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DON DALY OF ILWU LOCAL 34, PCPA

INTERVIEWEE: DON DALY

INTERVIEWERS: HARVEY SCHWARTZ

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HARVEY SCHWARTZ: Don, can you tell me where you were born and when you were born?

DON DALY: I was actually born in California. Turlock, it's in Central Valley, in 1944, September seventeenth.

HARVEY: Okay, what were your parents doing at that time?

DON: Actually, my dad used to do contract work and bale hay, and that thing. And my mom, well about the time I was born—because I'm not totally sure because my dad and mom divorced when I was like, four years old. I don't remember too much in terms of what she was doing.

HARVEY: Okay. What countries in Europe did they come from? Do you know?

DON: Actually, do they have to be Europe? My dad's parents came from Australia.

HARVEY: Australia? No it doesn't have to be Europe. I guess it can't be.

DON: But as far as my mom, I'm not totally sure because they were here since basically they started settling the United States, so which one they really came from, I'm not sure. But we're basically Irish, and English—probably over there.

HARVEY: Yes. What's it like growing up in Turlock, California?

DON: Actually when you're young, it's great because you get to basically—it's all farm stuff for kids you know, hunting, fishing, you do all this stuff. It was wonderful. I mean, we worked our ass off for our dad, driving tractors and hauling hay and stuff, but it was all fine, you know? It was just something you did.

HARVEY: Yeah. Did you go to school in Turlock and all that?

DON: Up until the middle of high school, we moved up to Bay Area, when I was 14, 15 years old—and came down to south of San Francisco, [California] about 25 miles.

HARVEY: Okay, why'd you move down there? Do you know why your dad moved down there?

DON: Well actually, it was because of the business he was in, there was too much seasonal. So winter time we starved, and summer time we had all kinds of money. So he got a job—he went into construction up there, so we moved up there.

HARVEY: So you moved there. What town was that?

DON: Redwood City [California].

HARVEY: Oh Redwood City, yeah. And you go to high school there?

DON: Yeah, a couple of years. Actually I quit, when I was 16, I went to work as a carpenter apprentice, and when I was 17, I joined the navy.

HARVEY: When you were 17 you joined the navy?

DON: Yes.

HARVEY: Uh, is this about the time for Vietnam?

DON: Actually, it's kind of weird because I did four tours to Vietnam, Vietnam never started until after I got out—supposedly, if you look at the record book. But yeah, Vietnam was definitely on.

HARVEY: Okay. What did you do in the navy?

DON: I was basically a diesel mechanic and it was repair on a fleet tug. So we drove there and take stuff in. I did the—basically the engine room, maintenance on the refrigeration, that sort of thing.

HARVEY: Yeah. How come you went to navy? Did you select navy for a specific reason?

DON: I guess actually it would be kind of a double—it was always something everybody always talked about, join the navy, see the world, sort of thing. My brother was also in the navy so, you know, it just sort seemed like the right thing to do.

HARVEY: Yeah. What'd you do when you got out of the navy? What year did you get out?

DON: I got out in the beginning of '66.

HARVEY: Anything spectacular in the navy that you recall? Any action, firing of guns or God-knows-what?

DON: Well, yeah but, that's tough to tell. When we'd go to Vietnam, we took the barges up the river with all this stuff for when they're doing something, we go through. And we got shot at a couple of time by snipers, we had to pull stuff out, but we never really saw any action. It was kind of like going to the movies. You'd see the rockets off at a distance. One time we were tied up in Saigon, and they'd get some guys come off a boat, there's a fight, five of us were watching it. And the guy goes into the water—so there was nothing real outstanding in terms of it, because like I said, it's not quite real.

HARVEY: Yeah, did you have, do any shore duty? Not shore duty, but were released to go on shore at all, during the Vietnam tour?

DON: Oh yeah. You could go, you went into different towns, you know the things you could go over, mostly bars and stuff. And then, we did a lot of—we'd actually follow Russian trawlers and we had radio jamming equipment on the back. Sometimes they'd stop and we'd have everyone go in, and go swimming and get back on the thing. So we just had, we'd spending the time going up the rivers, or sometimes we'd stop down, when you left there we'd always go—they'd take—Hong Kong for R&R [rest and recuperation], we'd stop in Hawai'i on the way for break and stuff like that.

HARVEY: Oh, so you did see a little of the world?

DON: Oh yes. We went to the Philippines—we always went to the Japan, Philippines, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Guam, Hawai'i. And then actually when we're in Japan one time, I took the train and went up to Tokyo, and stuff like that.

HARVEY: Oh yes, okay. So you did see a little something when you were there, besides a little something other than a tin can. What kind of vessel were you on?

DON: Fleet tug. Ocean-going tug that I spent the whole time on, and actually it was interesting, because the whole crew changed four times while I was on there. Basically I stayed there until the time I got out of boot camp until the time I got out. Which apparently is unusual.

HARVEY: How—where did you go and what year?

DON: Well, let's see, it would have been '61?

HARVEY: Yes, in that range.

DON: Because I went in just when I turned 17, I was born in at '44. Yeah. '61.

HARVEY: And you got out in '66?

DON: Yes, I got an extended four months because of—I think it was the Kennedy assassination, they extended everybody. I was actually due to get out on September sixteenth, and they had the extension that went into effect midnight the fifteenth. And they had already transferred me over to get off. I went over there and the guy looked down and he says, "I'm supposed to get out the twenty-seventh. I got to stay, you got to—"I says, "You're talking one day!" And he says, "It don't matter, get back to the ship." And they were leaving to Vietnam that weekend so I got to ride to Vietnam and then got off, and flew home.

