



Cesar Chavez's widow, Helen, accepted the Medal of Freedom for her late husband from President Clinton at a White House ceremony on August 8.

President Clinton Presents Posthumous Medal of Freedom to Cesar Chavez at the White House

Helen Chavez, the widow of United Farm Workers founder and president Cesar Chavez, accepted the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Clinton on behalf of her late husband at a White House East Room ceremony on August 8.

In the citation accompanying America's highest civilian honor which was awarded posthumously, the President lauded Chavez for having "faced formidable, often violent opposition with dignity and nonviolence. And he was victorious. Cesar Chavez left our world better than he found it, and his legacy inspires us still."

"He was for his own people a Moses figure," the President declared. "The farm workers who labored in the fields and yearned for respect and self-sufficiency pinned their hopes on this remarkable man who, with faith and discipline, soft-spoken humility and amazing inner strength, led a very courageous life."

The citation accompanying the award noted how Chavez was a farm worker from childhood who "possessed a deep

personal understanding of the plight of migrant workers, and he labored all his years to lift their lives." During his lifetime, Chavez never earned more than \$5,000 a year. The late Senator Robert Kennedy called him "one of the heroic figures of our time."

Chavez's successor, UFW President Arturo Rodriguez, thanked Mr. Clinton on behalf of the union. "At a time when so few Americans seem inclined to jeopardize their careers—much less their lives—on behalf of principle, the life of Cesar Chavez stands out with even greater moral force," Rodriguez said. "Every day in California and in other states where farm workers are organizing, [Chavez] lives in their hearts. Cesar lives wherever Americans he inspired work nonviolently for social change."

Also attending the White House ceremony were other members of the Chavez family, UFW's First Vice President Dolores Huerta, who co-founded the union, and Magdaleno Rose Avila, Exec. Director of the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release: August 8, 1994

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT IN MEDAL OF FREEDOM CEREMONY The East Room 4:40 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the White House. As you might imagine, one of the great pleasures of the presidency is selecting recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom -- the highest honor given to civilians by the United States of America.

If I might begin on a very personal and immediate note, last fall, this annual ceremony was held on a very happy day for me and for those of us who want a safer and more humane United States. It was the day we made the Brady Bill the law of the land.

Today as we gather here, Congress is on the verge of voting on the most comprehensive anticrime bill in history. But that bill has been held hostage for 11 days by certain special interest groups. So as we recognize the contributions of civilians to our country's way of life, I'd like to take this opportunity to call on those groups who are blocking the crime bill to let it come to a vote, and ask the other citizens of the United States to ask the Congress for the same thing. Many people we honor here today have given their whole lives to enriching the fabric of the future, and we can do no less. (Applause.)

This afternoon we will present the Presidential Medal of Freedom to nine remarkable individuals whose service to our democracy and to humanity has advanced the common interest of freedom-loving people, not only here at home but throughout the world -- Herbert Block, the late Cesar Chavez, Arthur Flemming, Dorothy Height, Barbara Jordan, Lane Kirkland, Robert Michel and Sargent Shriver.

The medals these Americans receive today has a special history. It was established by President Truman in 1945 at first reward notable service in the war. In 1963 President Kennedy amended the award for distinguished civilian service in peace time. The honorees that year included the singer, Marian Anderson, Justice Felix Frankfurter, diplomat John McCloy, labor leader George Meany, the writer E.B. White, playwright Thornton Wilder and the artist Andrew Wyeth.

By the time that first ceremony was held here in the White House in December of 1963, President Johnson had added to the roll of names President Kennedy and His Holiness Pope John XXIII. Listen to this: At that time, Under Secretary of State George Ball said that the President is establishing what we can proudly call an American civil honors list. How many of our greatest citizens who went on to achieve other things, said that the greatest thing that could ever be said about them was that they were good citizens. That is true in every way of those we honor today.

Cesar Chavez, before his death in April of last year, had become a champion of working people everywhere. Born into Depression-era poverty in Arizona in 1927, he served in the United States Navy in the second world war, and rose to become one of our greatest advocates of nonviolent change. He was for his own people a Moses figure.

The farm workers who labored in the fields and yearned for respect and self-sufficiency pinned their hopes on this remarkable man, who, with faith and discipline, with soft-spoken humility and amazing inner strength, led a very courageous life. And in so doing, brought dignity to the lives of so many others, and provided for us inspiration for the rest of our nation's history.

We are honored to have his wife, friend and long-time working partner, Helen Chavez, to be with us today to receive the award.

These recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom represent different political parties, different ideologies, different professions; indeed, different ages. Their different eras, different races, different generations in American history cannot be permitted to obscure the fact of what they share in common -- an unusually profound sense of responsibility to improve the lives of their fellow men and women, to improve the future for our children, to embody the best of what we mean by the term "American citizen." By their remarkable records of service and by their incredible spirit, we have all been enriched.

And now, I would ask the military aide to read the citations as I present the Medal of Freedom.

(Citations are read.)

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing let me say that I couldn't help thinking as the citations were read and I looked into the faces of our honorees and their families, friends and admirers here, that we too often reserve our greatest accolades for our citizens when they are gone. I wish that Cesar Chavez could be here today. I am grateful that his wife is here, and I am so grateful that all these others are here.

Let us remember today that the greatest gift any of us can give the founders of this Constitution and this Republic is to emulate the work of these citizens whom we honor today, every day, each in our own way.

Thank you for being here. God bless you all.

(Applause.)

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Celebrating the Medal of Freedom

The following is a list of events surrounding President Clinton's awarding of the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Cesar on Monday, August 8. These events took place around the country as we all celebrated this great honor for Cesar, Helen, the Chavez family, the UFW, and especially the campesinos.

Washington D.C.

The Ceremony at the Whitehouse was a spiritual moment as Helen F. Chavez received the medal on behalf of all those who believe in justice. A reception was held for the families and friends of the nine recipients. They were able to mingle with Congressmen, Cabinet Members and other Celebrities. The Secretary of Transportation, Federico Peña was there to greet the UFW/Foundation delegation.

In addition to the ceremony and reception at the Whitehouse, there were two receptions held early this week to celebrate the bestowing of the Presidential Medal of Freedom upon Cesar. The first was at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, MD, where our delegation from California stayed. The reception was sponsored by Stephanie & Rod Bower and other D.C. area supporters. We had songs and an intimate sharing of sisterhood and brotherhood.

The second reception was hosted by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the National Council of La Raza on Tuesday, August 9 and was attended by more than 300 people. Recording artist Tish Hinajosa played a few songs, and many congressional leaders spoke, including Jose Serrano, Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Mfume, Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. Other members who were present, some of whom spoke, included Esteban Torres, Howard Berman, Bill Richardson, Kika de la Garza, and Bob Pastore. This reception also had much singing, and also many Viva Chavez' and ¡Si Se Puede's!

New York

Norm Yen and the New York crew put together a spectacular press event which was attended by such notables as Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Manhattan borough President Ruth Messinger, City Council Member Katherine Ford, who served as M.C. for the event, and activist Gloria Steinem. A large contingent from IGLWU also came out to show their support for the UFW and Cesar. There was coverage from three TV stations and three radio networks.

In a statement describing what Cesar meant to her, Gloria Steinem said, "He expected more from those around him than we did from ourselves, and so made us able to surpass our limitations... The people changed by Cesar's life go on to touch others in an endless wave. He is still with us. He is part of the future."

Salinas

1200 UFW supporters and workers came out in force on Monday in Salinas to participate in a three-hour, seven mile long march to celebrate Cesar Chavez and his being given the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The march was followed by a festive UFW rally and celebration at an area park. There was also a press conference which received extensive media coverage by 5 TV news channels and 2 newspapers.

Unfortunately the event was not without its tragic moments. Apparently, three men being chased by la Migra and showed up at the park where our supporters were gathering. La Migra showed up and proceeded to arrest the men in front of everyone, reportedly pulling one of the men by the hair on his head. This brutality enraged everyone! The members of the Salinas office feel that it is a disgrace that la Migra showed up at a union rally which could serve to scare away UFW supporters from attending future events. Subsequently, Efran Barajas and the Salinas crew organized a protest rally at the INS offices. A press conference was held on August 10th to condemn the actions by the officers.

¡Si Se Puede!

Stockton

The Stockton office held a press conference that was attended by 3 news stations and received front page coverage in newspapers in Tracy, Lodi and Manteca. The Stockton newspaper covered the event on the front page of the Metro section as well. The day was also declared a Salinas City holiday in honor of Cesar by City Councilman Ted Gonzales.

Parlier

The Cesar E. Chavez Elementary School held an event in honor of Cesar on Monday which was attended by Tanis Ybarra and other UFW organizers from Parlier. The kids put on a dynamic show complete with poetry, dancing, a band as well as many guest speakers who praised Cesar and his memory. The day was culminated in a ceremony by the children where a replica of the Presidential Medal of Freedom was hung on the Ocampo portrait of Cesar.

