, could really catalyze a concept you know put it visually before a lot of people. Uh, it grew out of Delano but it took root in the campuses as well and in community organizations. So you began to see that this tremendous response, this growth of uh, posters and imagery uh, that uh, was emerging from Chicano artists. I think it was an opportun, same way it was an opportunity for me as a playwright and as a director you know to express something the Huelga was also a vehicle for, for visual artists to uh, channel their art and for poets to begin to write poetry and for musicians to begin to write songs and so it was uh, it was the spark really that was needed because the urge, the to create, to express uh, had been there for some time. It was just waiting for, for the Huelga to come along and to set it off.

43:33           And in a way even though they were in the city it became their cause too didn't it?

43:39           The, my experience with uh, urban centers uh, throughout my life had been that a lot of farmworkers live in cities. When I was growing up uh, I used to see families, I made friends actually over several years, families that would come from East L. A. you know to work in the same fields. It didn't matter that they were living in an urban area. Uh, Los Angeles uh, was rural anyway up until very recent times. You know there were fields right outside of L.A. All of Orange County, all of the San Fernando Valley, all of that was, was uh, field work you know it was for workers who lived in, in the middle of a huge urban area. So uh, they could relate to it and if they couldn't relate to it personally they could relate through parents, they could relate through grandparents and it became then a part of their family history and part of their family imperative to come together and to,

to join and support the strike in any way that they could from the city and uh, and I think that the cultural expression just made it all come together, it gelled and glued the whole movement together in that sense.

44:39 Course that doesn't quite explain how people who weren't Mexicans responded in the same way, they didn't respond in the same way but it provoked a different set of responses but was also positive too.

44:50 I tell you uh, it is my feeling that one of the most ignored subjects in American history is, is the whole history of the labor movement and uh, you know we have this impression some how that America is a middle class country and that uh, there's been a lot of prosperity and people have lived in cities but the presence of most Americans in cities is uh, is really only part of this century up until the 1920's and the 1930's people lived on farms uh, in great numbers. So it was a recent memory you know that we were evoking you know people knew what hard work was they, they knew what working in the fields and working on farms was all about and if they didn't their parents could tell them also. They didn't want to go back to the fields and no one can blame them for that but it was not such a far fetched concept as you might imagine. You know I, I really look at this distinction between rural and urban as, as uh, as not a huge issue in the 1960's it's more of an issue now. The lines are really solidified and been drawn but uh, in 1965 there was still an opportunity to relate to the Dust Bowlers, there was still an opportunity to relate to the people that had grown up picking cotton you know along side anybody else who was out there. And uh, and so it was possible to tap into that sense of labor justice in America which is still there frankly. I think we've all suffered. The Reagan administration really gutted uh, the importance and the, the essential quality of the labor movement in this country but it had been building for awhile.

When the Huelga came along it served as a reminder of what the labor movement had been through in the thirties. And so that brought a lot of people in you know from the unions and uh, they regaled us with all kinds of stories about how their unions had been you know steel workers, the auto workers, all these people were our friends. And, and they're still there you know they are still there. The only thing is that it has been forgotten. And uh, there isn't enough, there aren't enough reminders uh, to people in general that without the labor movement and without working people and without unions we're gonna be in deep trouble in this country. I, I think that you cannot uh, continue to take away jobs and opportunities from people without some kind of uh, severe impact you know on the national character and spirit soul.

47:03        RICK

47:04        Yes.

47:05        Let's, let's switch gears a little bit and talk about Cesar himself. Um, try and help us bring it to life because you know with respect to people who knew him, absorbed his personality and knew his qualities but to everyone else he's an icon, he's you know he's a symbol, he's not a real person and you knew him very well. What, how can you give us some insight into who he was?

47:30        I would say that if there's any word that describes Cesar he was a doer. I mean he, he was dedicated to creating change, not talking about it. He, he didn't enjoy uh, you know having these long drawn out philosophical discussions about social justice or about ideologies. He knew a problem and he wanted to do something about it. He knew that there was a serious problem having to do with

wages and working conditions with farmworkers because he had lived it. And that the only way that you could resolve those problems are by having some kind of mediated exchange between employers and workers, right? That's the union contract. Those are the negotiations and he wasn't talking about anything so far fetched. I mean we are talking about uh, cold water in the fields when it's scalding hot out in the field and there was nothing. There were no bathrooms out there, not even for the women. Now you consider your out there miles out in the middle of the field there's, there's no visible crop, there's not even rows out there and people are out there weeding the crop where do women go to the bathroom? They would be forced to go out behind the parked cars. And walk a mile or two to get there and a mile or two to get back because they were out in the middle of the fields. If they could get permission to leave their hoes, their short hoes or whatever it was they were working to get out there and in most cases they were not allowed to do that. So it was, it was like uh, it was like real slave labor conditions that were reminiscent of the uh, early part of the century and the late 19th century in which you had sweat shops and these were literal sweatshops so uh, given those conditions uh, where something was bound to happen and Cesar was one who kept saying from the very beginning, from the time that he was like a teenager he kept saying something has to be done.