HARVEY: You didn't want to stay for 20 [the military retirement plan]?

DON: Oh no. You know, that wasn't my thing, I was glad to get out when I did.

HARVEY: Yeah, I was in the army and I had the same response.

What'd you do next?

DON: Well I got out, I went to work for Montgomery Ward [retailer] in the warehouse. And then I went to work—I changed and went to work—it was kind of an aerospace thing, they did this—they kind of fused glass and melded together for satellites and stuff for the government. I worked there for a while, and then my uncle called me one day, and says, "You want to go work on the waterfront?" I said, "What do they pay?" Then I said, "Yeah, I'll go."

HARVEY: Okay. What did you do in Montgomery Ward? You worked at the warehouse. Was that a Local 6 ILWU?

DON: No, that was not union. Montgomery Ward was not union.

HARVEY: Not union?

DON: Yes.

HARVEY: I wonder how they escaped, but they managed.

DON: (*shrugs*) Well, in the sixties it wasn't. . .

HARVEY: I mean, a lot of stuff was ILWU and Local 6 in those days.

DON: No, but not this. This was down—the warehouse, it was basically me and this old lady that priced the tag. That was it. There was no, it wasn't just a big—it was just a warehouse for that store.

HARVEY: Where was it located?

DON: Redwood City [California].

HARVEY: Okay, away from San Francisco. Maybe that explains it to some degree. Okay, so what year was it when you were going to the Waterfront?

DON: I went in the Waterfront in '67.

HARVEY: You heard they were—so you're in the class of '67 group, the big group, the large group?

DON: Yes.

HARVEY: Is that where you met Jim Brown?

DON: No, I actually didn't meet him for a long time after. It's kind of funny. I owned a bar with another longshoreman. And then I got out and then he got out, it ended up I had the bar myself, for a couple of years, and then I sold it to another longshoremen, Jim Brown—no, Jim Fowler, and he sold it to Jim Brown. So Jim and I never met until then. That was in the seventies.

HARVEY: I see.

DON: Early seventies. And then just in terms of the bar—because it was right across the street from the hall, and so it—Jim and I started somehow working together and became good friends after that.

HARVEY: That's interesting. What's your first day on the job like? As a longshore worker?

DON: Actually, you know, nothing exceptional about it as I remember right. I ended up going on a coffee ship and you know, I'd spent half my life hauling hay so it was no big deal. We worked it and stuff so it was, you know, just kind of a normal day.

HARVEY: Nothing spectacular to it, nothing you recall for it, huh? That's interesting.

DON: Not really, no. First day was, you know. The more interesting was that kind of the idea of just going to hull and get your job. But in those days, like the coffee, you know which, they left that kind stuff for the B-man. You go there and it was good for a week, you know? Because you had to dig all the way down, make the palettes and stuff. And we didn't normally work, you work hour on and a half hour off. So you get your break and, you know, to me that was fine. So you know—

HARVEY: What products did you find arduous, or difficult or unpleasant?

DON: Well, I mean, you know, when we're doing hides, it gets a little bit smelly, but as far as, in general, other than that, it was no big a deal. The only—the one I used to dislike, I guess I should say, they used to do these big sheets of like, sheet metal, sort of thing. And they'd be up, they put the wires on them and you'd pick them up and if they did them wrong or they'd bump something, it would slip off, and you kind of could wear yourself out just staying out of the way from things slipping and stuff. So after a little bit I tended not to go over where the steel dock was, you know, in the beginning when they did that, until later on.

HARVEY: Have you heard much about unions became you came into the ILWU? It's your first union job, as far as I can tell.

DON: Well it was, yes. Yes and no. You hear about them all the time you did the thing—my dad was a union carpenter and my uncle was a union plumber. And you know so, yeah I heard about it, but it wasn't something

that was a, big deal sort of thing until—like I said, when I got the job, basically the thing I asked my uncle was the pay because at that time I was married, had a baby and a baby on its way, so I was more interested in doing, taking care of the family. I learned most of what I knew about unions after I got there.

HARVEY: Yeah. I was going to ask you, you know, what, if you can recall, what your impression was when you first engaged with or meet the ILWU culture? You know, it's a whole world view.

DON: Oh you know what I'll tell you, it's a totally different life. Normal thing, you go down there, and all of the sudden, the people are totally different from what you think in terms of normal people. One of things that kind of stood out is you had the guys down there that, you know, spent a lot of time imprisoned, guys that just—it was different in general. But it was interesting, you know. And most of them were great guys, they were nice—other than, the old-timers who didn't want you doing certain things. But I actually was real comfortable being there. But it was more, it was kind of different in terms of the people and the way you get the jobs, you go up, you got to figure it out, so you had to adjust to that, but you know, that was okay.

HARVEY: I'm also thinking of the union's politics too. Its social justice causes and all the left-wing, right-wing squabbles and so forth. I don't know if that's the right word but—

DON: Well actually, it probably is, but you know, really, I think probably the biggest thing on a lot of that stuff—some of that stuff you're for it, or you go against it. But it's like, you go to the meetings, and people would get up there and they are talking. Okay what the hell are they even talking about this for? And you sit there and it's just kind of something that made the union meetings go on longer and stuff, and you're going, "Okay, where is this even going?" And you don't know. As time goes on you see certain things. Certain ones you totally agree with. Other ones you're kind of just like, Okay, you don't even make sense, why are we even discussing this?

