

PORT OF LOS ANGELES CENTENNIAL
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

AN INTERVIEW WITH
VERNON HALL

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
2007

TRANSCRIPT BY
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Unknown speakers: And we are speaking with...

Interviewer: Hard questions first.

Vernon Hall: OK [Laughing]

Interviewer: Please say your name and spell it.

VH: My name is Vern or Vernon Hall. V-E-R-N-O-N, always went by Vern V-E-R-N Hall. That is a real tough one there H-A-L-L.

Interviewer: Also, can you tell us the year you were born and where you were born.

VH: I was born right up the street in San Pedro, California. Literally, about a mile from here. In the old San Pedro hospital in 1936, which makes me, if you can figure out, seventy years old.

Interviewer: Right. Looking young.

VH: Thank you.

Interviewer: Having grown up in San Pedro...

Unknown speaker: Just talk to John do not worry about me. Continued undistinguishable chatter. [Laughing].

Interviewer: Growing up in San Pedro, what are your earliest memories of growing up here?

VH: Growing up in San Pedro, actually my earliest memories, not to be hokey, revolved around the Port because that is where my dad worked. He was a machinist. Started to work here ten days before I was born. Was I destined to work the port, who knows? (Laughing) San Pedro was pretty much like it is today. It was clearly dominated by the fishing industry, by the port, which was totally different obviously. That is why my family came here. That is why many families came here was because the activities related to the port.

Interviewer: Tell us about your family and your father. What background did they come from? Why did they come here? When did they come here? What did they do when they got here?

VH: My dad as I say...My grandfather was a machinist, as was my dad. My grandfather was Swedish, so he lived in Minnesota where else, right. They came here in 1905, to work on these legends, and the activity associated with the growing of the harbor then. My mom's side came here a few years later because my step dad, excuse me, my mom's step dad was a merchant seaman. One of the original pre-Union long shore men. (Laughs) Again, everything...they came here because of the fact that there was a harbor here.

Interviewer: Now, as a kid growing up. Do you have any specific memories of stories of your earliest days that you remember about this place and your life here?

VH: Of course, not of course. Like many people, went down to pretty exciting port facility Cabrillo Beach. That was one of the social centers of town. It is still a big social center, but not so much for San Pedro. People from other parts of LA come there, use it, and enjoy it. When it is

not polluted of course. We learned to swim there and we spent the summers getting burnt, which is now, after thirty or forty skin cancer operations, I probably should not have done that. Who knew, right? There was not any sunscreen in those days. We just went down laid out and played volleyball, swam both sides, inner harbor/outer harbor, used the bathhouse, which has been restored nicely. Used...

Interviewer: For those people who do not know about San Pedro, what is Cabrillo Beach? What is it describe it?

JD: Well Cabrillo Beach is kind of unique. It is a beach that lies within the boundaries of LA harbor, at least the inner beach does. Even though you have this huge industrial harbor now you have a recreational swimming beach. Probably the closest thing locally would be Alamitos Bay, which again it protected inner salt-water beach but in that case, again, there is no shipping going by. You have a lot of yachting but ah, so Cabrillo Beach is kind of unique and um...

Interviewer: What are some of your memories of Cabrillo Beach?

VH: Well, like I say going down there and getting burnt [laughs]. One of the things that was interesting about Cabrillo Beach is it reflected on my career, which we will talk about I am sure later. The facilities: the bathhouse and a matching, boathouse which has long been torn-down, were designed, in the heart of the depression by either WPA or CCC Architects who were looking for work. A lot of really competent and big named architects designed those facilities. A few years later, when I had the privilege of developing the Cabrillo Marina I had a brilliant idea, which we did carry out, to use the architectural work of those buildings as our guidelines for all subsequent development. Everything seemed to go...

Interviewer: What was San Pedro like when you were growing up?

VH: Well, San Pedro was just a, what we call now, a small central business district. You could do all your shopping: clothing stores, hardware stores, five and dime stores, you remember five and dime stores, maybe but I do not know, now they are 99 Cent Stores I guess [laughs]. You can walk down to; there were three or four maybe five active theaters. Some of which you did not go to as a young person. There was the infamous Beacon Street of course, which you definitely did not go to.

Interviewer: Tell me about that. Why do you not go there? What was Beacon Street?

VH: You do not know about Beacon Street.

Interviewer: Tell me all about it.

VH: All right, I do not know much about it because I was just a kid. Beacon Street was the area we are sitting in right now here at the Port Admin Building. At one time, had the reputation, and the one time was right after World War II in the late forties, as the toughest few blocks in the world. It was a bar, if I may say, whorehouse, clip joint, another bar-repeated over and over again, Shanghai reds, just a whole history of San Pedro associated with these few blocks here. Why was it rough? Because, again, San Pedro attracted merchant seaman from all over the world. People would...rumor has it would literally get Shanghai'd here. [They] would be going

to the bars have a few drinks and find themselves shipping out the next day, against their will. It was a...like I say, if you were growing here as a kid you tried to stay away from there just because of the reputation. Was it that bad? Who knows, I could not tell you. There were some great restaurants there, but um...

Interviewer: Tell me about those.

