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Andy Imutan

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Andy Imutan

Interviewer: Steve Velasquez, Harry Rubenstein and Peter Liebhold

Project: Bracero Oral History Project

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: September 27, 2005

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Andy Imutan was born on March 8, 1926, in Manila, Philippines; he came to the United States with his wife in 1965; her parents petitioned for her to come to the United States; Andy and his wife came to Los Angeles, California, before going to Delano, California to work; he quickly became involved with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO); eventually, he was in charge of the Stockton and Delano, California, chapters of the organization; later, he began his own Filipino organization, which helped families and young wives acquire various work skills; he ultimately returned to the Philippines. Mr. Imutan very briefly describes his travels from the Philippines to California; he began working in Delano, California, but he quickly became involved with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO); in September of 1965, he was part of a strike that was a continuation of earlier efforts in Coachella, California, to achieve better pay; events in Coachella turned violent, with people getting hurt and equipment being damaged; after demands were met in Coachella, the same companies refused the same wages in Delano, hence the continuing strike; within roughly a week, Cesar Chavez joined the strike; Andy goes on to comment on the Filipino work crews, as well as their community and union interactions with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC); in addition, he details his organizing and fundraising efforts with the union, as well as his various travels; eventually, Chavez put him in charge of the Stockton and Delano, California, chapters of the organization; later, he began his own Filipino organization, which helped families and young wives acquire various work skills; he ultimately returned to the Philippines.

Name of Interviewee: Andy Imutan

Date of Interview: September 27, 2005

Name of Interviewer: Steve Velasquez

SV: Today is September 27, 2005. My name is Steve Velasquez. I'm interviewing Andy Imutan with Harry Rubenstein and [inaudible] for the **Basara Overstreet** Project and the Delano Grape Strike Program tonight on September 27. Mr. Imutan, could you tell me a little bit about yourself, where were you born and sort of what your parents did?

AI: I was born in the Philippines, Manila, 1926. March 8, 1926. I came to the United States in 1965.

SV: Did you come by yourself or with the rest of your family?

AI: No. My wife was petitioned by the parents. They came from Delano, and that's the reason why – from the Philippines, I went to LA and then to Delano.

SV: Uh huh. To work.

AI: Yes.

SV: Yes. What did you do when you first got to Delano?

AI: I did not work too long in Delano because – in the field because at that time there were meetings being held by the AFL-CIO regarding organizing – you know, demanding for better wages and so on, and I attended one of those sessions to listen, and the more I listened, the more I got mad because they were talking about bad wages, bad working condition, bad housing. Everything was bad, and so I said, "How come I didn't – when I was in the Philippines, all I heard was in the United States it was very good," you know?

So I thought that probably in the laborer side of it they were very much advanced, but I was not – I did not see it that way when I arrived. So the more I listened in the meeting, the more I got upset. So when the strike on September 8, I was there right away. I joined it right away, and that's it. I was with **Larry Adoun**, which Larry was the leader of the strike in Delano on September 8. The Filipinos mostly would walk off of the field. On September 16, Cesar Chavez joined us.

SV: Uh huh. About how many Filipino workers were at the meetings and sort of joined?

AI: Yeah, you see, in the – mostly Filipinos were members of the AWOC. Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee was an organizing committee of the AFL-CIO. It was a predominantly Filipino organization, and that's why most of the organizers were Filipinos, and when the strike was called in Delano, there were more than 3,500 workers that came out of the field. Predominantly Filipinos went out, and in the process the Mexicans were scabbing on us because, you know, when the Filipinos went on strike, the Mexicans would continue to work.

The same thing when the Mexicans, when they struck, we worked – I mean, the Filipinos worked, but the Delano strike was a continuation of the Coachella strike, which was also AWOC's strike. I think that was also predominantly Filipinos, and the season, the grape season in California starts from the southernmost part in the boarder, Arizona, Coachella, the Imperial Valley going down to Arvin and Delano. That is when the company – the grape season, and in Delano it's mostly table grapes, and the Filipinos sort of control the table grapes industry at that time.

