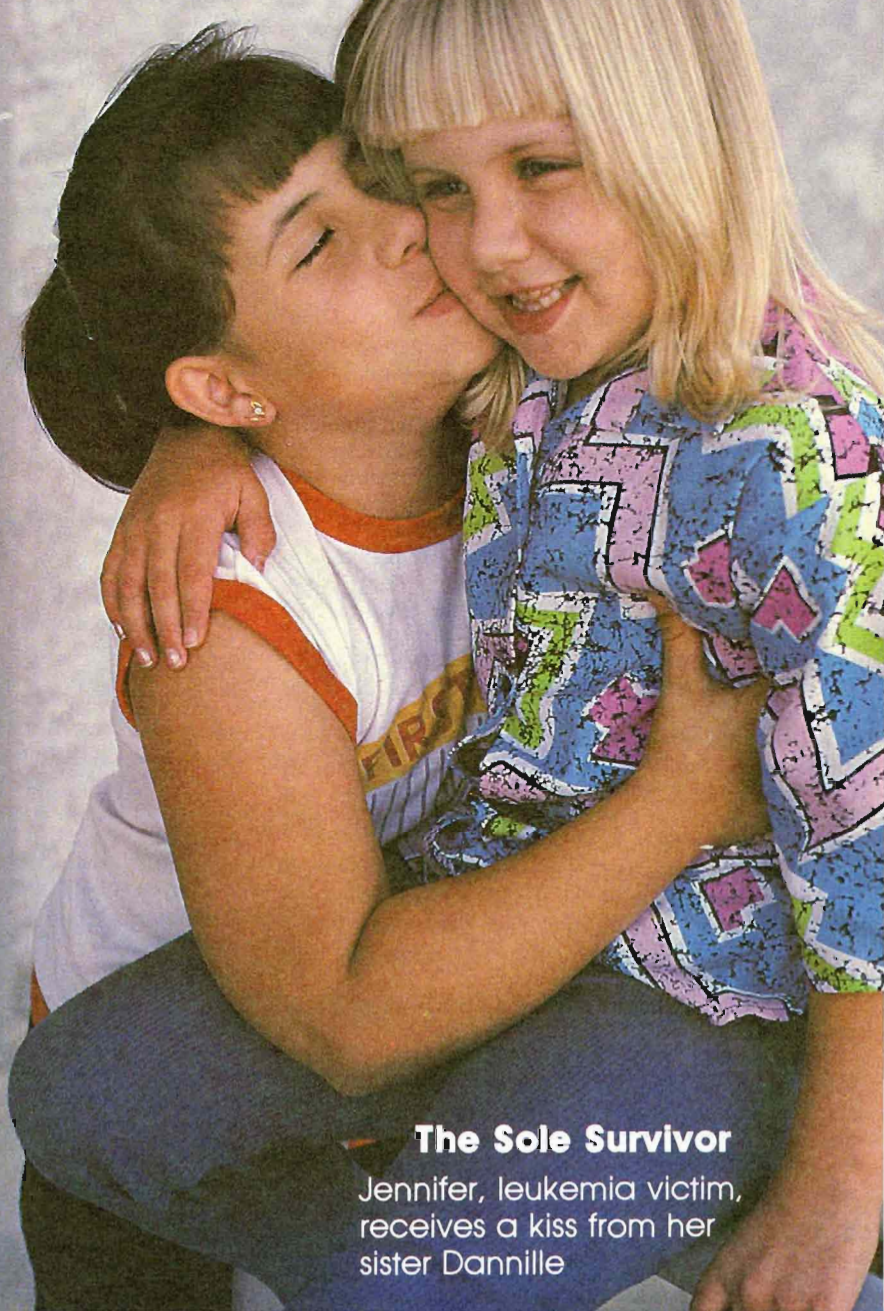


# FOOD AND JUSTICE

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## **The Sole Survivor**

Jennifer, leukemia victim, receives a kiss from her sister Dannille



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*Jennifer has cancer, and although she is in remission, her parents fear she will have a relapse.*

## California Town Declared Leukemia Cluster

When the media in Fowler, California reported there were two cases of children with leukemia in the town of 3,000, Pat Shepherd, the mother of two, became concerned.

"I remember hearing about the cases and counting my blessings that my daughters, Danille and Jennifer, were healthy. Shortly after that, Jennifer was diagnosed with cancer, with leukemia," Pat said.

