

Long Time, No See

There was no parking space immediately in front of the house, but they found one down the block. I walked to meet them, long time no see, I said. Oh, it's only been 40 years, he replied. We shook hands and embraced, abrazo-style.

He was a young man from the L.A. area, barely 19, if that old, when I first met him in Delano. He was one of the first outside volunteers to join the farmworker movement in 1965. I was not far behind, but a good 12 years older. He left the movement three years later, and I after eight.

Our reunion was the result of his telephone call: he was going to be in Sacramento with his wife, could he come by and see me? Of course, why not come for an early dinner, and they did. Three plus hours of reminiscing, comparing notes, gossiping about people forty years removed as if it were only yesterday, and bringing one another up-to-date about careers, family, the deceased and the divorced. Time was up, we parted company.

A curious reunion. We had not been friends, but more like comrades in the same fight; we were disparate in age and had maintained no contact these many years, but now his need to want to meet and talk about those days. Those three years, he said, seemed like yesterday, and they reshaped his life forever. Even now, as a university professor, he sees the results of the farmworker movement reflected in some of his students, especially Latinos.

We may never talk again but that does not seem necessary to me. What was important was sharing and reliving, if even for only a few hours, what was a life and death enterprise for each of us when we were young men determined to change the world. It is not likely, I think, that our children will ever experience such a reunion, but I do not rule out the grandchildren – a half-century seems about the right spacing.