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My first memorable teacher was my mother. She instilled in me -- a great love for Christ. That had major impact on my life and has contributed to everything I have done. She taught us that we are all the Christ light, and that has been my guiding light. My other memorable teacher was my eighth grade teacher, Mrs. Parr.

Mrs. Parr taught in a segregated school. I went to school in Saticoy, California. We lived on one side and the white children were on the other side of the golf course. Mrs. Parr knew she was teaching Mexican-Americans from the wrong side of the tracks. The other students were close to the country club on the other side of the golf course. They were children of the growers, and went to school a full day, but Mrs. Parr kept insisting that we were just as smart as they were. It was a belief she had in us. She understood always. There was alot of mistrust of white people in that school. But she was just like one of us.

In Saticoy alot of fruit was picked. I never remember not working in the fields. We would pick apricots in June and July and plums in July and August. In November and December we would pick walnuts. When I was a child I would have to pick walnuts and would come to school for half a day, but I never felt oppressed by working because my mother always made a game out of it. We would have races -- my brothers and me-- to see who could pick the most. We would compete. Each of us tried to see how much we could do to prevent my mother from having to do the hardest backbending work. She used to peel the walnuts. It was hard work, but we had fun. Sometimes being outdoors was like camping, but the low wages were always a problem.

Mrs. Parr had to work extra hours with us because of our work schedule, but she never hesitated to stay those extra hours and help us. She treated us with great respect. I was president of my eighth grade and Mrs. Parr assisted me in organizing the agenda and my presentations. She always told me how well I prepared, how well I spoke. Even when I talked too much in class and she would keep me after school she would speak to me about setting an example, that Saticoy needed a lot of leadership. She would tell me it was my responsibility to be a model for the class. The thing that really struck me was her very strong convictions of how good we were. I will always remember that she cultivated my leadership qualities.

I made the honor roll in eleventh, twelfth and two years of college because of a teacher who took special time with me in math. Math was a subject I had great difficulty in. Getting on the honor roll was really special because it was the first time I had even done that in my life.

Later I became a teacher with Our Lady of Victory missionary sisters. I was a nun for fifteen years. Whenever I had a difficult child I would recall Mrs. Parr or my math teacher and stress their good qualities. I learned from her that when people really come to realize that they are important they will do worlds. . .

I got involved with Cesar (Chavez) as a nun when I went to look at the farmworker's strike in Delano. I was struggling with getting involved with civil rights at that time and Cesar helped me through it. Cesar is a great teacher and he's one of my heroes. When I worked with Cesar I worked almost twenty-four hours a day. It was hard work. Being one of the few women involved at that level the men

expected me to cook for them. But I refused to cook because I don't know how, and also I resented being asked to cook just because I was a woman. Cesar was the only leader who really treated me as an equal. He told them to get another volunteer to do the cooking -- that I had other things to do. He used to have a thing where the people who wanted to get into the action would stay up until one or two o'clock in the morning. His method of leadership was to give me one part of a task to do and when I showed enthusiasm he'd let me have it all. When I told him I was worried about how I could possibly do it he told me to go back and ask others how they had done it.

I was deeply involved as an organizer in the Cochella strike. But when it became violent Cesar said, "You will take care of the grape boycott in Michigan. Start in Cleveland and then go to Detroit. Why don't you develop a strategy and I'll work with you." He gave me contacts. Then I started using my own contacts -- priests and nuns. They helped me. I contacted the bishop, then the mayor. Walter Reuther helped. He was a jewel. I was able to accomplish alot with my contacts in religious life, and as a result of that and my involvement with the Young Democrats I was able to get the total state of Michigan solidly behind the grape boycott.

The sixties was a time of crisis for me. I collaborated with the Black Panthers and I remember the anger which was not Cesar's way of doing things. It was changing my personality and so I had to stop. He used to tell us that anger prevented people from hearing each other. You don't listen to each other when you're angry, or concentrate on what you're really saying. Like Ghandi he believes in using political and economic power. He says that violence will never alter anything.

I admire Cesar because he works day and night along with everybody else. I still talk to him from time to time. He typifies the dignity of work--making things better for everyone. His vision is the dignity of being a farmworker--a laborer. Giving a worker his due wages. Cesar has made Ghandi his role model and he has very positive approach. If you look at his campaign he does everything with love, spirit, challenge and force, not with violence or anger.

In the days during which I worked with Cesar if you wanted to talk to him privately it was very hard because he was always busy, always with people. So he would ask you to go with him for a ride. One day I asked to talk to him, and as we sat in the car I said, "Cesar, I would never in my life have been able to do these things. It's you who have brought these talents out in me. How did you do it ? And he answered, "I didn't do it. It has been in you all the time. You have exemplified alot of leadership. It's all a matter of deciding you want to do it."