Jennifer may seem like an unlikely victim of pesticide poisoning. The six-year-old girl does not have farm worker parents. (Her father is a barber.) Jennifer's only connection with agriculture is that she had the misfortune to live in a town surrounded by fields. Of four children diagnosed with cancer between 1981 and 1984 in Fowler, Jennifer is the sole survivor.

Fowler is the latest California town to be designated a "statistically significant cancer cluster" according to state officials. Fowler has 3,500% the expected rate of cancer. The national average of children with cancer is 1 in 8,000; in

Fowler the average is 1 in 227.

Jennifer's father, Dan, believes that the city, county and state have done little to help Fowler's children. He believes that pesticides and fertilizers have contaminated the water supply.

City officials insist Fowler's water is safe. "How can they say it's safe to have 1 part per contaminant per billion, or 10 parts, or 40 parts?" Dan asked. "None of this is based on health data. They base their information on what is okay for a 165-pound, 25-year-old male. I'm not 25. And my children aren't. What do these contamination levels mean to a baby or a child?"

"The people I really feel for are the farm workers. Those people are going out in those fields and getting hit every day and so are their children."

Jennifer's illness is not the only tragedy the Shepherds have experienced. Pat had two miscarriages and a stillbirth before she had Jennifer. The Shepherds have since moved from Fowler, but when they were there, they lived across the street from a vineyard

Thanksgiving Day is upon us again — a national holiday of thanksgiving services, family get-togethers, and turkey, potatoes, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie pouring out of the Horn of Plenty.

But behind that familiar scene is another shameful one that still persists after 27 years: Edward R. Murrow's "Harvest of Shame," a TV documentary on the miserable lives of migrant farm workers first shown on Thanksgiving Eve in 1959.

The irony shocked Americans: The very people who harvested the food for Thanksgiving feasts were themselves too poor to put food on the table to feed their families.

Little has changed. Just a few years after Murrow's film, in 1965, we began our first grape boycott. After winning that, we had to start another boycott in 1973. Now, in 1986, it's the same old story. Growers have once again forced farm workers to begin a boycott of all California table grapes to regain their rights to free and fair elections, good-faith bargaining by growers, and protection from the poison of pesticides.

But there's a big difference in this boycott. Now growers are so recklessly saturating crops with deadly pesticides that residues on food make the Horn of Plenty as potentially poisonous for consumers as working with them in the fields is for farm workers.

Growers are no longer feeding people — they're poisoning them.

Twenty-seven years later, Murrow would be as ashamed and as proud of a new film we have produced, "The Wrath of Grapes," as he was of "Harvest of Shame" — ashamed that farm workers are still abused but proud that the peril of pesticides to them and consumers is being exposed. 🍷



*Dan and Pat Shepherd believe that Fowler's water is contaminated and that this contamination is responsible for their daughter's illness.*

and a well.

"Many nights they were spraying pesticides," Dan said. "And I would wake in the morning with my eyes swollen shut."

Although Jennifer has been in remission since August 1984, the Shepherds constantly fear she will have a relapse. The Shepherds hope that no other children will share Jennifer's experience.

Dan said, "I want people who read this magazine to know they are not safe. Just because you are white, middle-class or educated does not mean you are not at risk of being contaminated — it does not mean your children are not at risk."

Christopher Guerra was not as lucky as Jennifer. He died of leukemia in April, 1984; he was 12 years old. He was Helen Guerra's youngest child.

Helen lived in Fowler since 1952, but she moved after Chris died. "I just couldn't bear the memories," she said.

Helen said her son began feeling ill in the summer of 1982. When the doctor told the Guerras that Chris had leukemia, the family was stunned. "I asked, 'Why my son?'" Helen said. "Then I thought, why should four children get sick? This is not a large town. There has to be something in the water."

The state is sending the leukemia victims' parents questionnaires about their

lifestyles. Helen does not believe these will help much. "What do these children have in common?" she asked. "They have different cultures; they eat different foods. The only thing they have in common is the water they drank and the air they breathed."

Helen said her son died a slow, painful death. "I just hope no other child gets sick like Chris did," she said. "I wish people would be more aware of the pesticides and what they do. It hurts so much to lose a child. They suffer so much."