VH: Well, some of the trainees were there, still in town. Auntie's go this start there. Auntie's Restaurant here in town. Working the counters of these little working class restaurants where you have a big long counter and for, you know, twenty-five cents have a bowl of Cioppino and some good fresh French bread. Now a-days, it is hard to find that without being...creating that this was real [laughs].

Interviewer: Now but as...

VH: The other thing, going back though, going back to San Pedro. The little central business district had virtually everything you could, need to...including the movies. I would go to movies on Saturday afternoon matinees for ten cents or a quarter. [I would] ride my bike all over town, not worrying about, you know, gangs or violence. It was just a nice safe community. As I just ran into while I was waiting, Bob Henry who is in charge of the red line project. Oh, I am sorry...

[A lot of undistinguishable chatter and laughter]

Anyway, we were talking about, I ran into Bob Henry who has the task of restoring the red line here in San Pedro. When you could not find something in San Pedro or when you were looking for a big outing, you would go down to Sixth and Harbor and catch the red line to either Los Angeles or Long Beach; where they had department stores, the big movie palaces, and the big cafeterias. That would be an event though. Normally you could anything you wanted right here in town including...

Interviewer: Do you remember specifically one of those events for yourself, going, taking the red line down there?

VH: Not particularly, no.

Interviewer: Yah, yah.

VH: I can, as it turned out I was downtown just a couple of weeks ago and we parked in the parking structure, which was probably...the building look awfully familiar. It was one of the old apartment stores on Eight and Broadway. It is now the jewelry district there, but it was kind of nice to go back in time.

Interviewer: And living in San Pedro, I mean, you described riding your bike, going to the movies, and things like that. I mean, who were the people who lived there? Who were your friends? Who were the San Pedroens of the day?

VH: The San Pedroens of the day were basically Yugoslavs, which we cannot say anymore, Serbo-Croatians, and Italians. I being partly Scandinavian, we had a little enclave of Norwegians

and Swedes. It was a melting pot there was every ethnic group. High school was quite a mixed bag of backgrounds. Obviously, from a religious point-of-view, strongly dominated by the Catholic Church, Mary Star. It is still one of the largest parishes in, anywhere. So your friends were Italians and Slavs. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Did everybody get along or was there the normal, a little push and shove?

VH: Absolutely got along. There was nothing like you read about today or see every day in these ethnic gangs going on. The toughest thing would be people that were wore leather jackets, the Fonzie's of the era. Excuse for looking at you but...

Interviewer: You cannot direct yourself. [laughter]

VH: And there were....

Interviewer: Start again.

VH: The tough kids in town were the...was the car culture of the forties and fifties. Many of which were World War II veterans that would come out. They got into hot rodding and they wore the leather jackets. They kind of looked like Fonzie's from *The Happy Days*. That would be the people you stayed away from, if you were, were not in that social group. There were no gangs per say. There were obviously some people of, like in any community, people that broke the law frequently; but it was a classic middle town America. The difference being, of course, we had this major harbor sitting on our port.

Interviewer: Now as a kid, how did you relate to this major harbor?

VH: Well, my dad worked in there. I got a lot of free rides on the ferry and so forth, so it was a lot of fun.

Interviewer: Tell me about that, so before the bridge there was a ferry? How did you get around in the port area? Describe it, what was it like growing up there?

VH: The port area, of course, was San Pedro, Wilmington, and Terminal Island. Terminal Island had some cargo terminals but it basically had the big canneries at Fish Harbor. Of course, looking forward, and excited, to that new movie coming out in a couple of weeks about the old Japanese community there, which I vaguely remember but do not really happened...

Interviewer: Yes, I want to see that too.

VH: Yeah, that will be terrific I am sure, but in the forties or fifties when I was growing up, Terminal Island was dominated by two things: the Navy shipyard or naval base in Long Beach, and the canneries in the fish harbor area. To get there if you wanted to, or to get to Long Beach one way to go there was to cross Terminal Island and you picked up the ferry right at Sixth and Harbor. The ferry had two levels. The lower level was for cars, I think it held maybe twelve cars [Laughs] that many. The upper level was for passengers. One of the things my dad did was maintain both the engines on the ferry as well as some of the mechanisms of the passenger ramps and so forth. A lot of that he would do after working hours on overtime, which was good. [Laughs] Some of the times I would be able to go along with him and ride the ferry back and

forth across the mighty one thousand foot wide main channel of the harbor. That was an enjoyable experience for many years.

Interviewer: Did you get to Long Beach much? I mean did you go there to visit at all.

VH: Well depending on what time. As I got older, Long Beach was the closest place you could go for a good time to take a date. It had some very nice movie theaters as the ones in San Pedro kind of went downhill with time. Along Pine Avenue and along Ocean Boulevard there were some nice places to go. They have come back, so to speak. Of course, there was the Pike. The Pike was a major, not a theme park, what is the right word, an amusement park.

Interviewer: Describe that, what was the Pike?

VH: The Pike was an area of Long Beach along the water that had all the features of the east coast, Coney Island West basically. It had a gigantic really scary, wooden roller coaster what was it called?