SV: Okay. So when you were there at the first meeting and you heard about all these things, did you think right then and there that this was for the better of everybody and for yourself as well?

AI: Yes. Yes, because remember at that time the wages were \$1.10 per hour, and the demand was for \$1.25 and \$1.40 an hour with 25 cents a box bonus, and then Coachella – the strike in Coachella was, what do you call that, violent in the sense of the usual labor strike, you know. So many people got hurt. So many equipments were over turned.

SV: Okay.

AI: Trucks were over turned and so on, and in ten days the growers decided to recognize the demands or give the demands of the workers and increase their wages, but there was no contract signed because it was used as sort of a bargaining thing, so many lawsuits, so the lawsuits were dropped, all that kind of thing, but there was no contract either, but the wages were given. So when the grape season reached Delano, you see sort of quite a few growers in Delano are also growers in Coachella. They also owned land there, and they also are grape growers there, and the workers are also the same workers. Most of them are – came from Coachella, going down – following the crops.

So the demands that [inaudible] Larry sent up were demanding the same wages given in Coachella. The growers ignored it, you know. They didn't answer the letters. So finally Larry made a report again that the growers ignored, continued to ignore the letter, so there was a vote taken, strike vote, to strike them on September 8, and a letter again was sent, and they ignored it again.

So on September 8 about 2:00 to 3:00 in the morning, people were in the Filipino Community Hall, which was where we – what we used for our headquarters, you know, the Filipino Community Hall in Delano, drinking coffee, eating breakfast, and so on, and there were some Filipinos that did not want to picket the growers because they were their bosses for so long and just imagine they didn't want to – the thing that struck me is that the growers didn't even know the names of their workers except maybe for the crew boss, but people been working for them since they were kids, and they could not even – they don't even know their name. They just called them, "Boy. Hey, Boy," like that, and the sort of things that –

HR: Did people work for one grower the whole length of California or were you hired each time you went to a new locale?

AI: Usually the crew boss will be working for the same growers for so many years. He just go back and the workers will be there and they will be in the camps and they will work, but in some cases they will move to another grower and work with another grower. It is not usually a pattern that everybody works for the same growers all over.

HR: Uh huh.

AI: Although some will be working with a grower in Coachella, and he will be in Delano –

HR: Right.

AI: So they would be following him there and working with him also.

HR: How are those work crews organized?

AI: It is by crew bosses. The Filipinos because of the lack of education in the early years they could not speak English or write them, so out of the vans there is somebody who is brave enough to be able to communicate with the grower and say a few English, and he becomes the crew boss to negotiate for their wages, but the

crew boss Filipino is different from a contractor Mexican because the contractor Mexican usually does not care about his workers too much in the same, so, you know, togetherness all the time, but the Filipino crew boss must have his workers believe in him. Otherwise they will not have any crew next year, see?

HR: Uh huh.

AI: So from year to year this – he pampers them like a son or like a brother – younger brother or something like that because he's the one that negotiates for their wages and whatever – for the camps. Before the workers will arrive in the area, the camps are clean, and there is a Coke and all that ready for the workers.

SV: Uh huh. And how big were these – crews tended to be?

AI: 40, 30, 25 –

SV: Oh.

AI: Workers.

HR: Now did the crew boss work in the field with the workers?

AI: Yes. The crew bosses usually will work in the field with them instead of just being, you know, watching them work. He would be working with them or something in most cases.

SV: And in terms of wages for the crew boss how –

AI: The crew bosses makes a little more than the workers, and in some cases probably certain percentage of the workers he makes as being a crew boss –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: To make sure that there would be workers for this particular grower, you know, and [inaudible].

SV: So did the crew bosses all participate in the union?