"I want to tell people: beware of pesticides. Avoid them. Love your children, because they could be gone one day." ❀

*Helen Guerra lost her youngest son to leukemia.*



## Boycott Actions Across the U.S. — And a Near Miracle in Canada

It wasn't exactly a case of changing water to wine at the wedding in Canada — but close.

At a dinner meeting of district presidents of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation at the Hilton Hotel in Toronto on October 3, Lupe and Maria Martinez, UFW boycott organizers in Canada, were invited to make a presentation on the table grape boycott. Present were 130 district presidents representing 36,000 Canadian teachers, headed by Rod Albert, president of the federation.

Martinez explained the boycott, showed the new boycott film, "The Wrath of Grapes," and asked for the teachers' support. The presidents voted unanimously to endorse the grape boycott.

Then the near miracle. As the various dishes were served, Maria noticed that among them were fruit baskets for each

table — "filled with the forbidden fruit," she said. She quickly informed President Albert, who in turn called for the Hilton manager. Albert loudly demanded, for all to hear, that the grapes be removed immediately: "The OSSTF supports farm workers and their table grape boycott!"

"The heat generated by the anger of Albert and the district presidents had those grapes turning into raisins fast," said Lupe Martinez. "Within minutes the manager had all the chefs and waiters and waitresses come out of the kitchen, collect the grapes in plastic bags, and throw them in the garbage. It was a beautiful sight," Lupe said.

The OSSTF voted to join the UFW Solidarity Membership program with a monthly contribution of \$200 to the boycott, and all the delegates purchased and wore boycott buttons. "That was a beautiful sight, too," Lupe said.

*UFW supporters and officers of OSSTF: (from left to right, seated) Fay Savage, secretary for provincial executive; Jim Head, vice president; Rod Albert, president; Ruth Bauman, vice president; Burt Cottenden, treasurer; (from left to right, standing) Graham Carr, executive officer; Dorris St. Amanda, executive officer; Kim McCulloch, executive; and Morris Richardson, general secretary.*



*Cesar Chavez leads supporters on a picket line in Houston.*

Photo by Craig Hartley.  
"The Houston Post"



## Texas

Rebecca Flores Harrington, UFW director for Texas, reported that continuing boycott actions were highlighted by the four-day visit of UFW President Cesar Chavez to three Texas cities in mid-September. In Dallas, Chavez attended a state-wide Peace and Justice Conference and showed "The Wrath of Grapes" film to the more than 300 participants.

In San Antonio the next day, Chavez participated in a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Patricio Flores at the San Fernando Cathedral. Archbishop Flores endorsed the boycott, and after the Mass, Chavez met with farm workers, seminarians, and parishioners. Other San Antonio boycott endorsements came from State Representatives Tommy Adkisson, Frank Madla, and Greg Luna.

In Houston, Chavez walked with supporters on a picket line in front of Randall's Food Market. Afterward, Chavez addressed several groups and showed them "The Wrath of Grapes." The groups included the Houston Metro Ministry, representing 100 different congregations; the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston; the Gay Political Caucus; the Houston Central Labor Council; and students at the University of Houston.

Among the many who endorsed the grape boycott in Houston were Bishop Joseph Fiorenza; State Representatives Roman Martinez, Larry Evans, Al Edwards, Erwin Barton, Harold Dutton, Senfronia Thompson, David Petronella, Debra Danberg, Paul Colbert, and Ron Wilson; and City Councilman Ben Reyes.

## Michigan

Artie Mendoza and the boycott staff in Michigan accompanied Chavez on a two-day trip to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and Wayne State University in Detroit in late September. Chavez first met with the UFW Support Group headed by President Roberto Frisancho. At an afternoon reception, Chavez was introduced by Ann Arbor Mayor Ed Pierce to university officials and students and to local community and political leaders.

Chavez also participated in a Hewlett Foundation seminar on conflict management and met with local labor leaders before making a major speech and film presentation at the university's Rackham Amphitheatre in the evening.

Chavez then went to Wayne State University in Detroit for a reception and luncheon meeting with labor leaders. He also met with officials of the Walter Reuther Library, the depository for UFW archives.