HARVEY: Yes. It took you a while to get used to that?

DON: Yes, yes and no. It took a while to get used to paying attention to it, but the thing is, particularly after I had the bar, you know, where you get people, where they all come in so you start seeing more in-depth of what people think. Actually, that was pretty interesting, because you get all the ones who are running little scams, stuff that you kind of see. I think, probably the biggest thing—because like I said because the work didn't bother me, that's something I had done my whole life—when they went to the point that they got, when they were going away from the boat cargo and going more to containers and actually San Francisco became kind of a distressed port—that's when it got more interesting. When things got—all your little x things. Like there was a guy there that—people, because they had the guaranteed start—and people would want to go somewhere.

So this one guy that came all the time, he would cover a whole bunch of people. So what'd he do is he'd take tickets to the passenger ship, pay off the gang boss, I mean the walking boss, and give him the ticket and put him on and put extra things on and he'd do things. So to keep them from flopping—because as long as you didn't flop you were okay. So he'd go up and pick up almost all the jobs going to the passenger ship. Then he'd give them out to other people, so now his guys didn't flop and he had the ones he wanted to keep to give to the boss, he'd give other people things—so it was like, they used to call him the chief, because it was second dispatch, he'd go get the jobs and he'd dispatch them at the back of the hall, sort of thing. But actually it was kind of—

HARVEY: Who was that again?

DON: His name was Eddie Robinson.

HARVEY: Okay.

DON: He—the thing that was, there was—it actually, it helped you, it gave you freedom because if you had to do something you'd say, "Hey I'm going to be gone can you—" and so he'd pick it up and you'd have to pay him for doing it. But it's like at that point, because if you went, you would all work the week and you flopped on Friday, you lost the whole week, it wasn't like that. You lost the whole week. So people would do stuff and Eddie was the guy they'd go see and get to take care of them when they'd go somewhere or go do something. Shoot, he was making more than one of them walking bosses. (*laughs*) But it was interesting. Like I said, being at the bar you hear all this stuff and the dispatchers came over there being across the street, so basically, the business was all longshoremen that made it. . . interesting.

HARVEY: What was the name of your bar?

DON: It was actually called Mike's Sting.

HARVEY: Mike's what?

DON: Mike's Sting. The movie, "The Sting" came out. Mike, my partner—we went into the bar together—[he] got a settlement from an accident he made up. So he made up the thing and he got a settlement out of it, and most of the people knew that. So he said, "Okay let's do this. You know, we'll name it Mike's Sting, and it'll be kind of this secret joke that everybody knows." So it's called, Mike's Sting and then he took—actually I got out after about a year, because he was in it just for (*shrugs*)—he kind of threw everything away. And then a year or so later he owed more than the place cost. So I got it back and then I had it for a few years after that. So that was—

HARVEY: Where was it located?

DON: Right across the street—you know where the union hall is?

HARVEY: Yes. Near Fisherman's Wharf?

DON: No, the other way. You know where the [?Ackron?] the shopping center across the street? Okay, there used to be place in there called, Chauncey McDuff's, a restaurant and a bar. Well, Zim's [a local restaurant chain] bought it up, and Zim's did not want the bar, they just wanted the restaurant. So we worked out a deal and bought the bar from Zim's and remodeled it and stuff there. Basically people would just walk across the street. Union meeting night we were packed, all night.

HARVEY: Wow. Okay so that's interesting stuff. Very interesting.

Did you get active in the union? You know like—

DON: Later on. I had the chief dispatcher when I had the bar try to talk me into running for dispatcher then, and I told him, "No that's all right." "You could make it no problem, because everyone knows you because of the bar." And so later on, I actually ran for dispatcher. I was dispatcher for about 4-5 years, I was relief for a year and did a thing. So I did that. I was on the grievance committee, and then I transferred over to the clerks.

HARVEY: Oh you did?

DON: Yeah. That was in 2000. So, you know, I did a certain amount, but it's more—basically, I knew all the officials, and I knew the stuff, but I didn't, run for office until, you know later on.

HARVEY: What was it like being a dispatcher for Local 10? What highlights do you remember from that?

DON: Actually it was really nice because, wage-wise you did okay. You weren't taking cut in pay to do it. And as long as you had a really good a partner, then it's like—my first year I worked with Frank Cresney—

HARVEY: Oh yes.

DON: Frank was great to work with. So you'd end up, you'd come in, you'd do the dispatch. Then you had part of the dispatchers—two, normally—would stay during the day. In the morning, one of us would get a break. And then at about 1 o'clock, they'd call up and get the rough order from the companies and we'd write up the stuff. And then the other would get a break in the afternoon, and then at about 3 o'clock, then they'd call in their permanent orders. So we'd both be there and write up the jobs for that night. But most of the stuff we had written up in the morning at the first order, then we'd just change those to fit what they actually ordered. Everybody would come in and do dispatch. Well then, after dispatch, the person that had had the longer break during the day had to stay, and the other person would go home. And you had to stay until about 8 o'clock. And you worked, basically 4 days a week. You had one thing where you shift, you went back and forth with one person and so he was on—we had the extra person for dispatch. And then the chief always would come in while we were writing up the final jobs and stayed until after dispatch. So it actually worked pretty nice. I would take—like when I got the long break—I'd either go to the gym across the street or take a walk up to Marina Green [park in San Francisco] or something like that. And then you'd come back and you'd stay.