Interviewer: Cyclone

VH: The Cyclone Racer, there you go. You have probably been there, yeah. It took you out right over the ocean and brought you back.

Interviewer: Say they had a big wooden...

VH: Yeah, they had a big wooden roller coaster called, "The Cyclone Racer" I believe. It was not only wooden and it made a lot of chattering noise, but it took you out, shot you out toward the ocean and brought you back on a sharp turn. They had all the other ferrous wheels and marry-go-rounds. I think they had a double ferrous wheel, which was quite exciting and all the carney games right along the midway. You knock the ball over, knock the milk bottles over, which you could never do. So on and so forth. It was a place also similar to my earlier description of Beacon Street, which had some seedy side effects to it. There was an area just between the Pike, just west of the Pike called, "The Jungle." As a young naval officer a few years later, I had to caution my men "Do not go into the jungle because you will be ripped off and who knows what." Of course, the first place they went was the jungle. [Laughs] Long Beach, as a city, has gone to great effort and quite a bit of money to restore the Pike to a modern amusement center with restaurants, bowling alley, multiplex theaters, and aquariums. Of the course, the property where the jungle was is now all very expensive high-rise condominiums. San Pedro has not quite done all that, they are trying but they will never do it on the scale that Long Beach has done.

Interviewer: [Clears throat] When you got involved, after you graduated from UCLA, you got involved with the port as a surveyor, during the summer.

VH: Well I was going to school I did that.

Interviewer: Yeah, tell me about that job; and what kind of projects were you working on?

VH: The job was...

Interviewer: While I was at UCLA...

Interviewer: Yeah, while I was at UCLA, just a couple of summers I worked there. Basically studying Engineering at the time, it seemed...I think my dad introduced me to somebody that I took the test, I passed it and I was hired as a Surveying Assistant. The first summer I did all the grunt work that you do including holding the chain for the guy that was taking the measurements, pounding the stakes [Laughs], rowing the boat as we went out and sounded the harbor; it was great.[Laughs] Fabulous experience. Projects, nothing on the scale that we done there was...I think the parking lot for the SP Slip, we did that. We did some regrading of an old lumber terminal. Like I said a lot of soundings, of which we did by hand...

Interviewer: Tell me about that. How do you do that?

VH: Well you took a chain.

Interviewer: Explain, you use to take sounding by hand.

VH: We use to take soundings by hand. We did not use depth-sounding devises. You got literally into a rowboat with three people in it, tried not to get wet, one person held the chain. The chain had markings every foot, little tags on it. The other one rowed the boat, which was me. The third guy was writing in a book what the guy with the chain was saying. [Laughs] That was a great way to spend a summer on the water, so that was quite a...one of my best memories there.

Interviewer: Part of this work was connected to the parking lot or was it Ports O' Call [Village] itself?

VH: I think it was the parking lot around, actually around the Slip. It was just before Ports O' Call. Ports O' Call started, I remember as "Norm's Landing." Norm was a...had a sports fishing thing on lease from the Port of LA. I do not know how he convinced them to let him build a village, but he did. Ultimately, it was taken over by Tallichet Group and expanded and expanded. Like many things of that type of development, it starts small and grows with time, not always growing correctly. That is part of the problem. If you were to start from scratch today and lay out a marine or maritime village you would have a lot of different... you could make sure the waterfront was open to everybody. You would make sure the sight lines were correct, but as it did, it grew. Like Topsie, it grew a little bit.

Interviewer: Again, for the people who have not been here, tell us what is Ports O' Call.

VH: Ports O' Call was and is a simulated New England fishing village on the waterfront. On the commercial side of the water, away from the cargo terminals in downtown San Pedro. It was initially, it started out as a sports fishing venture. It expanded into restaurants and shops. It was very popular for maybe ten or fifteen years. It had a lot of specialty stores, candle shops, Ports O' Call restaurants featured there. Initially, it even had name brands I think it was a Pepsi Cola restaurant there and Italian restaurants. It attracted a lot of people from all over Southern California. It was kind of the...I would think it was kind of the model for other villages that were built at Marina del Rey in Orange County and so forth. It is still there.

Interviewer: What happened to it?

VH: Time [Laughs] Lake of maintenance, leasing policies of the port. Competition from other newer attractions. Changing demographics. It is still there. It is still functioning and it will come back I am sure of it. I know the port is working on developing a new master plan for it. At the time it was, you know, the fifties and sixties it was a great place to go.

Interviewer: In the seventies and early eighties, you were a civil engineer and you worked in planning. I understand that you introduced this idea of project management of the port. Tell us about that, and what was project management? How did it get involved with the history of the port?