AI: That is why – one of the thing that happened to the union, the AWOC, why the lack of crew bosses were also members of the AWOC, and, in fact, the strike vote was mostly crew bosses talking –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Because you see the situation with the Filipino crew boss was entirely different from a Mexican contractor where he's, you know. The crew boss has to be with his workers. He knows that. He talks about that at the union meetings. He's there. He is a member of the union also. He was a member of the union.

SV: Uh huh.

HR: Did the crew boss provide housing and food?

AI: The crew boss was the one who makes arrangement for that. Housing, which he discussed that with the growers, and if it is usually year to year, they go back there, and he goes ahead – he went ahead of the crew and had it cleaned and everything prepared for the workers when they come in, and he also provides – looks for – I mean, provides a cook that could take care of cooking for the crew.

HR: Now what were people speaking to each other on a Filipino crew? Were they speaking Tagalog or English?

AI: Well, they're speaking most – there are crews that speak in Ilokano, you know, because that's a predominantly – among the workers that came to the United States, most of them were Ilokanos also, I mean, more than anybody else, more than any other ethnic group, more than **Ipigalo**, more than **Dubizian** or whatever. The Ilokanos came ahead – I mean, were more, and it was – quite a few crew bosses were Ilokanos.

HR: In terms of the communities, you said that there was a community center. Were there other people talking about this who were not farm – was everybody in the Filipino community there farm workers and if not were there – what were they saying about the –

AI: A lot of the – a lot of members of the Filipino community were farm workers. Of course, there were a few who were businessmen.

HR: Um hm.

AI: But the majority were farm workers, yeah.

HR: And was there a principal leader within the community who was –

AI: Well, the Filipino community had its own president – president, vice president, board of directors and so on, and the union is separate from them.

HR: Separate, yes.

AI: Of course maybe there were some Filipinos who didn't like the union anyway. I mean, they were grape growers – but there's where we had our headquarters in the Filipino community. When Cesar joined us, that's where he went. That's where they came to the Filipino community to have breakfast with us and all that.

HR: When working in the fields, were most of those sort of done by – was there a lot of mixing, in other words, between various work groups? There were Mexican American and Filipino or did growers tend to hire one or the other?

AI: The tendency was that if the growers will hire a crew of Mexicans, and then he will hire or so a crew of Filipinos, but there were growers that will hire only Filipino crews because the Filipinos were kind of experienced in regards to table grapes, and so it was [inaudible]. Even asparagus. Most of the asparagus workers were Filipinos.

HR: Um hm.

AI: In fact, there was a time when all of them were Filipinos mostly, you know. Very few other ethnic groups were involved with that.

HR: Would the same crew do asparagus one week and table grapes another week?

AI: No. Some of them would come from the table grapes and then will go straight to the asparagus. It's a month or two, couple of months, not week to week because you're going to go back and forth, see? Once the grape season is over, asparagus now begins in the northernmost part. It's in Stockton area, San Joaquin.

HR: Now in terms of the grapes, the table grapes, what were they actually – what were the crews doing, just picking them or –

AI: Well, no. The crew – they have in the grape orchard, they have **garling**. They start with garling, but that's another season. Another time.

HR: What's that?

AI: Garling. The garling. They put a canal there in the trees. Later on they do pulling leaves. They pull the leaves so that the sunshine can hit the roots –

HR: Oh.

AI: So many other **[inaudible]** thing, but the major part, of course, is the grape season really, when people come and pick grapes because that is the gravy train. In other words, that's when they make a lot of money usually.

HR: Uh huh.

AI: And garling is a very hard job, very difficult. They put the canal **[inaudible]** the tree. They cut the canal there, I think for the soil, whatever it is, and then they prune. They prune the grapes about January. You know, starts to be wintertime, they start pruning the grapes, cutting.

HR: So would one crew migrate north a couple of times, do garling and then come back and then –

AI: Yes, that's correct. They go back, but very few only. Not the entire crew. It's a skeleton crew that do the culture.

HR: Um hm.

AI: And in some cases it's the local people that does it, that do those things because, see, the Filipino younger men usually will proceed to Alaska for the table grapes –

SV: Oh, really?