San Juan

The San Juan office held a press conference and event at their office on Monday, August 8th. They placed poster boards around the room inscribed with quotes from Cesar and passages about his life. Two TV stations came out to cover the event which was attended by approximately 25 campesinos. When the news covered the ceremony at the White House, they also showed the events in the San Juan office with the UFW flag as a backdrop.

El Paso

A group of community and political leaders as well as our own Norma Chavez and the El Paso UFW crew held a "Freedom Luncheon" at Jalisco Restaurant in South El Paso on Monday, August 8th. The luncheon was to honor and pay tribute to Cesar Chavez, his life's achievements, and his receipt of the Freedom Medal.

Austin

The Austin office held a press conference which received extensive coverage from 2 tv stations and 3 newspapers. Two Austin City Council Members came out to pay tribute to Cesar as well as special guest Ed Seal of the Texas AFL-CIO.

Sacramento

Sacramento Mayor Joe Serna, Jr. hosted a luncheon for community leaders on Monday, August 8th to celebrate Cesar's receipt of the Medal of Freedom. Guests included Police Chief Arturo Venegas, Jr and Councilman Sam Pannell. Serna gave an emotional address where he proclaimed, "I have spent most of my career around well educated, successful people - both in state and local government and at the university where I teach. Yet the truly important lessons in life that I learned over the last 27 years came from a man who didn't have a college degree...His name was Cesar Chavez. And if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be Mayor of Sacramento today. I came from the UFW. Cesar and the union are my roots."

The luncheon featured personal memories shared about Cesar from those who knew him and a video of la Causa.

Denver

The Denver City Council passed a resolution on August 8th to formally recognize the decision by President Clinton to award Cesar the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The resolution praised Cesar in stating that, "He championed the rights of farm workers, organizing the nation's largest migrant workers' union, the United Farm Workers Union, and through his activism and leadership succeeded in gaining basic rights, dignity and equality for thousands of workers...Cesar Chavez has been a role model and advocate for millions of Americans who are grateful for the many contributions and sacrifices he made on behalf of his country."

San Diego

A press conference and reception is scheduled for August 14, at the Barrio Station.

Excerpts From Remarks Made by President William J. Clinton during Medal of Freedom Ceremony

"...Cesar Chavez, before his death in April of last year, had become a champion of working people everywhere. Born into Depression-era poverty in Arizona in 1927, he served in the United States Navy in the Second World War, and rose to become one of our greatest advocates of nonviolent change. He was for his own people a Moses figure.

The farm workers who labored in the fields and yearned for respect and self-sufficiency pinned their hopes on this remarkable man, who, with faith and discipline, with soft-spoken humility and amazing inner strength, led a very courageous life. And in doing so, brought dignity to the lives of so many others, and provided for us inspiration for the rest of our nation's history.

We are honored to have his wife, friend, and long-time working partner, Helen Chavez, to be with us today to receive the award."

Citation upon presenting the award to Helen Chavez:

"With few material possessions but guided by his parents' steady example, his Catholic faith, the lessons of Ghandi, and an unshakable belief in justice, Cesar Chavez brought about much needed change in our country. An agricultural worker himself since childhood, he possessed a deep personal understanding of the plight of migrant workers, and he labored all his years to lift their lives. As the leader of the United Farm Workers of America, he faced formidable, often violent opposition with dignity and nonviolence. And he was victorious. Cesar Chavez left our world better than he found it, and his legacy inspires us still."

[...] "Ladies and Gentlemen, in closing let me say that I couldn't help thinking as the citations were read and I looked into the faces of our honorees and their families, friends and admirers here, that we too often reserve our greatest accolades for our citizens when they are gone. I wish that Cesar Chavez could be here today. I am grateful that his wife is here, and I am so grateful that all these others are here.

Let us remember today that the greatest gift any of us can give the founders of this Constitution and this Republic is to emulate the work of these citizens whom we honor today, every day, each in our own way.

Thank you for being here. God bless you all."

The Washington Post

TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 1994

Hail From the Chief

Clinton Gives Medal of Freedom to Nine Citizens

By Susan Gregory Thomas
Special to The Washington Post

"The fact that he gets to choose his targets in cartoons may have something to do with the longevity of his career," quipped President Clinton yesterday, turning toward The Washington Post's longtime editorial page cartoonist, Herbert Block.