VH: Well, Project Management is a discipline and applies to virtually any enterprise. It is a way of approaching and accomplishing things. It goes back to some very basic things like, what is a project? Well a project is different from an ongoing activity. A project has a beginning and an end or a goal. It has a series of steps to get from there to there. Everybody manages projects every day without thinking. When I...some of the projects, probably the first one we used it on, was the Cabrillo Marina that I mentioned earlier. It was and is at the site of Cabrillo Beach, just north of it. It was kind of complex. You had property issues. You had political issues. You had community issues, because some people want to improve a facility out there some people did not. Then you had the technical challenges of building the thing in a marine environment during the era of when people were starting to be concerned about the environment. There are a lot of complexities to it. To approach it, the way it was approached prior to the thinking about project management, it probably would never have been done. The engineers would have designed the plans or hired someone to design the plans. The property managers would have leased it, would have negotiated leases for someone to operate it. The environmentalists were just getting started, would have found all kinds of reasons why it could not be built. Everybody did his or her own thing, but did not talk to anybody except at the top; when the Executive Director or the Board at the Harbor Commissioner either approved or disapproved it. Project Management theory, basically, lets you speak to form a team of all necessary disciplines to work your way through all the problems early on. Working a coordinated effort and that was something that was not being done. Now for whatever reason or whomever I did it. I was able to first, grasp the concept and translate it into terms that were acceptable and amenable to the people who were put into these teams. These project management teams attacked a specific project while they were still doing their other jobs: negotiating leases or analyzing the environment.

Interviewer: Again, to sum it up for people who do not know, what was the Cabrillo project that you were working on?

VH: The Cabrillo Marina

Interviewer: Marina. What was that project?

VH: The Cabrillo Marina was to carry out a promise that would have been made twenty years ago to build a marina. An additional recreational boating facility in LA harbor in an area near, originally, at Cabrillo Beach. One of the reasons it was not built was the plan was to wipe out the swimming beach that I had mentioned earlier and replace it with a marina for those wealthy yacht people. That did not sit well with certain elements of the community and the project was stopped.

It was started again ten years, say the first concept was back in the thirties. It came up again in the early fifties, then we were poking through some files, and we said let us...we should either be doing this or we should not. Let us put it to bed one way or another. We started a new process which involved, not only project management, but bringing in outside consultants who had expertise in developing marina and bringing in the communities. The community being defined as those who had an axe to grind. Someone either for or against, would benefit from it or would not benefit from it. It was quite a challenge and quite exciting actually. The end result was and is very successful.

Interviewer: How did you solve all the things that were stopping it in the past? What were the break through that made it happen?

VH: I think the biggest break through was getting everybody to sit at a table and talk to each other. Not just talk to each other but to give them the tools in the form of resources, consultants, studies to take their ideas and study to see if they would work or not. The third thing that probably made it work was to give them a target. To come up with plan by a certain date. Do not just sit and talk, spin your wheels. You have...we have either identified you as the interests groups, either individually or representing groups. We are giving you the assets and the resources to take your ideas to put them on paper, to put them up on the board, and argue about them. We are giving you a target to come up with a plan. If you come up with a plan that incorporates all the things that you are...the compromises that you may have to make to come up with a good plan. We will guarantee we will take it to the authority, the Board of Harbor Commissioners. Present it to them and seek their approval. Once they approve it, we will carry it out and make it happen.

Interviewer: [Coughs] How did you get away from the original objection that this was going to take away the bathing beach? How did you compromise that out?

VH: That was serendipity. The Federal property became available. Fort MacArthur was being realigned or closed down. The property where it was built was ex-military property, barracks and everything. Not easily, but we did acquire that...we had it returned to the port. That became the center of where we developed the facility. The beach was preserved and still there today.

Interviewer: You got involved with the Balustrades Peninsula of the Land Conservancy and the White Point Nature Preserve. Tell us about, what are those things and how did you get involved with those.

VH: I did. [Laughter]

Background voices: [Laughter] I get it. He did, he said he did it.

Interviewer: How did you move from what you were doing before to this, and getting involved with those kinds of conservancies and things like that? What drew you to it and what were you doing? What did you achieve?

VH: Basically, on the White Point Property, which, was Federal property returned to the city of LA, with the purpose of developing a recreational facility. It had its constraints on it. It is a one hundred-ten acres on coastal property, lying about Twenty-Fifth Street and Western Avenue. If

you know where that is. A citizen group was formed, came up with a master plan, the master plan sat on the shelf for ten years. Another citizen group came up with a master plan and it sat on the shelf for ten years. After I had retired, I was doing a few things giving back the community as you are supposed to do, after you retire, and the City Councilman Rudy Svorinich asked me to chair the third version of the committee, so I did. I approached it the way I approach my projects. I said, "OK, let us get people together that have an interest. Let us come up with a goal and then let us make sure it can be implemented." With the background on the project, we know who wanted to, and with reading the papers, you know who wanted the projects. They are still out there today. The people who wanted to be all soccer field. They are still out there, would love it today to be all soccer fields. More power to them. Some people wanted it to be a doggy park. Others wanted it to be what it was, a community garden where you can raise your own corn, chickens, and whatever. [Laughs] We know who wanted it. Then there was the Palace for the Nature Conservancy that wanted to keep it pretty much natural. After a couple of formative meetings where we identified the players who were interested, we challenged those groups to come forward. [They] present their concepts for the land, and what I did add which I think was critical to the list, oh by the way show us how you are going make it happen. If you get the land, show us you can... that you have the assets whether it be money or people, whatever to carry it out. That was new to them. In return for doing that, again, I promised them that whatever we decide we would take if forward. This time we will not let it sit around for another ten years, so the next citizen group can plan it. I had the backing of the Svorinich on that and that is exactly what we did.