AI: Go to Alaska and do some cannery work, you know?

SV: Um hm.

AI: But then some of them go to the wine grapes area and do some wine grapes work, but those are usually done by the Mexican workers, the wine grapes.

HR: Hm. Why is that?

AI: It needs – they pay you in piece rates, and you got to be fast with it, and it's very dirty, you know, and the Filipinos are old already,

and they cannot do that anymore. [Inaudible] although before in the years they were doing it [inaudible].

SV: Uh huh. Yeah, I mean it is an older group of people. There's not a lot of young Filipinos coming to –

AI: No more. Very few young ones. Very few. You can count it – it's the sons or, you know.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: But there are very few sons either also because the Filipinos say, "I told you we're deprived of anti [inaudible] law." You not allow them to marry white.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: So the quota of the Philippines later on became 100 men to one woman, to one lady, one girl, one woman, yeah, and they were not allowed to marry white, and they cannot own land. They cannot become citizens, although we were nationals. Very bad, you know. Nobody talked about that. Filipinos are really proud, excuse me.

SV: Right.

AI: They're very proud. They don't want to talk about it.

SV: Yeah. When I've been to Delano, it looks like an old, dying town is what I sort of remember. What was it like in the '60s, especially the Filipino community?

AI: Well, it is the same thing. It was a lot of people during the harvest time, you know. People start coming in to harvest the grapes, so there would be a lot of people in Chinatown. They call it Chinatown, but most of the people there are Filipinos, not Chinese.

SV: Uh huh. But were there – I mean, there's a few bars, right, and there's a big community hall.

AI: Um hm.

SV: What other kinds of institutions are there?

AI: Well, now there's a lot. Now it's booming.

SV: But in the '60s.

AI: In the '60s? Well, it's like an old, sleepy town, you know. Very few of them. There are only 15,000 people in Delano.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: The population was only 15,000. I understand 400 square meters – square miles.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: 20 by 20.

SV: Uh huh.

HR: Now were there Filipinos that were residents that stayed there year 'round in Delano?

AI: Yes, there were quite a few Filipinos that were residents of Delano. Some crew bosses live in Delano because Delano was the center of all the work that they are doing, and they have houses there. Some Filipinos have houses. In fact, the mayor of Delano at one time was a Filipino, one of the very few Filipinos that became the mayor of a town. It's a typical, as you said, sleepy town.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Fifteen thousand population, but now there's a lot of hotels and a lot of so many things there now.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: I would even be surprised because I've not been there for a long time.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Last – two Sundays ago we had an anniversary of the union, 14th year, and there was Western and so many other hotels. Before there was only one.

SV: Uh huh. When the two unions came together, it sounds like there's a bit of a cultural difference –

AI: Um hm.

SV: Between the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee and I guess at that time –

AI: And [inaudible].

SV: Right, I mean, especially in terms of the nonviolence.

AI: Yeah, well –

SV: How did that sort of merging –

AI: When the merger came about, there were some Filipinos that quit, you know, transferred to Teamsters, like **Ben Guines**. They left the union. There was about seven of them who left the union, didn't want to be on board with it because they didn't agree with the civilized approach of the union. They wanted the usual picketing and, you know, the old style.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: And so they quit, but most of the people that agreed to like Larry Adoun and all the people that followed him –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: In the merger. The merger become it, you know, because Cesar was a very good leader, you see. He was able to make people follow him without any fanfare. There is no complain or anything of that kind because he was a very good leader. He understands. Then he was very kind to the Filipinos. He call everybody brother, you know like – I mean, he was sincere. That's the thing. It takes a person as the way, like Chavez, who could lead the Filipinos because the Filipinos are really a bunch of – they don't want to follow anybody except themselves, I think. Even in the Philippines we are – even here they are – there is one group, Ilokano. There's another group, **Alongo**. There's another group, **Tegalo**. They don't mix in the sense, in the early days.

SV: Um hm.