The 84-year-old Block, who has been drawing cartoons as "Herblock" for The Post since the year Clinton was born—1946—was one of the nine Americans honored yesterday with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest award giv-

en to American civilians. The intimate ceremony, held in the White House's East Room, recognizes the lifetime achievements of those citizens whose values are appreciated by the administration. In this case, those values were social conscience, social service and bringing people together.

"Their different eras, different races, different generations cannot be permitted to obscure the fact of what they share in common," said the president to an audience filled with recipients' friends and family. It is "an unusually profound sense of responsibility to improve the lives of

See MEDAL, C8, Col. 1

Washington Post cartoonist Herbert Block (a.k.a. Herblock) holds a cartoon given to him by President and Mrs. Clinton.



Nine Receive Medal of Freedom

MEDAL, From C1

their fellow men and women, to improve the future for our children, to embody the best of what we mean by the term 'American citizen.'"

They were a diverse group, indeed: from the late farm-worker organizer Cesar Chavez to professor and former congresswoman Barbara Jordan to retiring House Minority Leader Robert Michel (R-Ill.). Noting the accomplishments of each recipient, the president then fastened the medal around the honoree's neck in a near embrace. In the case of Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women since 1957, he actually did indulge in a hug.

"In recent years, her Black Family Reunion celebrations have reminded our society that self-help and self-reliance and loving, extended families are the dominant cultural traditions of

the African American community," the president said of Height, who has had a hand in almost every victory of the civil rights movement.

The others recognized were Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO, for forging partnerships between management and labor; James Grant, executive director of UNICEF, for efforts on behalf of the world's children; and Arthur Flemming, who served in the administrations of every president from Franklin Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan.

It would be fair to say that Robert Sargent "Sarge" Shriver—honored for his leadership in the Peace Corps as well as for chairing the Special Olympics, had the loudest and most populous peanut gallery. His daughter Maria Shriver and her husband, Arnold Schwarzenegger, sat side by side, along with brother-in-law Sen. Ted

Kennedy and the Kennedy gang.

When Shriver got his medal, the group jumped to its feet, whooping and hollering as if at a prep school commencement. They've had practice at this event: Shriver's wife, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, was awarded the medal in 1984 by President Reagan for founding the Special Olympics and for her work with disadvantaged children.

Other moments were more reflective. The president paused especially to remember Chavez. The founder of the United Farm Workers of America died last April near his home town of Yuma, Ariz.

"He was, for his whole people, a Moses figure," said the visibly moved president. "The farm workers who labored in the fields and yearned for respect and self-sufficiency pinned their hopes on this remarkable man." Helen Chavez appeared stoic as she shook Clinton's hand to accept the award on her husband's behalf.

Fr. Victor Salandini
Activist priest, 66

On the United Farm Workers' 343-mile march from Delano to Sacramento, Father Victor Salandini reflected on the marks of a faithful Catholic.

"I don't think you are a good Catholic because you go to church every Sunday," Salandini said. "I think you are a good Catholic if you do something to help people."

Although he wasn't talking about himself, friends say the bearded, gray-haired Salandini fit the latter description perfectly.

He died Wednesday in San Diego of liver cancer. He was 66.

A Rosary is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at St. Mary's Church, 1160 S. Broadway in Escondido. Mass of the Resurrection is scheduled at 10 a.m. there Wednesday.

Salandini apparently knew he was ill months ago, but postponed extensive medical tests so he could participate in the march this spring, where he celebrated Mass every morning for UFW supporters.

"No one has ever championed the cause with greater passion and selflessness," UFW President Arturo Rodriguez said in a statement issued from union headquarters in Keene.

Born in Washington state, Salandini began working in the fields as a teen-ager. In an extensive April interview with *The Californian*, he said that's when he first noticed injustices suffered by farm workers such as lack of toilets and cold drinking water in the fields.

After he was ordained as a priest



HENRY BARRIOS / THE CALIFORNIAN

Father Victor Salandini once said: "I think you are a good Catholic if you do something to help people."

of the San Diego Diocese in 1952, Salandini earned a reputation as a maverick who disobeyed the orders of the bishop if he thought they conflicted with the rights of farm workers.

In 1971, Salandini consecrated a flour tortilla during a Mass for farm workers on the picket lines. Bishop Leo. T. Maher warned him it was against church law. Salandini used a corn tortilla at the next Mass. Maher suspended him for two weeks.

Still, the feat landed him in *Time* magazine and earned him the nick-

name "Tortilla Priest." Salandini used that moniker in his 141-page book, "The Confessions of the Tortilla Priest" published in 1992.