## St. Louis

Dolores Huerta, first vice-president of the UFW, and Frank Ortiz, director of the Chicago-based Midwest Boycott, were invited to St. Louis to promote the boycott at the three-day Sixth National Membership Meeting of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) in late September. Huerta addressed the more than 300 delegates and then introduced "The Wrath of Grapes." The delegates reacted to the horrors of the pesticide menace depicted in the film with a ringing endorsement of the table grape boycott and a donation of \$1,500.

"It's amazing how little most people know about what pesticide poisoning is doing to farm workers, townspeople, and consumers," Huerta said, "but they're stunned and angry after they see the film."

## Mid-Atlantic Boycott

The Mid-Atlantic Boycott office in New York City reported that labor networking is proving to be an effective strategy in spreading the news about the table grape boycott. Boycott Director Arturo Rodriguez said that Thomas Van Arsdale, president of the New York City Labor Council, recently sent out a letter to affiliates asking local labor leaders to contact major stores and demand that they take table grapes off their shelves.

"This action by Van Arsdale really puts teeth into an endorsement of the boycott made earlier by the council," Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez also said the UFW Solidarity Membership program is proving a big boost for the boycott. Gold Eagle memberships have been subscribed to by the New York Metro Postal Union and the United Federation of Teachers, Local #2.

"But it's not just the financial help we've been getting," Rodriguez said. "We've been given office space, free use of phones, and all kinds of materials by several unions." He cited several individuals and unions who have made sizable contributions: Bettye Roberts, president, and Bob McEnroe, executive director, of the American Federation of State, City, and Municipal Employees, District Council 1707; Vito Pitta, president of the Hotel and Motel Trades Council; Beverly Gans, director of United Auto Workers Sub-Region 9A; Barry Markman, vice-president of the Public Employees Federation; Enio Carrion, president of the Hispanic Labor Council; George Boncoraglio, president of the Civil Service Employees Association, Local 1000, Region 2; and David Dyson, director of the Union Label Department of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. ♡



*The United Federation of Teachers, Local #2 present their Gold Eagle Solidarity Membership to Arturo Rodriguez, boycott director. From left to right are: Edwin Espallat, vice president; Arturo Rodriguez; Sandra Feldman, president; Irv Hershenbaum, UFW staff; and Georgie Altomare, American Federation of Teachers.*

# EPA Finally Acts: Dinoseb Banned

In 1970, the UFW was successful in getting DDT banned in fields covered by UFW contracts. It took the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) two more years to ban this pesticide nationwide.

In 1984, the UFW demanded the banning of five deadly pesticides as part of table grape boycott. The EPA was again unconscionably slow. On October 7, the agency finally banned one of these pesticides — Dinoseb.

“We know that with the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the EPA, the primary concern is not human health and safety,” Cesar Chavez said at a press conference in San Francisco shortly before the ban was announced.

Chavez was joined at the conference by representatives from five environmental and farm worker advocacy groups. Calling for the immediate, world-wide ban of Dinoseb were: Dr. Marion Moses, National Farm Workers Health Group; Karen Synder, Natural Resources Defense Council; Ralph

*Demanding the world-wide ban of Dinoseb at a San Francisco press conference are: (from left to right) Karen Synder, Ralph Lightstone, Cesar Chavez, Dr. Marion Moses, Michael Picker, and Dr. Don Villarejo.*

Lightstone, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation; Dr. Don Villarejo, California Institute for Rural Studies; and Michael Picker, Toxics Coordinating Project.

Dinoseb has contaminated ground water in three states (California, New York, and Massachusetts) and has been found to adversely affect the eyes, lungs, skin, liver, kidney and brain. It has also been found to cause severe birth defects and male sterility.

EPA spokesperson, Al Heier, was asked why the agency banned Dinoseb now. He said it was because the EPA received data linking Dinoseb to birth defects. Heier said it took awhile to get this data. This is an understatement. Dinoseb has been in use for almost 40 years.

Heier said that growers and manufacturers can appeal the suspension and cancellation of Dinoseb.

Chavez commented, “It is time that public health and not agribusiness profits be the priority in decisions regarding pesticide use.” ♡

## GUEST COLUMN

# Pesticides and Toxic Contamination

*By Penny Newman and Michael Picker*

It's not only that the problem of toxics is getting worse — we're finally finding out what's already in our air, water and food. California recently required that drinking water be tested for synthetic chemicals. One of the first studies under this new law shows that one in every four drinking water wells has been contaminated.