AI: This one is on his own with his own leader and all that kind of thing, but Cesar was the key. He was the – he was able to make everybody follow.

HR: Did they communicate into English?

AI: Meetings, Cesar does it in Spanish, but he could translate it into English. The Filipinos can manage to understand a few English, but those that were members of the union that were their regular union strikers sort of understood how to speak English also.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: But later on we had to use – when the contracts were signed and there were a lot of members automatically over night, and the meetings were jamming the hallway so we had to translate from English to Spanish to Tagalog to Ilokano because some people cannot understand Tagalog. Filipinos themselves cannot understand, and Ilokano may not be able to understand Tagalog although he manages to understand some words because, you know, he's been listening to it for quite a while.

SV: When the strike began, your role was to help organize –

AI: Fundraising, things like that.

SV: And when did you begin working on – you were telling me you went and worked on the boycott.

AI: Well, in 1966, the merger, the march through Sacramento, there were 17 Filipinos that joined the march because the head of the AWOC did not agree to the march, so we went on our own, you know. We joined it, and I told Larry, "Larry, you work for AFL-CIO. It's up to you," but anyway. He was there. He helped support it, supported the march. We were 67 in total that left Delano. When we were in Sacramento, there were about 10,000 of us, so it was – and that was the period of time that Cesar became a national figure sort of, you know, because reporters began to report about the march and talk about Cesar Chavez and all that kind of thing.

SV: Were you familiar with the Selma march that took place prior to that march?

AI: Do what?

SV: The Selma march in the South.

AI: Yes. They – Martin Luther King's march –

SV: Yes.

AI: Through Selma?

SV: Yes.

AI: Yeah. I was –

SV: So you were familiar with that before you began your –

AI: We were familiar with that. See, that march and the labor unions did not agree to the marches, you see. You don't do that, all these [inaudible], that kind of thing and sort of was the reason why some of them who were hard-core union men condemned the head of AWOC because he came from the building trades, you see. Al Green was not really hip to that –

SV: Oh.

AI: March, but that created – that march made Cesar a national figure. At the same time it also organized quite a lot of people who began to notice the farm workers and their plight, you know, the problems and the wages and the kind of living condition. It became sort of known, and then the boycott you were talking about.

SV: Yes. Right.

AI: By the time we get – sometime in '68, there was another strike we called in Coachella. We discovered that we were spending too much money in the strikes, and we cannot [inaudible]. We decided that the – the board decided that probably some other kind of approach will be better, and that was the boycott, and people were sent out to the boycott, New York and farm workers, you know, farm workers who –

SV: So what was that like? You were sent to –

AI: I was sent to Baltimore, and I covered Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

SV: Were you by yourself or was there –

AI: Yeah, I had with my family, and I had three boys in the back of my Volkswagen, you know.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Just imagine crossing country –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: With three boys. They're fighting all the time and – but anyway, that was the beginning of that thing, and we'd go into the community. We'd talk to the unions. The unions would sort of pick us up right away, you know, labor unions, organized labor, picked us up right away, give us housing, gave us food, you know, and I left Delano with \$100.00, just imagine. So we had to beg all the way.

SV: Yes.

AI: But you know where you're going to go. You go to this place, there would be food for you. You go to this place, there will be shelter for you. It was arranged.

HR: Now when you went to Baltimore, was it – who did you talk to? Was it the Jews or –

AI: It was the Central Labor Council, and he was there, and the Meat Cutters Union, which was **Jerry Minivase** at the time was the president, and at first they had us, you know, to live in one of the most dangerous place in Baltimore, and we did not stay there another day because when Jerry heard about it, he said, "Hey, hey, hey. Don't put – what did you – why did you put them in a very dangerous place?" One of the ghettos there in –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: So we were moved to another place.

HR: So it was mostly labor meetings that you went to?