Now it could be a pain in the ass if you didn't have somebody who did their share or prepared the stuff to do it. But all in all, it was good. And in fact, I almost didn't go to the clerks when I transferred over. Because, a guy, [?Galarza?] was chief and he said, "Why don't you stay?" And I said, "Okay, look. If I could—" Because you had to take off—because every two years you had take every third year off. If they didn't do that, then I would not have gone because I actually liked dispatching. And it was good because you kept your list of people and when you got jobs and there nobody there to take them, you'd call them to get them to go get the jobs. You could fill up the skilled jobs, you could fill up the stuff and it worked really nice. You kind of had a lot of leeway to do what you wanted. So if it wasn't for the fact that you had to—that year I was coming up and [?Galarza?] asked me, and I said, "If you could get it where I could still transfer next year if I want," and he said, "I can't do that." And I said, "I'm going to go then." Because the next year I would've had to take off. Because I've been at office for two intervals—

HARVEY: You had to go back for the—

DON: You go back at, you work the job and then you come back. But I actually like the dispatch job.

HARVEY: I understand that at one point you got hurt when you were helping people with their, you know, to cover their numbers and so forth so they could get their 13 hours for medical and so forth. Can you kind of go into that? I understand you got hurt while you trying to help somebody—

DON: Oh okay, so Jim told you.

HARVEY: I'm afraid Jim spilled the beans, yes, just enough.

DON: I'm on a job, this guy is gone, and so I'm working for him. And I'm working—

HARVEY: Can you explain how that comes about? This is mostly for the, for the benefit of the camera person watching this in twenty years who may or may not—

DON: Okay, basically because of the guarantee, okay. So this guy, he actually had a bar and had a couple of things. So basically, I actually joined a gang in his name during the day—

HARVEY: In his name, okay. To cover his—so his hours were covered?

DON: Right. And so I would go, and when the gang worked, I would go to work and we were on a steel ship. I'm back under the wing, and they actually, we called for a crowbar to come in—so we could move the ship and move the steel and hook it up to send it out. So when they brought the crowbar in, they had a, it was weird kind of crane, it was on like a garage door roller, the whole would come out and you could move the boom up and down and stuff. When they came in, they stopped. Well the guy when he came in—they put the hook on the crowbar on, he used a wire instead of a rope and hooked it on the hook—and the hook didn't have the safety latch on it. So when they stopped, it swung and it threw the crowbar back up under the [inaudible] _____ and hit me in the back and knocked me out. So, then they'd send me out in a basket. Well I come to and I'm on the dock, and I'm going, "Oh, shit." Jim Brown was there. So I call Jim. And I said, "Jim, go see the gang boss." And he says, "What?" And I said, "Jim, go see the gang boss. He's got the wrong name on the payroll." So Jim went and told the gang boss, and the gang boss switched the name to mine. He took my wallet, he took my ID and gave it him so he put the right name. And the gang bosses in those days, even like the walking bosses, I mean they'd love to see me coming because you know, I did the job. I would keep up and I worked nights because people will be glad to see you coming if you did your job. So the gang boss just, "Okay, no problem," and changed the name and put it on. So I just ended up being off for quite a while, because the crane did some nerve damage, and damaged a couple of discs.

HARVEY: Is that healed up entirely?

DON: Yes and no. I still have some problems from it, you know. But it's kind of like, okay if you go on a long ride on a car and you're getting a lot of bouncing, then I'll be real sore. But you know, I live with it. It's not a big deal, I don't take nothing for it or anything.

HARVEY: What year was that?

DON: Oh god. That had to have been, *(pause)* probably the late eighties?

HARVEY: Okay. It's okay it doesn't have to be—

DON: I only remember because it was when I just had moved down off moved up to Marina County. Yeah, so late eighties I guess.

HARVEY: Okay in that range. Anything in that period before you went into Local 34 that we need to cover that I hadn't covered? Like the '71 strike for example. What did you do in the '71 strike?

DON: Picket duty out on the thing and basically, and you really just kind of we went out there and went through, you know? They had the coffee wagon come by and bring donuts and coffee for you, and you spent your time going there and did what they told you to do.

The thing for me the waterfront, the waterfront, to me personally, was basically a godsend. I got a divorce from my wife—and something went down—and the freedom the waterfront gave you, was unbelievable. I mean you basically, you would go to work today, you don't want to work tomorrow, you don't have to. The only thing you were supposed to do was, theoretically, as a B-man you were supposed to work a certain percentage. And basically, I travelled all over the world, you know, at that point, I took off went I worked on a freighter to Australia, I did a thing, I hitchhiked around Europe, hitchhiked across country a few times, I went and took a trip all the way down to Mexico. I mean it's like you could just go.

I had a friend call me one time he says, "Hey, I just picked up these hitchhikers and they're going down to San Diego, let's go to Mexico." And I said, "Okay." And I left, and you don't got to do nothing, and I didn't have a job, you know, you're not going down to the hall. So we ended up going down to Florida and worked as bellhops through the winter, stayed in Florida all winter and then came back. Actually on that one I got back and they had sent me letter for de-registry for non-availability, so I went up for the grievance committee, and they said—I said, "Okay, look I went on vacation. My car broke down." I said, "I didn't have any money. So I got a job and got the car fixed so I could come home." I said, "Do you want me to bring you in the repair bills?" And they said, "No. Just next time, make sure notify someone."

