

Sister Ina Marie Nosack

Coffee at WCM Rock Creek 9/27/2012

Sister Ina came to the Museum on 9/27 at the invitation of Winn Herrschaft to discuss her memories of migrant labor camps in Washington County.

Sister Ina grew up in Gervais, OR and remembers trucks of Mexican men coming into the county in 1942. The community referred to them as "Chicanos." She believes that Gervais was a drop off point for the workers and many needed to find their way to camps. They weren't directly taken to camps as promised.

Her family lived on 160 acre farm with corn, wheat, and a garden for her family. She recalls rationing during the war. In 1943 she was a senior in high school at St. Mary's of the Valley and decided to join the convent.

She was a missionary in Peru from 1966-1973, where she started a school. When schools began closing in the Beaverton area, she was summoned back to Oregon to work locally. In Peru she learned Spanish. When she returned to Portland she described it as being in a "time warp." All of the bridge overpasses were built while she was away. She was stationed at Staten Church and she asked to work specifically with Hispanics to retain her Spanish skills. Soon she taught religious training in Spanish to young children.

She helped take a census of migrant families using her Spanish. When she visited homes during the day, she began helping mothers with sick children and translating for them at the hospital. Sister Ina remembers a man who had a swollen cheek due to a tooth ache the day before Thanksgiving. She took him to the dentist to get help because the dentist had an aunt in the Convent and she forced the dentist to see the man.

She feels Hispanics were well received in Washington County by 1984 since Centro Cultural opened in 1982 and there was a senior center and place for folks to meet.

There were 40 migrant camps in the county- her 'order' was in charge of 20 of them. Once a month they too supplies such as pinto beans, oil, cheese, rice, butter, etc...to the camps. The women didn't like cheese because of constipation, and didn't know how to use butter so they would dump it in the bushes. She found this humorous. She also mentioned that Reser's Fine Foods contacted her to take their surplus to the camps: tortillas, salads, jalapenos, hot dogs, etc...

Madeline Taylor at St. Alexander's taught her how to do a handshake with a Mexican man. She was never afraid to go to the camps alone. The men were respectful of her and treated her well.

She thinks the camp conditions were better than Mexico where she spent two months one summer. She remembers a double bunk bed, stove heater, small cabinet, water outside and bathrooms. Not bad.

Some men could earn \$100/day picking fruit.

Pious X Parish created the "Adopt a Camp Program" where Father Burt Griffith linked each church with a camp and asked them to visit the families twice a month to mingle and add social elements to find out what people needed.

Guadalupe's Circle was a relief/food bank for women in the community.

People she mentioned to speak with about bracer research:

Farmers: Tankersly, Malinski, Heikes (Farmington)

Hortencia & Emilio Hernandez: care takers at Centro in beginning

Enedelia Hernandez Shofield

Garzas: "Texas Mexicans"