One of the toxic pollutants threatening my home is the deadly pesticide DDT. When the Environmental Protection Agency finally banned DDT, it still allowed a company to make it to sell overseas. But the hazardous wastes from making it remain in this country and threaten our communities. My family suffers health problems because of this irresponsible behavior.

Where pesticides are concerned, you can run, but you can't hide. So we are fighting back. Our group, Concerned Neighbors in Action, began in 1979 by fighting for the cleanup of the Stringfellow Acid Pits. We are now united with other groups in the Toxics Coordinating Project, a network of more than 100 organizations and leaders concerned about toxics in the workplace and environment.

Recently, the TCA joined Cesar Chavez and the UFW in demanding that the EPA enforce a worldwide and total ban on the pesticide Dinoseb, which recent tests have shown causes birth defects. Shortly after, the EPA banned its use and sale in the U.S. but still allows it to be sold overseas.

We are all becoming the victims of



*Penny Newman*

these chemical dependent industries. Unless we act, they will continue to pollute our food, homes and workplaces. Ultimately, our fight is the same as the farm workers' — for justice and for our children. By continuing to work and fight alongside each other, we will finally win. ♡

*Penny Newman is the Chair of CNA and lives in Glen Avon, near Riverside, California. Michael Picker is the Executive Director of the TCA.*





*Mayra Sanchez is the thirteenth McFarland child to contract cancer.*

## A Story Too Often Told

**W**e have told this story before. A child in McFarland, California becomes ill. The parents take the child to a doctor and are told their son or daughter has cancer.

Mayra Sanchez, 6, and her parents are the latest McFarland family to go through this heart-breaking experience. Mayra was diagnosed as having a brain tumor, an illness which makes her the thirteenth child to be diagnosed with cancer in McFarland since 1981.

Alejandro and Esmeralda Sanchez said their daughter was a normal child the first five years of her life. But specialists who have been treating Mayra do not believe she will ever be normal again.

"The doctors don't think Mayra will recuperate," Esmeralda said. "Even though they say this, we have seen some improvements. But we might see them because we are so desperate for our

daughter to improve."

Now, Mayra is completely helpless. She cannot walk, talk or do anything for herself. Her parents feed her through a tube in her stomach.

Like many other McFarland parents with sick children, the Sanchezes blame the town's water. Esmeralda believes the water is contaminated. "Some days the water is so filthy, we cannot take a shower," she said. "Sometimes the water smells like bleach. It is disgusting, and I think the town should clean the water up."

But town and state officials are not helping. Even if something was done now, it might be too late for Mayra.

Esmeralda said, "We try to have faith that she will improve, but we don't know. Sometimes we don't even know if our daughter recognizes us. When we call her name, she turns toward us, but we just don't know." ❀

## California Governor's Veto Angers McFarland Residents

**"I** couldn't believe it when I found out [Republican Gov. George] Deukmejian vetoed that bill," said Teresa Buenthello, whose four-year-old daughter, Tresa, died of cancer two years ago. Tresa was one of 13 children who have been diagnosed with cancer and one of six who have already died in recent years in McFarland, one of two towns known as "cancer clusters" (see page 3) in California's agriculturally rich San Joaquin Valley.

What infuriated Buenthello, other cancer victims' parents, and the majority of the 6,000 residents was Deukmejian's veto of legislation that would have provided money to determine why so many children are dying of cancer in the small town.

Health experts are convinced the high rate of cancer is being caused by pesticides and nitrate-containing fertilizers leaching into the water system from surrounding agricultural fields. Nitrates have been linked to cancer, and

four of the city's six wells have nitrate concentrations above state standards.