And then, so, you know, for me, like I said, I had three different bars while I was down there, I went to school while I was down there. I travelled all different times. The freedom the waterfront gave you, to me, made that the best job in the world. The work didn't bother me, and you know, I loved to take off and you didn't even have to think, you know somebody said, "Oh let's go here," and I was ready to go, it didn't matter. So, it's funny the different people, they sent me that letter of de-registration of non-availability because I did something, and they did not do it, they just walked away, and I'm going, "Why?" So I went down and tried to do what I could, and it's just, you know. And I'll tell you another one—theoretically I shouldn't.

HARVEY: No you should, that's okay. It's good. We're trying to get a little reality here.

DON: I was going, I got the thing to go to Australia. And so I told somebody, because I had gotten the letter from the thing from Florida and took care of that. Actually it was that same year because I ended up spending the whole year in the summer that year. So I took and I got a thing that I was going on the ship and I talked to the first mate and I got work and I worked for passage to Australia. So, went to Australia and I hitchhiked around there, and I worked at a brewery there for a while and picked grapes for a little bit. And then I came back.

When I came back, they had a letter writing me up for somebody working my number. The guy got caught, somebody had an outsider work and the gang boss wrote him up saying it wasn't me. So I got called up before the grievance committee. So I go up to the grievance committee, and I'm the first case on rack. They call me up and I say, "Hey look," I said, "I was off on disability," I said, "I came back to go to work," and I said, "I couldn't make up letter," and I said "A friend of mine was out of a job," I said, "He has kids and I told him, 'Hey you could go work for a day or two to get some money to feed your kids. He got caught the first day.'" I had no idea because somebody else has got this guy to come and work for me.

There was this old black guy, big, black guy they called, "Preacher"—he rode an old motorcycle and stuff—and he's on the board. Everybody's sitting there and they're talking, and Preacher says, "Hey, gentlemen," he says, "Wait a minute, you know, if this goes before the LRC, the brother is automatically deregistered for having somebody work his card." And they say, "Well, what should we do?" And he said, "Well, okay let's just start all this all over. We'll take his name—because the guy that wrote him up didn't show up anyway, we'll throw this part away, we'll restart the thing and take the next case and go on." And they said, "And we'll give him two weeks off. And then we'll go on." And one of the guys said, "Okay, so we have no way of making sure you'll take the two weeks off, but you better." And I said, "Hey, no problem." And so basically, Preacher, I mean, he basically saved me, you know. And that was kind of, what the thing was—everybody at that time, you kind of took care of each other. And it's like, you were kind of talking about our group in '67 and they hired 750 people, they did the same thing in '69 and they didn't hire anybody for like, 20 years. I mean, we were the new guys on the block for like 20 years until they started doing it. So it's kind of like, you know, everybody kind of knew you and stuff, so at that point, I could say he did it, so I more, kind of—I made sure I took care of—you know, make sure I kind of did the right thing like that because I didn't want. . . . But that was an interesting one! *(laughs)*

HARVEY: Do you remember the wildcat strike that was over the apartheid issue, Leo Robinson's group, you know?

DON: Oh yes, where they kind of—

HARVEY: They struck that vessel, that one vessel.

DON: Yes, yes.

HARVEY: Do you remember that?

DON: I remember it but I don't remember necessarily a lot of it. They didn't work the ship, they didn't do the thing. They actually had a couple of times where things like that where, what's his name, Richard Mein got written up for you know cutting some cords for the reefers for the—

HARVEY: I recall that yeah.

DON: So basically he almost got de-registered. Actually I don't know if he's still there—

HARVEY: He ultimately did get [deregistered]. He was a good friend of mine and had been a student of mine in state college.

DON: Because he was actually going to get deregistered and then what they did is they voted him in as president, so they couldn't deregister him. And the thing is Richard was—he's kind of an asshole.

HARVEY: He can be at times.

DON: Because he'd get these, I mean he had several things happen that he should've got rid of, and he had people that wasn't on his side. But when it came to that, for some reason everybody kind of supported him. I mean it's like he beat up the janitor one time at the place. He did—you had a whole bunch of little things he did—just because you know, on this one, just because it was PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] against him, everybody backed him. I mean probably nobody would've voted for him if it wasn't for that. You know, so that's what saved him. But the guy still did stuff that pissed people off and so he finally did get deregistered. But basically, that was the waterfront then.

And you know, I heard somebody talking earlier about the idea of people coming in, you know families and things. It's like partially the way that they did it, when somebody's family [member] would come up, they actually respected the job, they actually did the job. The way they ended up getting a lot of people in, you know when they did the last couple of—you got people that didn't give a shit, they were just there to do the thing and they wouldn't do their job, wouldn't do their anything. It basically hurt the union more than a lot. To have the relatives come in, was actually a good thing for the waterfront, because you were supposed to do your share. People complain about the [?Village Islands?], but they all did their job. They all worked, which is what—

God, I guess it was, later, or early nineties, no it was before that, earlier. Eighties—I went to LA for a year. And when I came back, I said, "You know everybody from here should have to go down there for a short time." Because it's like, when I was in LA, I shot for the steel jobs—steel jobs were good for 7, 8 days—but even the fuck-ups did their job. They did what they were supposed to do. San Francisco. . . I mean it's like I can remember going on a ship and noticing when you start working, and it comes 9 o'clock and the guy says, "Oh, I'm off." And I said, "What do you mean you're off?" And he says, "Well I'm in the gang, I'm on first—" and I say, "You sure the hell weren't out here" But it's like they thought they had—it's like we didn't lose our—we gave it away. You know, because people just weren't, well, at that point they weren't willing to do what they were supposed to do. And that's you know, what hurt us a lot.