Interviewer: Describe what, again who do not know, what was the end result?

VH: The end result is that it is a nature preserve. Basically, enhanced by taking out some non-native vegetation, enhanced by putting in interpretive trails. Theoretically, it will be there forever. It was an old Nike missile sight. It has come from coastal habitat through the cold war back to coastal habituate again. Today it looks like a bunch of weeds out there because it has been a dry winter. Not much greenery out there.

Interviewer: [Coughing]

VH: It is a spectacular sight.

Interviewer: I am sorry say it again.

VH: I say it is a spectacular sight. But again, how I got involved, was after I retired many people told me that since I have been here all my life you should participate in homeowners groups and things like that. I think I got tapped for that one because I have known Rudy Svorinich most of his life. I saw him grow up through school, become politician, and all that. We had a good working relationship. He had a...he pretty much tracked what I had done at the port, so he know I could handle a project of this magnitude. I think I did. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Talk about the 2020 plan. What was that and what was your involvement with that?

VH: Well it was my baby.

Interviewer: I am sorry start again.

VH: The 2020 plan...

Interviewer: Wait for me to finish to start.

VH: Okay.

Interviewer: Okay start go ahead.

VH: The 2020 plan was, basically, a creature that I may have invented. I do not know but I certainly carried it out. The origin of it was...actually, it came from the Federal government. A lot of people do not know. I was explaining it to somebody. The Corp. of Engineers, which of course is part of the U.S. Army, has-one of its many responsibilities to maintain the waters of the United States. Most of the channels in Los Angeles harbor, Long Beach harbor, and many other harbors around the country are the responsibility of the Army Corp. of Engineers. They have a whole bunch of planning rules obviously. One of their requirements is they plan improvements to those facilities. To project out fifty years, have a fifty-year planning horizon. They started this process in the early seventies. It became the 2020 plan. In essence, it was a plan to... it evolved into a plan, a cooperative plan between both ports L.A. Long Beach and the Army Corp. the local district, to envision what the harbor might be in the year 2020. As part of that, we did all kinds of things. We did economic studies. We looked at all the facilities that we had. We looked at trends in cargo, cargo handling, what type of ships will be there in the future. It really was a landmark study to plan the future of the harbor.

Interviewer: What did you see as the future?

Background chatter. Resetting the recording.

Interviewer: You have to tell me about the how you, then in the past and how you did it your way as far as engineering is concerned. How it changed over the years.

VH: I hope it was not my way John [laughing]. In the past, engineering-civil engineering was a very rigid, structured environment. In fact, my first seven or eight years until they built the building we are in now sitting in, I sat at a drafting stool. This is what you did. You sat in a drafting room. There were no cubicles. There were no private phones. You made sure that you cleaned up your desk every night so that drafting room look pristine. This is the way the railroads did it when they were building the intercontinental railroads back in the eighteen hundreds. The Army Engineers did it the same way. It was a very rigid structure, as I mentioned earlier, the structure did not deal too much with complexity. You had a complex, where you started introducing community issues. You started introducing environmental issues and property issues that type of approach maybe would not work so well. When I was hired, that was the environment and we had a very autocratic boss. [He] passed away a couple of years ago, Ed Gorman. Wonderful engineer, but an engineer of the old school. His boss the Chief Harbor Engineer was...grew up in that same environment, very autocratic. [He was a] Great man. When we got into some of these more complex projects and we started to get into more planning, not just moving forward, doing it in an era where you had to concern yourself with the environmental impacts and an era where you had factor in financial impact. You just did not do what sounded right. You had to go through a more formal process, which you call project management. One of the projects we started on...

Interviewer: Go back to the beginning give us a nice summary of what it was like in the old days. As far as the railroads would go, the top down engineer knew everything. How it worked. Describe that again.