AI: Yes, mostly labor meetings, but eventually I had to also talk to community groups, church groups, all kinds of people until finally – I also talked to, for example, to the wives of the senators here. Mondale was the senator then.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: His wife was the president, I think, of that – was the head of that women's senators' wives, something like that, and I talked to a lot

of church groups and all that kind of thing, and we were picketing the different outlet stores, hardware – I mean, grocery stores –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: In Baltimore, and the unions came over in the beginning to meet, you know. They were there. Their organizers were there to help us in the picket line. Eventually the community started to come in –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: That kind of thing.

SV: And did you work with any of the university students –

AI: Yes.

SV: At that point?

AI: Yeah. In fact, you know, one of the recruits that I had who became a very successful man in California is **Richard Ross** who was with the Saint Mary's –

SV: College?

AI: College here in Maryland.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Saint Mary's ministry. They teach – to be a priest. What do you call that?

SV: Oh.

HR: A seminary?

AI: Seminary.

SV: Did you get support from the Baltimore Archdiocese at this point?

AI: Yeah. Yes.

SV: So they were –

AI: They were very active with us also. They were supportive, and they – *The Sun* newspaper, *The Sun* –

SV: Oh, *The Sun*.

AI: *The Baltimore Sun*.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: I think it was **Jane Turner** or somebody that covered us very well. In fact, when Agnew was going to be inaugurated as vice president, I was informed by them that there was going to be centerpiece of grapes at Agnew's inauguration.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: So because it was really like having a red cloth on the bull, you know.

SV: Yeah.

AI: I said, "Well, now the vice president is no longer foot-in-the-mouth Agnew but he is now grape-in-the-mouth Agnew." I think it came out in *The Sun*, and sometime in 1968, and I want to get a copy of that also because that may help me in my book.

SV: Uh huh. So you stayed – you were in Baltimore and Washington until – when did you go back to California?

AI: Until '69, then I was moved to New York after the end of the boycott, after the end of the strike.

SV: And so then you went back to California in '70?

AI: Yeah, '70, after – you know. I went back to California. Then Cesar assigned me to Stockton to be the director of the Stockton office.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Asparagus. I mean, we going to strike already in the asparagus, but Larry quit.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: So Cesar asked me to take over Larry's job in the Delano office to be head of the Delano area.

SV: Did he quit over policy issues within the union or –

AI: Well, Delano – I mean, I guess it was something to do with being reminded or being, "You are the assistant director, but Cesar Chavez is more known," that kind of thing.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Very minor things and also we were – he was being egged because he was receiving a salary, and we're receiving \$5.00 a week. He was receiving a salary from AFL-CIO.

SV: Uh huh. All right. As time went on, I mean, obviously most of the Filipino workers because there were so few children sort of drift away from farm labor.

AI: Yes.

SV: I mean, when did those gangs really – or the work crews sort of disappear as a major part of –

AI: I would think in the '90s, sometimes in the '80s because in the '60s and in the '70s the Filipinos were still – we're getting old, 70s, 65 and up and went home to the Philippines, got married to a young wife, you know, and have a son or a couple of children, and the Filipino was kind of very old already, you know –

SV: Um hm.

AI: So sometimes the son would – the child would say, "I cannot share myself with my father. I feel he's my grandfather" or –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Because too old. The Filipinos were kind of old, and the wife was 20 years old, 21 years old, very young, and you have a son that kind of –

SV: So you continued to work with the union then through the '80s?

AI: Who?

SV: You.

AI: No. In 1973, I told Cesar that I was – if he could give me a leave of absence indefinitely because I'm going to form a Filipino organization, which I did in Stockton, and it was called Filipino **Byanehan**, Incorporated. Filipino Byanehan was like a service center, a non-profit organization, service center helping Filipinos mostly. Young wives of old men, you know, we had a program to help them, educate them, give them skills in case the old man dies, for sure he only had about five more years or ten years more to go –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: And the wives were being trained for skills. It was very good program.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: And the funding was almost \$2 million a year. There were 56 staff.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: It was a very successful program

SV: And you did that for how long?

