

CHÁVEZ, HELEN (1928–)

A native of Brawley, California, Helen Fabela picked cotton and other harvests during the summer, on weekends, and after school. Her father's death led to Helen's leaving school at age fifteen to help her mother support the family. Four years later, she married Cesar Chávez. As a loyal wife, and mother of eight children, she relocated the family to facilitate her husband's organizing activities. Active in the struggles, she wrote the daily reports, addressed envelopes and postcards and helped prepare for chapter meetings. Chávez supported her husband's founding of the National Farm Workers Association (precursor to the United Farm Workers union). In 1962, Helen reentered the agricultural work force. With her children and relatives she joined picket lines and marches. For thirty-years Helen worked with United Farm Workers' credit union as a secretary, bookkeeper and treasurer-manager. Helen Chávez' activism merged family, work, and union advocacy even though she preferred to stay in the background of it all.