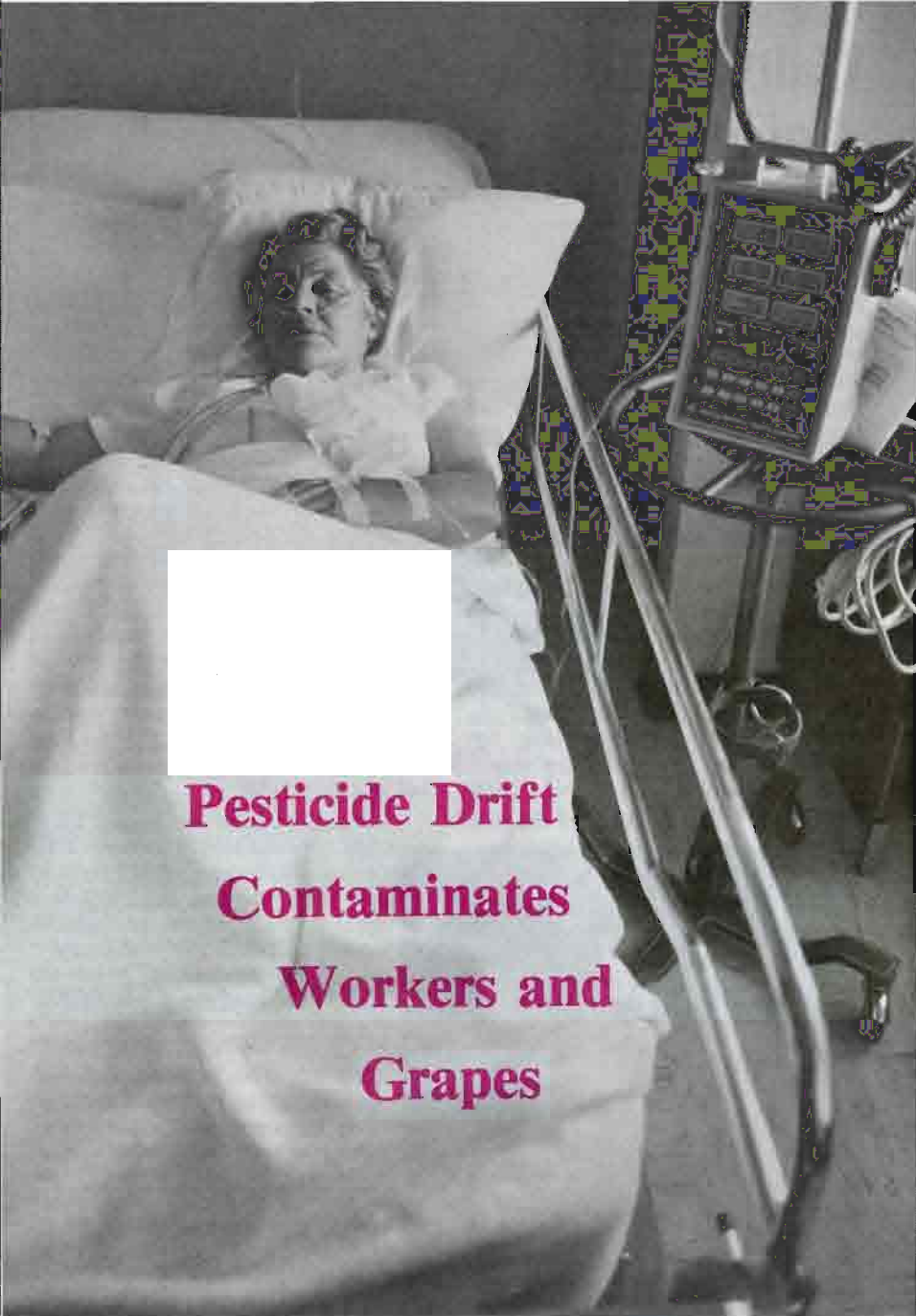
### Senator "Shocked"

"Fiscal integrity" was the reason Deukmejian gave for his veto of the \$125,000 appropriation. "I was shocked by the veto," said Sen. Walter W. Stiern (D-Bakersfield), author of the bill. "It was such a minuscule amount of money." He was also disgusted because McFarland research could have been used for 84 other rural communities with water that the Health Services Department says does not meet the state's drinking water standard for nitrates.

Teresa Buenthello was almost as mystified as angry about Deukmejian's strange sense of values. "The lives of kids are more important than money," she said, "and I can't help but wonder how many more children like my little Tresa will have to die before he'll sign a bill like that." ❀



*McFarland has 400% the expected rate of cancer. A study to find out why is "premature" according to Deukmejian.*



**Pesticide Drift  
Contaminates  
Workers and  
Grapes**

*The pesticide applicator told Maria Gomez, a farm worker, that he was not spraying a harmful chemical. Gomez' doctors would probably disagree.*

**I**nsecticide drifting from an orange grove poisoned 59-year-old Maria J. Gomez and 10 other farm workers picking and packing table grapes in a vineyard on the Marko Zaninovich ranch near Poplar, California on September 5.