HARVEY: Yes, yes, yes. What'd you think of the women when they came out on the Waterfront? What'd you think of that?

DON: Well, I'll tell you, there's some women were actually good to work with. But one that I remember the most, is the first woman to come down there, Maddie.

We're doing the lashing job at the army base. We're working, they're working late. We lashed our side, they're going, and I'm sitting there watching her, she's not touching anything, she's looking like, she's over here she's here said she's moving around here, but she's not doing anything. And the walking boss come over and told, "Okay, you guys need to go over there and start lashing," and I told him, "No, we're not going to go over there, she's not doing anything." And when it got be 5 o'clock and then it became overtime, then we went over there and started lashing. But it's like, you know, so I didn't think too much of it in terms of watching her, because she basically was just using the fact that she was a female and not doing her job.

But having said, later on, is some come, there was some of the girls I would have rather worked with than the guys because they really got in and did their job, and in some of the other girls as they came in later, they knew weren't going to—so they, as quick as they could, started driving tractors and driving and they did them, so.

Some of the women were just fine, you know. Gina—I don't know if you ever talked to Gina—Goney, I think that was her name, she was one to work with. She did her job, she'd outwork a lot of guys, I think. I used to love getting her as partner. But you know, like I said, Maddie the first one to come down there—and then actually the next one which was, what the hell was her name? She had, she worked with this guy where he basically did all the work. The first couple girls, you know, kind of, were looking for a free ride. But then as you got them, as they come later, they knew they had to do their work. So in the end, it worked good.

When I went to LA, it was before we got girls in San Francisco, they had 2-3 girls out in LA that I worked with, they were great workers. They did good, except there was this one blonde. She, on a ship we were working bananas, and she'd get in there. And the only problem with her was she was wearing a T-shirt and she'd get sweaty, and guys would stop and watch her work. But she actually got in and she did her job. So yeah, I was fine with them as long as they did their share, you know? But if they didn't, I wasn't going to make-up and do it for them. You know, they could work with someone else, because I thought, Okay, yeah they want to be down there, do your job. Otherwise, you know, so.

HARVEY: Interesting. Very interesting. You mentioned that you went to school while you were on the waterfront.

DON: Yes.

HARVEY: What was that all about? What kind of school did you go to?

DON: Well actually, what I did, I guess you could say it's kind of was, a little bit—I took—I went to junior college, then I went to San Francisco State. But at the point, I had the two kids by myself—my wife, we had split up and I ended up with the two kids—and so going to work and stuff. They had the G.I. Bill [Servicemen's Readjustment Act] where you'd go to school for the thing. So basically I started taking night classes at the junior college, you know, to get the money for the doing the stuff with the kids. So I did and I transferred to San Francisco State. And I actually came a couple classes short to get my B.A. [bachelor of arts degree], but you know then, it's—I've given that up and I wasn't going anywhere so it's just, you know, kind of something I wanted to do and something that made sense to do.

HARVEY: Sure. What were you majoring in? Do you remember, recall, did you have a major?

DON: Well actually, I guess you'd have to say psychology. Because I took most, but I took business classes, you know, and math. But you know, psychology would be what major because I took more of them than anything.

HARVEY: That's interesting.

You were there for the transitioning—I guess you were, basically there for the transition to containers from break bulk cargo. How did you deal with, or see, you know, the transition to more container work?

DON: It was good and bad. And actually, probably in general it was—they went to containers, so then we become a distressed port and a lot of people transferred out. And then they started to guarantee. And the way it was, was if you were one of the people that wanted to work, and you went down there, you could work all the time if you wanted to. If you didn't want to work, and you went about the right way, you could draw a guarantee and do it, which a lot people did.

HARVEY: So PGP?

DON: PGP, yeah.

HARVEY: Pay Guarantee came in, yeah. Is that with the second M&M contract? [Mechanization and Modernization Agreement]

DON: Actually, the M&M contract was just before we went down. And that's when the—and then when we went to containers, they got the guarantee in and so I don't know if you'd really refer to it as an M&M contract, but you know, basically that's what it was because we're going on to containers. And you had a lot of people—it's like at that time—when it first started, I was in the bar and I moved down to Los Banos, which is in Central Valley. I collected guarantee until I came back up and got the bar back myself for a year or so. There was good points and but actually probably one of the good things that actually—it made people work better because a lot of times you get on a job and people would take—there would be something good on the ship, and they'd start hulling stuff out to their car, and so I had times—I'm the only guy in the hatch working, everybody else is taking something out to their car, doing something and you're working, keeping up. Well when we went to containers, now that wasn't available necessarily and you had to—plus when they first started containers, you had to put them all in place, they weren't like the ones now. You get them in on the deck, you'd have to lift and push some of them back to wing, and you'd put them in, so everybody kind of had to be there to do their job, and so in that sense, that it was good but also, you know did change, it cut back the amount of people you had, more and more as time went on. For San Francisco, it was probably pretty, fairly hard, but for the people, they adjust. That's when people started working for each other, because it had that, there wasn't the work there, so you'd cover each other so they wouldn't lose their money, so they could go.