VH: Yeah, well like I say, in a pure civil engineering or railroad engineering environment, harbor engineering is basically an outgrowth of civil engineering. The Chief Engineer or the Chief of Design was the authority figure and the knowledge figure. To be a good Chief Engineer you had to know more about all aspects of your field of engineering than you subordinates. In many cases, that was a fallacy. Particularly as technology was changing, it would be like me today trying to go down to the engineering division and try to figure what the young engineers who are sitting there in front of their computers are doing. I could not do it. Would not need to do it. If I could give you a really good example, of one of the things I did, which I think was beneficial. Where I really knocked heads with my supervisors. For whatever reason, I did not really care what level of the organization I was in, when I saw something that should be done better or should be done differently, I said, "Hey let us think about doing it differently." We were building, we the port, were building container wharfs. It was a new era of converting the old wooden wharfs that handled general cargo. The traditional picture you have of unloading things in pallets, unloading things in slings. Having long shore man with hooks over their shoulder, that era was going away as I entered the harbor as a young engineer. Not to young engineer, [I was] in my middle thirties in the seventies. In the nineteen-seventies. One of the things we were doing was converting general cargo wharfs into container wharfs. Container wharfs because they have to handle moving container cranes. Tremendous new loads that they were not used to dealing with. The structural engineer became as important as the civil engineer, who could lay out the railroad track on the wharf. Under the in-house design not only of Ed, God rest his soul, but also of the Chief of design, their approach was kind of a brute force approach. Well, we built this one. We made it really strong, now we have to build another one. Let us make it even stronger. What they were doing as designers, as engineers were creating extremely massive structures that were really hard to build. The contractors were going crazy. Because for every pile that was vertical, they had four piles that were battered, as they called them. Providing a framework on each pile. Supporting the wharf deck, very hard to build, but very tough, very rigid. If a big earthquake hit it would break. That is exactly what happened in Oakland, when they lost a good portion of the port during the, what was it, the Loma Prieta [earthquake in 1989] I guess. For whatever reason, I was assigned the job of designing a new wharf from scratch. I went to Ed and I said, "You know would you give me the opportunity to re-examine our whole approach to container wharfs? Let me hire some consultants; let me send them around the world, literally, to look at every conceivable type of container wharf that is in existence where you can plan today. They did not send them around the world. They did literature research obviously; also let me hire some geotechnical people to find out exactly what our soils conditions, particularly, our seismic conditions-our earthquake conditions are. We can look at all the types of wharfs. Look at our particular situation, look at our particular labor market, and come up with the best answer for the future. How I convinced them to do that, I do not remember, but I did. It was exactly the right thing to do. Guess what we came up with, a totally different design. Instead of being rigid and inflexible, was slender and flexible. Simple example, when you have to explain these things to the harbor commissioners and so forth, the oak tree verse the palm tree in the high wind. The oak tree resist the wind, resist the wind, resist the wind, and

resist the wind. The wind gets stronger it collapses in one single catastrophic event. The palm tree bends, and bends, and bends, and bends. The wind stops and it comes back. That is exactly how we designed the new type of wharf, and they are still doing that today. That same type of wharf with today's technology with all the tools available to our bright young people. The same kind of wharf.

Interviewer: But you talked about this being a different approach.

VH: Right.

Interviewer: Contrasting the old approach, top-down to this multi-phased, talk about that. Explain that again.

VH: Well again, we by doing it this way. By now introducing consultants, who brought in new information. By emphasizing to a civil engineer, the need to bring in the team of geotechnical engineers, seismic engineers, and structural engineers, it forced that way...it broke the mold by necessity. Whether he ever admitted it or not, he could not know all of that and did not. He would still check the civil work, but trusted that we were hiring the best people to do the other disciplines. With the Project Manager in charge, bring all the pieces together not only to finish the design but to take it forward into construction.

Interviewer: Is the term? [Clears throat] It was used in DWP work in the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century, coerced labor. Is that a term you used inside, all the work has been inside?

VH: [Laughs] I thought you said forced labor. [Laughs]

Interviewer: No, no coerced, coerced.

VH: [Laughs] Yes that is correct. [Laughs]

Interviewer: So was that all? What about the policy of the harbor? Was that done as well?

VH: Absolutely. When I got there, everything was done inside. That is correct.

Interviewer: Describe that to me and how it changed.

VH: Well, it kind of just did. It changed by necessity. Because...

Interviewer: What was the old system and what is the new system?

VH: The old system was to have in the drafting room, inside...in-house forces we will call them, to have all the specialty items that you needed. We had a squad that is the word we used, a "squad" of electrical engineers to do the lighting design. They ultimately became involved in obviously container, crane, power, and everything like that. Initially lighting design power to the terminal buildings and so forth. We had a squad of structural engineers, who could design buildings if necessary; and were learning, as they were going, how to design container wharfs. It was a new discipline for them. We had a squad of architects to analyze the architectural features. About everybody else was a civil engineer. They were organized into a planning squad, a design squad, and a maintenance squad. All of them reporting to a Chief of Design.

Interviewer: Let us start again. I am sorry when I talked...

VH: All of the specialized in-house designers, which had a squad leader next level, entry level, and then a Supervising engineer. All the squad leaders appointed...reported to the Chief of Design, who in turn reported to the Chief Harbor Engineer. The classic, rigid, civil service in-house thing. The projects either became too complex. The environment changed with the advent of the environmental laws. The working environment changed. The criteria started the...the computer era, the computing power started to be available to outside consultants. Just the size of the, as we expand the harbor, overwhelmed the in-house capabilities. One of the first things I did was to start hiring consultants.

Interviewer: Chatter...

VH: Once I started hiring consultants, I started to see how consultants worked. That led me to think about project management.

Interviewer: Was the arguments in favor of the old system?

VH: Um hmm

Interviewer: It was cheaper. It was more economical. You bring in outside people and they charge you a lot of money, and if you keep it in-house, it is cheaper to do it. The other way is more expensive. Is that the argument against that change or were there other arguments?

VH: I really did not think that as one of the factors. I think it was just a matter of control.

Interviewer: Hmm

VH: A matter of...

Interviewer: That is the argument of the DWP.

VH: Yeah

Interviewer: It was cheaper to do it in house.

Unknown person: But that was a long time ago.

VH: Yeah. One would argue differently today. In fact, there was an argument in the paper just last week about how the DWP would do it and how outside time...did you read about that one?