49:16           But I mean, but there was something unique about him because a lot of people have said that and have not been able to pull it off. He had something else that motivated you and me and everyone else whose life he touched to give that effort. That's the hard thing to put your finger on.

49:34           He was able to cut away the, the rhetoric. He didn't have any rhetoric to begin with. He brought to the struggle his experience. He brought his personal

sense of the injustice of it all. That every worker's experienced and that's where he kept his focus. Uh, if anything his rhetoric probably got spiritual more than anything else but even then I mean he wasn't one to preach you know he wasn't one to go out give an uh, uh, you know a big lengthy oration to anybody. He talked very simply or very directly about what needed to be done and, and he listened. He would sit and listen to people and, and they would in term then begin to speak on what the problems were. So he felt that by coming together, agreeing that something had to be done and then working together uh, something could happen. Cesar was uh, extremely brilliant that, that's sometimes forgotten. He was a genius in his own way and that word is often misused I think and too often because it means you know it means someone that's erratic, somebody that uh, that that uh, creates something unusual but what Cesar was a genius about was our humanity and uh, he was able to look for a solution. He had this thing about magic bullet. He was always looking for magic bullets, meaning that he saw the, the entire structure of a problem and he said it doesn't need to be completely overthrown, it doesn't need to be completely disrupted it only needs to be touched in the appropriate place. This demonstration will do it or if the boycott was based on this. If you put pressure here you get responses over there and uh, he was, he had a game that he always played you know that, it was I think uh, probably inspired a little bit by the, the movies of the thirties and the forties and, and he played this game with uh, with Richard, with Manuel, with his contemporaries in the union and it was the, it was a little bit of George Raft, that kind of defiant and, and I think he owes some, some of the uh, uh, that to the Pachuco era, you know. That is the tough guy and yet he it was always with a smile, always with a sense of, of a laugh and yet it there was a strategy. There was a plan A, plan B, plan C. If plan A didn't work there was always plan B and C to go to. There was always something to fall back on and so he, he didn't just seek a particular direction, he

analyzed the whole problem anticipated what the opposition might do and, and then calculated and maneuvered and he made it a game. He made it a strategic game and got all of us involved. We all knew what plan A was, plan B and plan C. And if plan A didn't work you turned to plan C, let's go to plan C, boom we went right there, right? So this was a guy that was organizing and maneuvering to win.

CUT

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**TIME CODE CHANGES TO 6:00:00**

6:00:03      Alright so Luis you were telling me about the game Cesar used to play.

6:00:07      It was uh, the games that Cesar played uh, were a direct outgrowth of his youth in a way and how he approached life as not as a game but as a strategy. That in order to be able to get from A to Z you had to maneuver and navigate and so his um, his models for all of that were all the popular heroes that uh, appear in movie screens in, in America since the beginning of Hollywood. There were stories that he had heard. The Mexican Revolution to be sure except he didn't use violence what he used was tactics. What he used was an, an effort to try and circumvent a problem by, by surrounding it you know with with a different set of conditions and uh, one of the things that he used to love for instance to take people for rides. If there was a question about uh, someone in the union and there often was because we were infiltrated more often than once by uh, agent provocateurs who were uh, particularly in that time of violence in 1968 were creating violence on the picketline and rather than confront them publicly out on the picketline or in

the union hall or what have you uh, Cesar would take people on rides and, and he would uh, climb in the car and Manuel and Richard or Fred or Dolores, somebody would go, the car would be packed. Whoever the individual was going to be questioned would go and they'd ride out into the country, right? And they'd stay out there until they got all the answers that were needed. Uh, it didn't end with a bullet you know like the Mafia did. It ended with dismissal. If it didn't work out for that person they were asked to leave. And uh, it was, I think uh, quite significant that they did this on wheels, that they did this in cars because this was a very mobile strike. It had to be. We were covering a thousand square miles of territory. The roving picketline became not just a symbol of the union but the working tool to reach the strikers and so in his own way Cesar did a lot of working and decision making uh, in a car going someplace and uh, questioning uh, what was happening. A lot of his meetings were taking place when he was going from Delano to San Francisco or Los Angeles or what have you, right? And uh, occasionally he uh, he would read but more often than not he would meet and uh, I was in on a lot of those meetings and they were significant, they were like staff meetings on wheels.

6:02:34 Um, is there anything else that shares a moment or incident with Cesar or something that really sticks in your mind that, that that shows people the way he was or the qualities he had?