And you know, and the nice part is then you could anywhere up and down the coast. You want to go somewhere, they had to let you for 30 days. Then they didn't necessarily have to renew or anything, they could make you go away for and then come back. So it gave you freedom to do that, I did that. I worked in L.A. for a while, I worked in Seattle [Washington] for a while, I worked in Portland [Oregon] for a while. You know you get things and you do it, there were good points so it worked out real nice. But you know, you knew that what was ultimately going to happen. Like now, they probably put more cargo on a ship now in the first 30 minutes of the day, then you did all day long before. With way less people.

HARVEY: Yes, so you're saying cut the workforce?

DON: Well, it killed San Francisco. I mean, we basically went all up and down the coast because they didn't make the conversion to go to containers, and that's what made L.A. And they started taking L.A., putting everything they could into containers and everybody, and a bunch of people went down there, like Rich Ostlin came up here. They went everywhere up and down the coast. And at that point, we had terrible reputation, so everybody wasn't really enthusiastic to get people from San Francisco. *(laughs)*

HARVEY: Why did you guys have such a bad reputation?

DON: Well, because everybody considered basically the people of San Francisco lazy, at the point. That they wouldn't do their job. That's the thing, we got a lot of, 'because of the guarantee. Oh that's all they're doing.' Then the guarantee, they were trying to do it because the containers took the guarantee away, so people—you know you got a choice. Like I told my wife at the time, "There's not in-between." I got to go there and work all the time. Or I got to go on the guarantee. Because they're giving you basically—what do we get? 36 hours at that time, so if you're not going to work 6 days a week, you're better off getting the guarantee. Okay so, San Francisco just basically got the reputation of being a bunch of lazy people because there were too many people drawing guarantee, too many people—but it was because of the guarantee that that happened, you know and so. I worked out in L.A., I worked every day while I was down there, but when I was up in San Francisco, I drew the guarantee because it didn't make sense not to. You know, I mean I lived 100 miles away, I'd come up and get my paycheck on Friday and I was in a night gang, and if the gang had to work, I had to drive up and stay the couple days, I did work or whatever. And you wouldn't work for two weeks again.

HARVEY: Yeah. Question, why did you decide to go into Local 34?

DON: I didn't go into 34 before, because basically I actually had it pretty good, because outside of dispatching, when I wasn't dispatching, being that I did my job, I could go on a job and make a deal. You got the people that did their jobs, so you could end up working basically half a day and get paid for the day. And after dispatching and stuff and kind of thinking about it, and realizing that, but I decided okay, it was really a smarter thing to go ahead and go over to the clerks. And you actually made double the money by the time you got finished because you're working as a supervisor and you're getting two extra hours and you're getting a lot of stuff. So it kind of made sense to do that.

But before that, you know it's like—okay, he [*pointing*] was talking there at the meeting today about the cocoa beans. When we were doing it was 240-footers, but you go to somebody that did that all the time, so we'd go out there and work that, and before that you could do that on coffee. And then actually at the freight station, they would do transloads [transfer of a shipment between modes of transportation] of apples or cigarettes. And you'd do [*inaudible*] and then you could go home. Well, I worked with guys that were good workers, we go, 'we're leaving at noon.' I mean, you get done—actually on the transloads on the freight station where they'd have you do two containers of apples or cigarettes, we screwed up because—me and this guy that was there—and we were leaving at 10:30, 11 'o'clock, so they added another container to us, so we had to do three. And we're still going home at lunchtime. So you know, it's like I kind of felt comfortable with what I was doing. I had it made it in terms of where anywhere I worked, they were glad to see me work. So it just wasn't something that I did.

Then, you know after I was dispatching and all that, and I decided, okay, and so I went ahead. Well basically in two years time, I doubled my salary. Because I went to where basically I was running the yard at Hanjin Terminal], I got paid 12 hours every day, so you're getting four hours of overtime. And you're getting supervisor pay, so it was actually a smart thing. Then, because you know, you could work a day and take the next day off and still be okay. So then, making a half a day didn't make sense. But up to that it was a job, like I said, you know, you had certain groups of people that were real good workers, and people were glad to see them coming, and they'd let you work all kinds of stuff, and you'd still do more than the other people that there. And so, you know, it's just for me at the time, it was really nice. I mean, I'd go and do the cocoa beans and I'd come home and the kids were coming home from school, you know it's that sort of thing. It actually, you know, was a good thing. When the time came, I probably could've done several years before going into clerks, but just as the same

reason I never put in for a walking boss, because I had too many good deals I was doing and working and stuff, and so why would I go there? I'd have to be there all the time. And then I figured out okay, the clerks, financially it makes sense, so I went ahead.

And they also had changed the rules in terms of work so you couldn't get away with only working with, you had to work more. There was big difference in terms of how everything went, because the guarantee kind of, you know, it was changed and there the whole was just—kind of was a matter of the times, I guess.

HARVEY: When did you retire? What year did you retire?

DON: I retired in 2008. And my wife's health was real down and stuff so I retired and spent time with her. Spent a little time traveling and stuff.

HARVEY: Did she pass away?

DON: Yeah, she did. Actually it was a little over a year, but you know, we did a couple of trips and stuff.

HARVEY: That's good. That you did that anyway.