"Most of my fellow priests think I'm a nut," he said. "But I don't care."

Although critics charged that Salandini was a renegade and a publicity hound, he said he was simply following the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

But his actions had consequences.

By his own account, he was kicked out of 18 parishes. Salandini was denied tenure as a college instructor four times, although he was a widely recognized expert in labor issues and earned a doctorate degree in economics from Catholic University. He was not assigned to a parish in more than 20 years.

In 1966, he landed in jail with UFW founder Cesar Chavez and a Protestant clergyman for trespassing on grower property. It was one of several times Salandini wound up behind bars.

Salandini was proud that he finished the march to Sacramento earlier this year.

"With the grace of God, I survived the march," he wrote in a letter to a *Californian* reporter. "(I) was the only priest to march the entire 345 miles."

But of all his actions in support of farm workers, Salandini seemed most proud of the times he walked the picket lines, where he made it a point to wear his Roman collar.

"I have walked more picket lines than any living priest," he said.

"I am proud of that."

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

Friday, August 5, 1994

QUOTABLE

"I don't think you are a good Catholic because you go to church every Sunday. I think you are a good Catholic if you do something to help people."

Father Victor Salandini

Catholic priest famous for consecrating tortillas for Mass and for his participation in the farmworkers union movement. He died Wednesday in San Diego. See story, B2.



Honors for Chavez, Kirkland

Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO, and the late Cesar Chavez, founder and long-time president of the United Farm Workers of America, were named recipients of the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, by President Bill Clinton during ceremonies Monday at the White House.

Helen Chavez, widow of UFW leader, accepted the medal from the hand of the president. It was the first Medal of Freedom ever awarded to a Mexican-American.

Of Kirkland, the president declared:

"Ever wrestling in his quest to enhance opportunities for working people, he has tirelessly worked to strengthen democracy and to further the cause of human rights. During the Cold War his vital assistance to the Solidarity movement in Poland spread the forces of freedom toward victory in Eastern Europe, just as his guidance here at home helped to renew and fortify the American economy."

"As a people, we are indebted to Lane Kirkland for his talented leadership efforts as an advocate for unity and social justice," Clinton concluded.

Kirkland, interviewed later Monday on CNN News, said, "I am particularly gratified that there was recognition of the role the free trade movement plays in human society, both in America and around the world, as an instrument for elevating conditions for ordinary people."

Chavez was praised by the president for having faced formidable, often violent opposition with dignity and non-violence.

"And he was victorious," Clinton said.

"Cesar Chavez left our world better than he found it, and his legacy inspires us still."

"He was for his own people a Moses figure. The farm workers who labored in the fields and yearned for respect and self-sufficiency pinned their hopes on this remarkable man who, with faith and discipline, soft-spoken humility and amazing inner strength, led a very courageous life," Clinton added.



Helen Chavez, left, and Lane Kirkland, right, receive Medal of Freedom from President Clinton.

The citation accompanying the award noted that Chavez was a farm worker from childhood who "possessed a deep personal understanding of the plight of migrant workers, and he labored all his years to lift their lives."

Arturo Rodriguez, Chavez's successor as UFW president, thanked the president on behalf of the union.

"At a time when so few Americans seem inclined to jeopardize their careers — much less their lives — on behalf of principle, the life of Cesar Chavez stands out with even greater moral force," Rodriguez said.

"Every day in California and in other states where farm workers are organizing, (Chavez) lives in their hearts," Rodriguez concluded. "Cesar lives wherever Americans he inspired work nonviolently for social change."

Also attending the White House ceremony were Dolores Huerta, first vice president and co-founder of the UFW, and Magdelano Rose

Avila, executive director of the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation.

Family members taking part were Richard Chavez, the late labor leader's brother; sons Paul and Anthony Chavez, daughters Linda Chavez Rodriguez, Elizabeth Chavez Villarino and Sylvia Chavez Delgado, and granddaughter Barbara Ybarra.

The president awarded a total of nine Medals of Freedom during Monday's ceremony. Other recipients were Herbert Block, editorial cartoonist for the Washington Post; James Grant, head of UNICEF; Dorothy Height, civil rights campaigner; Rep. Robert H. Michel of Illinois, the House minority leader; Barbara Jordan, University of Texas professor and former member of Congress; Arthur Fleming, former secretary of Health and Human Services, and Sargent Shriver, the first head of the Peace Corps.