

Photographs by Peter DaSilva for The New York Times

A yurt village inspired by the domed tents of the nomadic Mongols was recently erected to house 40 migrant farmworkers in the Napa Valley.

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More Housing for Migrants of Napa Vineyards

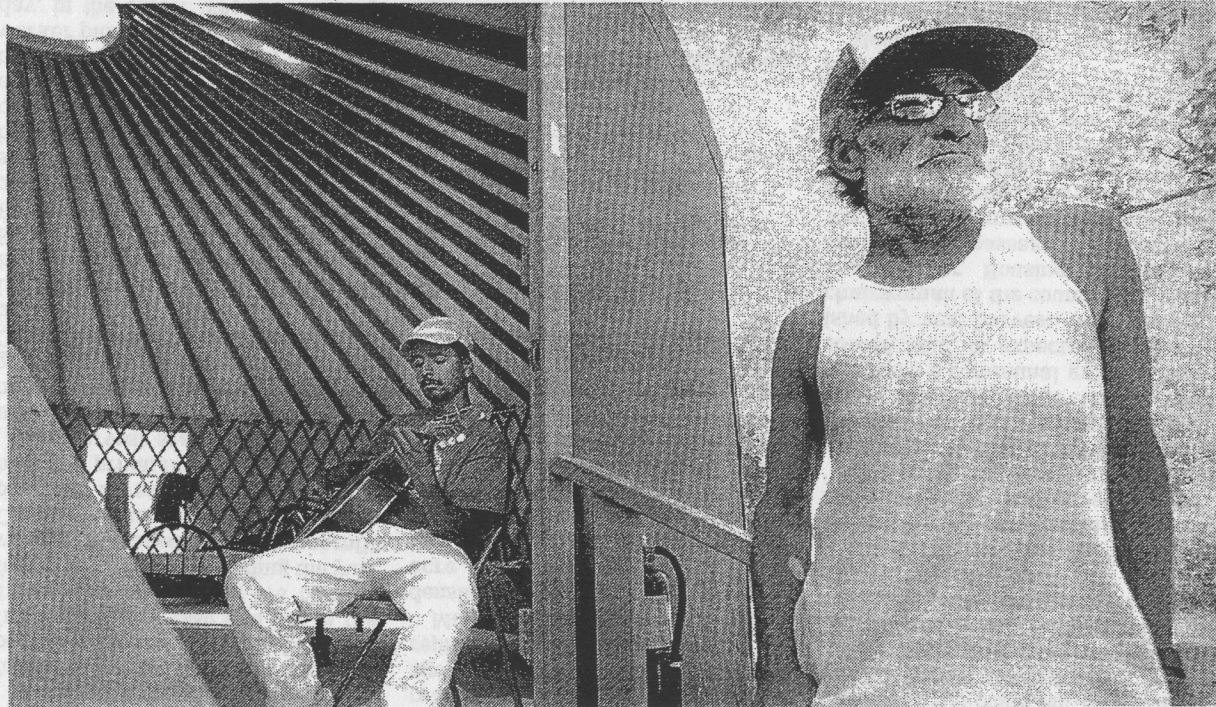
By PATRICIA LEIGH BROWN

ST. HELENA, Calif., Sept. 19 — This is the season of abundance in the Napa Valley, when the scent of crushed grapes infuses the air, and the porch of the Catholic church becomes a makeshift home for some 45 migrant workers waiting for the reds. They call the porch Los Pinos, after Mexico's presidential palace.

This is the moment when the golden light of autumn casts two Napas into high relief: the one of visitors luxuriating in deep-tissue massages and Frette linens, the other of laborers sleeping along the riverbank, under bridges, in vineyards, in packed garages and in parked cars, the windows foggy with their breath.

It has been this way for years in the Napa Valley, where thousands of migrant farmworkers, almost all of them Mexican, arrive each year to work the gemlike vineyards, finding plenty of jobs but few roofs or beds.

But this year, many of the workers making their way to the harvest — estimates range from 2,500 to 4,500 — are beginning to see signs of change.



Roberto Ortiz Otozco, left, and Jesus Casteneda are among the Napa farmworkers who share a yurt. A county measure passed in the spring loosened zoning restrictions to allow for more housing for migrant workers.