The incident involves negligence and lying by two growers, a slow county investigation, questionable state residue tests and possible grape contamination.

#### **The Incident**

“The sprayer told us in the morning that he was using something to improve the color of the oranges and not anything dangerous,” said Gomez, a grape packer from Earlimart and a 25-year employee of Zaninovich. “Most of the crew believed the sprayer because he wasn’t wearing protective clothes. I had my doubts because the chemical smelled like a skunk and the oranges were too small.”

Spraying in the orange grove, owned by ANR Pistachio Company, continued all morning. After lunch, the sprayer returned but with protective gear — cloth gloves and what amounted to a surgical mask. Gomez said this is when the crew stopped believing the sprayer’s story.

About 2 p.m., workers started getting sick. Instead of moving the crew, one supervisor, who also became ill, told the workers to hurry — that they had to finish and get out of the area.

“We still had at least 60 boxes of grapes to pack,” said Gomez, “and we had full trays on the ground. It didn’t make much sense to hurry.”

“By this time, I had a bad headache, nausea, eye irritation and sweating,” said Gomez. “My face went numb. I started seeing black spots and I passed out. The next thing I remember is waking up in the Delano Medical Center — at 3:40 p.m.”

The doctors’ reports show that Gomez and the other workers (who came to the hospital at the end of their shifts) had indeed been poisoned. The chemical was actually Supracide, a dangerous restricted-use organophosphate and a suspected carcinogen. It can kill workers with prolonged exposure and is illegal for

use on grapes.

#### **The Investigation**

The Tulare County Agriculture Department didn’t start its investigation until September 9. Its notification came from neighboring Kern County officials who heard about the incident from “unofficial” sources in Delano. The Tulare County Health Department has no record that the Delano Medical Center ever reported the poisonings as required by law.

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***“Of course the grapes were sprayed. I should know, I was in the vineyard packing them.”***


**— Maria Gomez**

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For its part, the California Department of Food and Agriculture did not test the grapes for residue until September 11 and then its samples came from boxes that Zaninovich workers said were “set aside” for inspectors at the company’s Delano warehouse. After testing, the CDFA officials declared the grapes “residue free” and legal.

Curiously, only one of the state’s tests was sensitive enough to detect Supracide residue levels below .05 parts per million, the Environmental Protection Agency’s tolerance for this chemical on most produce. The other tests all had sensitivities of .165 p.p.m. In addition, the EPA only uses a safety factor of 10 to set this tolerance rather than the normal 100.

“Zaninovich is no fool,” said Gomez. “The company could easily have changed grapes or switched labels.” Gomez also said that company officials told workers that it “dumped” the sprayed grapes. State officials say the grapes are still in the warehouse. Zaninovich either lied to workers or to government officials.

“I wouldn’t eat those grapes,” said Gomez, “and consumers should know that the grapes with the Supracide on them are SUNVIEW brand Thompson seedless.” 



*In the family's front yard amid junked cars and other refuse, the Castro children play.*

## For the Children's Sake

**R**emegio Castro is a farm worker, a father and a husband. He is also disheartened.

"This is not the way I want my family to live," he said. Castro is referring to his home, a trailer in Lindsay, California, which contains nothing more than two bedrooms and a kitchen. The family's "front yard" is a dirt lot littered with tires and obsolete appliances. For this, Castro pays \$175 a month rent. "This is not the kind of place I want to raise my children in," he said.

But Castro does not have a lot of choices. "No matter how hard I work," Castro said, "I still can't seem to make ends meet. Sometimes I want to buy meat for dinner, but if I do, there might not be enough money for food next week."

Castro works for various labor contractors; he takes any available job. "In a good week, I make \$150 for seven days of hard labor. Out of this, I pay rent and buy food for my family," he said.

At times there is no available work for Castro. "Sometimes I go three months without a job," he said. "I will do any job, but sometimes there is nothing."

Castro was asked how the family survives during these long stretches. He replied, "We suffer."

Even at the best of times, it can be said the Castros suffer. They live in deplorable conditions and subsist on beans and tortillas. Ironically, it is they, and thousands of other such laborers, who provide food for the people in this country.