Interviewer: No

VH: [Laughter] I am sorry. I am sliding as I talk. I apologize to the cameraman here. Anyway, the bottom is I think the...what I was able to, at the time, bring it in has now blossomed into...but they still have in-house capabilities. Let me answer your question a different way, and bring it into today's. What I felt was necessary, when I became a supervising engineer, a Chief Engineer, or a director of them, was to have sufficient in-house capability. So that as you are hiring consultants, you have people on your staff that can talk to them as peers; and can assure you as the supervisor that the work being done by the consultants is cost effective and is technically effective to the

degree it needs to be. That is important to do. There are organizations where there is no in-house capability, where you are totally at the mercy of...mercy is not the right word, but you are totally reliant upon on the technical expertise of your consultants. We took advantage of the fact that we had the in-house capability when we were doing everything in-house. We kind of transitioned into making those people the technical peers of the people that were hiring. One of the things I did, which also broke the mold, was once we did start hiring consultants was I... consultants use to be hire and the Army still does it that way I think, by blue ribbon panel. [They] would review the proposals, select the consultants, and then disappear. I mean in disappear, they were you bosses but they did not have to work with the consultants. One of the things, after a couple of hiring under my belt, and I saw how the blue ribbon panel concept was not really working...by the way if I may take a side bar. The building we are sitting, the architect was hired by a blue ribbon committee. This is a very controversial building, as you probably know, and you will hear it in your other interviews. But anyway, the concept was to let the people who [you] will ultimately be working with selected the consultant, [and] participate in ultimately making the recommendations to the managers as to who to hire. Almost always, it is a matter of not money; it is a matter of qualifications-professional qualifications. Many times, it is a matter of who would I rather work with. Most consultants I am sure, even in your industry, are technically competent or they would not be in business. Most of them charge the same fees or they would not be in business. Ultimately, it gets down to who. During the selection process, you are actually creating a team. The closer nit your team is, without crossing ethical boundaries, the better chances of a successful product at the other end. Again, that kind of thinking was strange to these rigid civil engineers who grew up with that mentality.

Interviewer: Alameda Corridor. [Clears throat] Give us some history of way we needed an Alameda Corridor. What is an Alameda Corridor and how did you get it done?

VH: Alameda Corridor was an outgrowth of the 2020 plan. The 2020 plan predicted a significant increase in cargo movement through both ports. The port complex of San Pedro bay. Railroads serving the...I have to give you a little history here. Railroads serving the ports, interesting history, when I came. The harbor that was pre-containerization, it was railroad tracks everywhere. There were high lines. There were lines on the wharfs. There were lines on both sides of the transit sheds, the warehousing that is right on the water. The railroads moved the cargo in and out of the harbor once it left the ship. As we transitioned in the harbor from general cargo operations into container operations, we literally had to create a lot of land. We tore down all those sheds that were sitting right at the face of the wharf and we took out the railroad tracks. For a period of time, the railroads were gone from the harbor. Then somebody, who was it Malcom McClain or somebody, invented intermodalism. We saw the need for and the opportunity to bring back rail into the harbor. A totally different form. Brought it back into intermodal container yards. The project worked on and had the privilege of supervising, ultimately was one of the first intermodal yards in the country or port, major port.

Interviewer: What is an intermodal yard and how do it function?

VH: [Sigh] Intermodal yard as it...was a...well intermodal obviously is moving cargo from one mode of transportation to another. Port is an intermodal thing. It moves cargo from the water

mode of transportation to a landside. That is a gross...that is a macro definition-intermodal. What it came to mean was providing a facility where the cargo could go from storage in the container yard, temporary storage, on to a train. Have that train leave the harbor and stay intact to remote location via Chicago, East Coast, and so forth. That is what it became. To do that you designed specialized facilities that were (baraid) if you will a series of parallel tracks with appropriate switching. You can move...handle that cargo with specialized machinery. That is...it became...

Interviewer: How does that lead to the Alameda corridor?

VH: As we were planning the future of the harbor, in the 2020 plan. We projected the need for bringing rail back to the harbors in this form, of intermodal form. Having a series properly located intermodal yards either adjacent to or internal to some of these projected big container terminals we were envisioning. As you looked at that, as you projected that future growth and using the simplistic approach and was much more complicated. Even today basically fifty percent of the cargo that stayed...that comes in LA and Long Beach says in Southern California. It is going to be handled by trucks. Fifty percent of it goes beyond Southern California and it should be handled by trains. The most efficient way from cost, energy use, pollution, and everything like that. That was kind of a macro driving force for our studies. Then we hired consultants do it much more detailed in that and demonstrate the truth of that. Using cargo projections into the future, and using that simplistic fifty-fifty split of trucking and rail then imposing that rather large number of rail movements onto the existing system of rail in Southern California, at the time we were studying it. You could easily predict total breakdown, total gridlock. As you know at grade crossings, the train has the right of way. Since...if you know Southern California, which I am sure you do there are rail tracks everywhere. Like Ports O' Call they grew by tops, like Topsy they put one here and there. Rail tracks out by the airport, rail tracks everywhere. Thinking about, how do we mitigate that impact? How do we prevent that future gridlock? The obvious solutions, first of all, eliminate as many grade crossings as you can. To do that cost effectively, the best thing to do is to consolidate all of the port traffic, rail traffic on a single line. Then build a single line to the standards necessary to accommodate that line of traffic. That concept, literally, came out of the 2020 planning as a mitigation for those projected future rail traffic. I think we first called it, "The Consolidated Rail Quarters Study" or something like that. We took that piece of the 2020 Plan and attacked it as a separate project. As a separate program that ultimately became the Alameda Corridor. The first job of that was to convince both ports and their management structure of the need to do that. As I hope, I have just convinced you. [Laughs] It was, that was...I will never forget, if I might give you a little historical vignette. I went to the newly appointed Chief Harbor Engineer or something like that. Maybe it was just Harbor Engineer. I went to a Management Retreat. It was a facilitated retreat, with an outside facilitator. The purpose of it was to identify strategic issues, that is it strategic issues. Well I had this Alameda Consolidated Rail thing in the back of my pocket and I said, "One of the issues is what are we going to do with all this rail traffic we are predicting?" Going back to my earlier comment about multiple disciplinary. Telling this to Property Managers, telling it to Marketing people, Accountants, to Executives, to Lawyers, to other Engineers I figured it would fall on deaf ears. I put that up on the board, on the white board. Scribbled down something and at the end of