6:02:4Cesar did not become uh, the spiritual icon that he became in people's minds right away. When he started he was uh, a farmworker and his uh, eating habits, his sleeping habits, his, the way that he lived at home was basically no different then the way other farmworkers lived. The worst and notable example and exceptions Helen used to have for instance the whole serape full of buttons that she began to



collect and she still has it. She doesn't display it anymore but they were all, thousands and thousands of buttons that was the difference right? Farmworker home with these big banner, serape, with all kinds of buttons. Uh, I remember early on um, Cesar used to drink and smoke. A lot of people don't know that. And I had the opportunity to see uh, him at a couple of Christmas parties when he'd uh, had too much to drink. He was benign, he was very uh, uh, kind. He was going around blessing people with wine for instance. That was his, his way of, of getting drunk you know he'd go around and bless people and you know we all cracked up about it. Uh, he would love to sing. He would love to sit around singing corridos and he used to smoke like a fiend frankly, early on. Lots of cigarettes, he drank too many diet cokes or cokes. But all of that began to fall away, all of that as time went by. As he changed, as the movement changed him, and as he changed the movement. He stopped smoking, he stopped eating fat. I remember eating at his home and having frijoles chinitos, which are re-refried beans, presented to him by Helen with as much love as any wife could offer her husband. It was tremend...I remember that meal, I still remember it you know because it was a meeting that we were having at his house, and here she served us, served Cesar. And he loved that kind of fat-ridden food, you know, at the beginning, right? After awhile he stopped eating even beans with lard in them. He became someone who lived on the basis of a macrobiotic diet. Uh, he had to watch his diet because he needed the energy and heavy food drained him. So did smoking, it drained him. So anything that interfered with what he was doing, that took away his energy, was not good and he abandoned it. And of course it took on another character, it took on a spiritual character, well so he's fasting you know. Or he's a very spiritual guy. But he took to eating fruit because, one, it was healthy, and they'd serve him a whole half a watermelon for instance, and that would be his lunch. And he'd sit there everybody else was having chile verde and tortillas and meat, and he's in there

eating his whole watermelon. People thought that that was funny, it was funny Cesar eating this watermelon, but he was getting energy from it. And he looked good. If you look at those films, considering the amount of, the number of hours he must have been putting twenty hours a day daily for years, he looked great. He looked great. Now occasionally he collapsed, his body just gave out on him, and his back gave out, he had a bad back. One leg was shorter than the other. And after the fast, he really had to watch it right? He had to regulate his diet in order to be able to stay on his feet. But all of that was part of changes that were taking place in him physically and mentally. Uh, self discipline became a real key feature of his personality. He read a lot of Gandhi, and I suspect that everything having to do with sexual abstinence to not eating meat, to staying away from fat, to stopping the diet cokes, just drinking water, all of that was part of a whole transformation that was personal. And yet as it turned out, it was movement wide, because he inspired a lot of people. They said, this is a man who is doing more than an ordinary man would do. These are extraordinary measures that he is taking personally. And I admired that very much. Uh, I saw him most of his fasts I was with him, and tried to help him, and I'll never forget how lucid he was, even his last major fast in 1988. He was extremely lucid because the Teatro was always instrumental in setting up, you know, whatever public event he wanted. And he knew exactly what he wanted, and he was still able to delineate what arrangements he wanted set up, and how he was going to go about it. Physically weak, but mentally tremendously strong. And, you know, I admired Cesar from the very beginning. I'm not a follower, in most senses of the word, you know. I'm fairly independent, I prefer to do my own work. But Cesar is the one guy that I can say early on that I followed, you know. And quite willingly because there was something about him, and I probably speak for a lot of people in this respect, that allowed you to follow him. There wasn't an ego there, you didn't feel that you

were doing it and Cesar was somehow taking the credit. He didn't want the credit. And also if you were like going to put out and sacrifice yourself, Cesar was there first. I'll never forget being called by union, by Cesar actually, to go from Delano to Borrego Springs in 1966 in the summer. They were organizing the Di Giorgio Ranch there. It was very hot, over a hundred degrees, 105, 110 in the middle of Borrego Springs, the San Diego area, the desert, and we arrived late at night and we couldn't find the huelga headquarters, there was no huelga headquarters. They were staying out in a state park. And so we arrived and the headlights shone out into the park and into the desert, and I could see these bundles, we call bultos, these these mounds in the desert, and there were men sleeping there. So we got our sleeping bags and proceeded to go out there and I bumped into somebody and Cesar rolled over and, 'oh okay, you can just lie down here' and he was one of these bunches of people sleeping out in the desert sand. And we were up before dawn, actually Cesar was arrested, he was placed in a truck and he spent the better part of a day and a night almost being cooked alive together with a couple of workers. Stripped down to his shorts, you know when he was arrested and taken in. So that kind of stuff when you see your leader doing that it makes you want to do it. It makes you want to stick your neck out. And of course with that sense of humor that was part of the union, if you got beaten you know as I did and as a lot of people did, what you'd look for are bruises that you could use! (laughs) You'd say, well they given me a real good one here, you know, this is good for the news, they're gonna see this. But that was the only way that we could respond, you know, to the horror of being attacked. After people started to get killed there was a visible change in Cesar. He felt personally responsible. I mean that in every sense of the word, personally responsible for the life and death of people in the union. And he didn't figure, he didn't feel that it was worth it. His magic bullet did not entail taking anybody's life. Not the workers, not the growers, not anybody. He

wanted a non-violent solution that would bring people to their senses, and to the extent that he encapsulated that in his being, all the way to the end of his days, he was a leader that I would follow again.

**END OF INTERVIEW**