"I just want to have enough work and a decent place to live," Castro said. "I don't expect luxury. I just want to have the basics of a normal life — for my children's sake." ▼

*Remegio Castro (far right) with his wife and four of his children in front of their home. From left to right are: Jorge, Darlene, Josefina, Veronica, Remegio, and Ricardo.*



## School Buses Sprayed With Pesticides

**T**wo instances of school buses sprayed with pesticides by crop-dusting aircraft near Salinas, California during the past year are frightening examples of how the plague of pesticide poisoning affects not only farm workers, townspeople, and consumers but their innocent children as well:

- Children of farm workers working in sprayed fields are born without arms and legs and suffer similar severe birth defects.
- Children in rural communities are dying of cancer from pesticides and fertilizers contaminating drinking water.
- Children riding to and from school are victims of pesticide poisoning from aircraft spraying crops.
- And only God knows what fate lies in store for children yet to be born of fathers and mothers who have eaten food with pesticide residues before conception and during pregnancy.

The first of the two reported bus sprayings — it's anybody's guess how

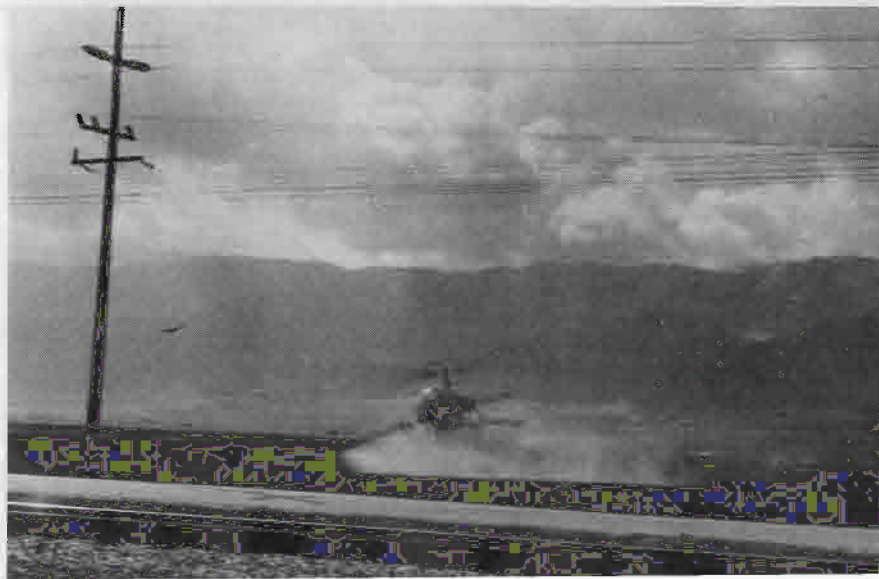
many more have gone unreported — took place on September 6, 1985, when a school bus on its way to the San Lucas Elementary School was engulfed in a cloud of pesticides from a crop-dusting airplane spraying a tomato field with two fungicides and the highly toxic insecticide, Monitor.

Bus driver Isabel Espinosa said the spray was so thick "I had to turn on my windshield wipers." Several of the 32 children experienced difficult breathing, stomach pains, and headaches.

All Wallace Marvin, assistant agricultural commissioner of Monterey County, could say was that crop-dusting aircraft "are supposed to keep the material [pesticides] on target."

The second bus incident, this past September, resulted in the spraying of 25 school children at a rural bus stop on the way to King City schools. They were enveloped in a spray drifting from a helicopter applying a mixture of the pesticides Phosdrin, Diphon, Metasystox-R, Methamil, and Retamil. ▼

*Pesticides drift over the nation's highways and towns posing a potential threat to millions.*







*"Trapped Children," one of 6 originals by Nora Mendoza*

## NEW — Farm Worker Greeting Cards

Since its inception in 1965, El Taller Grafico (The Graphics Workshop), in partnership with contributing artists, has provided assistance in raising funds for the United Farm Workers' **Los Niños Campesinos** program.

To mark its 21st Anniversary, El Taller Grafico is offering for sale a limited edition of greeting cards by artist Nora Mendoza of Detroit, Michigan.

Proceeds from the sale of these cards will assure the continuation of the **Los Niños Campesinos** program.

**YES** Send me \_\_\_\_\_ sets of 12 cards (2 each of 6 pictures, blank inside, with envelopes) for the introductory price of \$5.75 per package.

I enclose a check/money order for \_\_\_\_\_

My address is:

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