AI: It was there up to '80, '83, and then there was some kind of political – it's a non-profit organization, so some Filipinos thought they would like to run it, so I gave it to them.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: In one year it was gone and no more.

SV: Oh.

AI: You know how this – it's too bad.

SV: Yeah.

AI: Then I had America also, service center, like the same thing, and I retired.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Decided to retire already.

SV: Well, yeah.

AI: Then I went back to the Philippines, see.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: When I went back to the Philippines, I was in the Philippines a real estate broker. I'm licensed –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Real estate broker in the Philippines. So went back because of the \$5.00 in wage program with the union, I didn't have any Social Security –

SV: Right.

AI: So I had to do something to sort of –

SV: Uh huh. Do you have any – when you were on the march, that was a by far much longer march than the march to Selma. That's –

AI: Where?

SV: When you marched to Sacramento during the strike. I mean, that was like 24 days as opposed to – wasn't it something like that?

AI: Yeah. Yes. It's a long march, 260 miles, I think, something like that. Yeah.

SV: It didn't seem – how much preparation was done before people actually left?

AI: For the march?

SV: Yeah.

AI: Well, it was –

SV: Was it well prepared or –

AI: There's a few days, you know, **Louis Valdez** said – you're going to see the chapter of. He had his satire.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: It was very doable, though. Louis is a very talented person, and it did take so long, but when we left, we were going to leave Delano, we didn't want us to pass through the Main Street, and so there were policemen there stopping us on the highway as we go, so we were kneeling there in the highway going to Delano –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: And finally that day, also about three hours later or a couple of hours later, they allowed us to go. When we were passing through the Main Street, they were calling us all kinds of names, calling us this, blah, blah, blah. "Dirty Mexicans. Hope you don't come back," that kind of thing, Communist, but we didn't mind because we were beginning to – Cesar said non-violence.

SV: Uh huh. And that was accepted by most people.

AI: Do what?

SV: The non-violence.

AI: Well, later on. The Filipinos accepted it later on after Cesar went on a fast.

SV: Uh huh. Was that part of the reason for the fast?

AI: Yeah, that was one of the reasons for the fast. He said was beginning to hear rumbles of violence, "Maybe we should be violent. It's getting too long," you know.

SV: Yeah.

AI: The strike was getting long and 1966.

SV: I mean, the strike went on for five years. That's a long time to hold a strike.

AI: Yeah, five years, but in the first year, nobody understood non-violence. It was getting – you go to the picket line, and people were still crossing your picket line, people – it was a very frustrating situation, and you see that every day, every day.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: And they're laughing at you, "You're not earning any money, you crazy guy."

SV: Uh huh. Were there many people within the Filipino community that crossed the picket line?

AI: Well, not too many. They would go somewhere else because what happened was that one day there was a Filipino – we were still in the earlier part of the strike before we had a merger. There was a Filipino crew boss who did not want to go out of the field –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: And then the younger Filipinos got hold of him when he went out and throw him into the meeting hole, and he didn't want work in the field anymore –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: But he was not hurt. He was just – he was ashamed because, you know, the Filipinos always, "Aw, scab," that kind of thing.

HR: Uh huh. So who did cross the picket lines? Did they have to bring people in from the town or –

AI: Well, for example, we, the strikers, were mostly Filipinos in the early part, and the Chicanos did not know about that either, and it was habitual. I mean, you know, in the sense that in previous years if they would have their strike we would have crossed those in the picket line, and they were crossing mostly Chicanos, and that's why Chavez was – we went to see Chavez to ask him about it, help us with it.

SV: Um hm.

AI: And that is when Chavez started to join, "**Welga**, welga." You know, welga is also welga in the Philippines.

SV: Okay. So –

AI: It was similar.

SV: Oh.

AI: Welga.

SV: Yeah, that's interesting. So it's also the same – this is a Spanish word.

AI: The same. So finally, well, you know, the Filipinos realized because before it was – the Filipinos were told that the Chicanos were lazy and all that kind of thing, and the same thing. The Chicanos were told that the Filipinos, they would get their women or whatever.