DON: I mean, I'm happy being retired. I mean with the kids, and the grandkids and stuff, I got something to do all the time. And you know, in fact, you know, sometimes you wonder, when did I have time to go to work? *(laughs)* I think life is good. And I think basically in general, with the time in the waterfront and stuff, my life has been great. You know, the freedom of the waterfront gave you, the stuff you did, the family, my kids are all doing good. I got no complaints.

HARVEY: Yeah. Have you been active with the Pensioners?

DON: Active in terms of I go to the meetings. I get, I'm on the executive board. I get things, it's more—Ralph volunteers me for a lot of stuff at times without doing it. But you know I got the time, I don't mind, I'll do it, something to do. So I'm active in the sense that if they need something I'll do it, but I'm not politically active sort of thing, you know. And you know, like I said, Ralph, he'll say, "Okay, you're doing this." "Okay."

HARVEY: It's Ralph Rucker?

DON: Yeah. He's you know, but see also, Ralph, Jim and I—I worked with Ralph when I was dispatching, you know, Ralph would be chief one year, [*?Galarza?*] the next. So he knows I don't care. It's just like, they were talking about next year, the thing is in San Francisco, and I says, "I thought it was Seattle next year?" And they said, "No, and you guys are running the hospitality room." And I said, "Oh really?" I said, "I got to make sure I go to the next executive board, so I can figure out what's going on." So, yeah, Ralph, you know, he puts me out there for a lot of little things.

HARVEY: Exactly. Any kind of—have I missed anything major? That you think that should be discussed?

DON: Not necessarily, not that I could think of, you know. Like I said, as far as I'm concerned, the union, the whole thing, it's been wonderful. I mean our medical makes the thing, you go to get your prescription to the

thing, you see the co-pays people got to pay and you say, "Wow. That's [union medical] a good thing." No, I'm thinking generally probably covered it good.

HARVEY: Okay, okay. What do you think of the current situation with Big Bob and current, our officers on top?

DON: Actually I think Big Bob is great. Now I don't know if you know, Jim Brown, at the last convention, put in the motion to basically bring the older people up to come up with the newer retirees?

HARVEY: Yes.

DON: They retired a long time ago. And everybody thought that he wasn't going to stand a chance. And he went over and he was talking to Big Bob, and Big Bob was right on it. So it's like, he doesn't have set ideas, he's open to ideas, he's open to try to get things to happen and he's you know, as far as what they show anyway, he does a real good job. The groups are there, I think, you know, seems to be doing great. And in his, that thing, that they got it passed at the executive board, so now you'll see how negotiations come out. But someone like Cleophus [?Williams?] who retired a long time ago?

HARVEY: Yes.

DON: I mean his pension's not enough to live on anymore. By them bringing him up to basically, not this last contract but the one before, I mean, it's probably going to double his pension. When we first went on the waterfront, this guy I used to work with, his dad had retired. And in ten-years time, his dad's pension wasn't enough to pay rent. He had to move into the Projects [public, low-income housing] to be able to afford anything and basically getting by—and they didn't raise, for a long time they didn't raise up people's [pension], now they're trying to make an effort to do it, they've been raising them little bits here as they go along. And then this motion which Jim takes the people way back and brings them up, where they can you know, at least have a living now. It's huge, you know.

Big Bob's the one, that, once that happened, everybody else, you know. . . . They were like, "Nah, that's never going to turn out," And Bob got it, you know, and that's all that it took. Once he backed it, you know, it's up there, they passed it, so now they just got see what happens in negotiations. But that's something that's good. That's something that, like I tell them, you need to take, when the pensions go up, have it be across the board, because otherwise—we're living a lot longer. You know, I'm planning on being here for another 30 or 40 years. Well, in 30 years my pension's not going to be shit, now it's okay, but—you know, basically they need to put in some kind of cost of living thing, or they need to something. Cleophus is the perfect example. I mean when's he going to retire? 30 years?

HARVEY: Yes.

DON: And so, you know, with the pension he's getting, it's nothing, at this point. Even with the couple of raises they're giving him, it's still not shit. You know, so if he gets this it'll be a huge raise for him. But it still won't be enough to be real comfortable, but he'll be comfortable.

HARVEY: You're talking about what they're going for right now?

DON: Yeah, it's in this contract. It's the end, when they get the last two, the pensions and the salaries are the last things to do, well they've got the thing that they're going to try to bring all the people up to two contracts [ago], twelve years ago. So that contract, I believe that gives them, a hundred and fifty dollars, per month, per year, return. And he's probably getting half that, or less now. You know, the people in there, the fact that they're not getting hung up on just what's coming for them, they're actually looking at everybody across the board, I actually, I think they're doing well.

HARVEY: That's good. That's good to know. Do you want to make any final statement? You kind of made it clear I think but—

DON: Yeah, like I said, as far as I'm concerned, because of the waterfront, my life's been wonderful. No complaints at all. The freedom. This job, the freedom particularly, much more so before then now, but even, the freedom as far as I'm concerned made it the best job in the world. We had to work our ass off but that was okay. I've been saying all along, I think that the waterfront, the union, and that thing has been wonderful in my mind. I mean, all my kids went through college, they're doing real well—I wish I did as well they did. *(laughs)*

HARVEY: Yes. Yes, ideal. Thank you Don.

DON: Yeah, my pleasure.

HARVEY: I appreciate it a lot.