SV: Uh huh. So what crops primarily did the Filipino work crews work on? It was asparagus. It was grapes. Were there other crops that –

AI: Yeah. Well, when they were younger, they work everywhere –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: In the field, but when they got older, they were left in asparagus although they were kind of old already, you know. They were 45, 50s and up. They were still working in asparagus, and that's very difficult. You know little **short haul**?

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Is the lettuce, for the lettuce.

SV: Yes.

AI: The asparagus is harder than that because when you cut that you have only this long knife, see? You have to cut it. If the asparagus is growing, you cut it.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: You cut it. So you have to stoop there to cut it, and in asparagus if you start – if you bend, once you bend, you should continue to bend until the afternoon because when you bend, when you go up, oh my God, the pain.

SV: Uh huh. Yeah, because those knives are about this long?

AI: This long, and they cut it, and when you look back some of asparagus are growing again.

SV: Uh huh.

AI: And that's why you – not so many people like the job, you know, because it's too –

SV: Do you know how people work asparagus now? Is it still the same thing?

AI: Same thing.

SV: So it's still bending down and not being –

AI: Yeah. The same thing. Same got to bend, the same thing, but see, the short haul covers only those in the lettuce industry –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Because before – now and days you're seeing longer hauls.

SV: Right.

AI: Because that is where we – farm workers fought against, you know, the long haul – I mean the short haul.

SV: Right.

AI: So –

SV: There's no replacement in asparagus?

AI: No, you've got to be near there because you cannot cut – see asparagus grow –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: You have to cut it here. You hold it and cut it here. So if you bend, you better continue to bend. You try it sometimes –

SV: Yeah. Well, I've only picked two or three at a time, not a whole day of work.

AI: It's a whole day, so by 2:00 – it's hot, summertime because it is the heat of the sun that makes it – and that's why they call it grass because it becomes grass. After a couple of days, no more. You cannot cut it. It's hard, becomes grass.

HR: Uh huh. Do you have any other questions?

SV: No. No, I don't. Do you have any final thoughts about what this strike and the boycott meant to you and to the Filipino community?

AI: What?

SV: Any final thoughts about what the strike and the boycott meant to you, personally, and to the Filipino community and Delano?

AI: Well, to me personally the boycott won the strike, you know. The strike, you picket the – you know how – it's a lot of land, and they have this gate there, and you put a couple of guys there, and you're removing pickets, and nobody cares about that. And then they're robbing picket line, which is composed of a lot of picketers and shouting, "Welga, welga [inaudible], come on," and some would follow you with come on because they get a little bit upset there and get the same also, so they come out and join you, but the boycott is the one that's really the one, the first boycott, anyway.

The boycott that we were in was really the one that made it because there was a time that in, for example, in my area there was a time in 15 minutes – within 15 minutes I will know where the grapes are located, and then in the next 15 minutes there would be a picket line there already, so if you own a store with, you know, you would like to be [inaudible] people making lot of noise in your front [inaudible] don't buy in your store because he has got –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: The boycott was the best boycott that – the best – with other unions it is not – they cannot do it.

SV: Right.

AI: Secondary boycott, but we were not covered under any law, so we –

SV: And the strike leaving a legacy, do you think – what do you think when you look back at the contributions that the strike made towards work and labor and –

AI: Well, the strike of the farm workers created a sense of courage also and for people to realize that they should fight for their rights and nothing's going to happen to them because it is the right in the United States to –

SV: Uh huh.

AI: Be able to talk about what's hurting them. We've given courage and also determination to succeed because just imagine a long time, you know. You imagine more than five years that you continued to fight the same – and it has also become an example to other organizations that if the farmers is going to do it, they can do it also.

SV: Well, okay. Thank you very much.

HR: Thank you, very much.

AI: Okay. I hope you got what you want.

[End of Audio]

Duration: 50 minutes

DRAFT