our two-day session, to my surprise, the number one strategic issue for the Port of LA in the next five years is to develop consolidated rail corridor. The point of my story, I think, is that there is a selling. Taking these concepts and selling it to a broad spectrum of other disciplines within the organization; and ultimately selling it the political structure to get their buy-in.

Interviewer: But then I think as it happened, in the old days, they would have said, “We have to build a trench between here and downtown and let us do it.” It was a far more complicated thing.

VH: Much more complicated.

Interviewer: Talk about the complexities.

VH: The complexities was...

Interviewer: Try it again. I am sorry.

VH: Ok, the complexity of the project was we settled on a single corridor, which was the...what branch of the southern pacific rail. One of the lines, one of the main lines. They said, “This is the least number of intergrade separations we have to build as the furthest from the, furthest distance from the least number of people.” We eliminate the noise and the vibration issues. Physically located so it can be connected to all these intermodal yards that were either in existence or we were planning; and connected at the other end to the railheads, so the Transcontinental Railroad and East LA. At the time, there were three railroads all connected. As it turned out that corridor went through eleven different political jurisdictions, maybe nine, I forget the number. In order to deal with that, the starting point was the two ports and SCAG, Southern California Association of Governments. We were able to convince the City Councilwoman, Joan Milke Flores, for the City of LA that this is essential. Long Beach likewise got their City Councilmen on board. With a little bit of political backing, we put together a loosely knit organization that ultimately became the Alameda Corridor Authority. It involved representatives, in many cases Mayors and Councilmen from Huntington Park. All the cities that it passed through. Including the big city of LA and the city of Long Beach. LA County was brought in and so forth. During the formative years, while we were doing our studies, a lot of it was pure politics. It finally got to a point as the studies came forward. We started to realize what we were actually going to build, which was a trench north of the 91 freeway. We realized that the cities like Compton and others were going to hold the project hostage. It was a big political battle to get them out of Alameda Corridor Authority officially. It took legislative action.

Interviewer: What was the biggest technical challenge? Besides the political challenge. What was the biggest technical challenge of building the Alameda Corridor?

VH: Ah...interestingly enough, some of the technical challenges were down at the harbor end. Where everything comes together. Most technically challenging subset of the Alameda Corridor was replacing the Badger Avenue Bridge; but that is another story. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Which I know well.

VH: Yeah.

Interviewer: We did a film about that.

VH: Did you, oh that is right you did. Yeah. I think I should see that someday. That was part of our mitigation, was to honor the history of Badger Avenue Bridge.

Interviewer: When it was all over, we had people crying saying, “Why are you taking this old bridge down.”

VH: I know, I know. It is terrible. It had to be done. Anyway. Technically, the main challenge was...it turned out to be the process of building it. Because again, the typical way that major civil organizations like the Ports do is to design, bid, and build their projects. Even though design, build, fast tracking, and negotiated contracts are being done all the time, many times by other public agencies. The Lawyers and the Politicians in LA and Long Beach were very conservative and did not want to do it any other way. Design the thing. It is okay to use consultants. Pay them what they need. Put it out to bid and have the contractors build it. Interestingly enough, the most technically challenging thing was financing it. That is where some really bright people who happen to be Harbor Commissioners got involved. [They] came up with a financing plan that included building the major portion, the largest portion, the trench section which I think you are familiar with, north of the 91 Freeway. As one single project and doing it by design, build, or fast track method. The technical challenges were not that difficult, it was a railroad project. A lot of retaining walls and things like that. Moving a lot of utilities, which is very mundane, but it can be challenging both cost wise and from an engineering perspective. The real challenge, besides the politics, was the financing of it. That forced us into realizing that if we did it the traditional way the time requirement would be anywhere from six months to nine months longer than if we used the design, build, or fast track method. The cost of money on a nine hundred million dollar or seven, what was that big...nine hundred million dollar contract the cost of money over those additional six to nine months would be intolerable. That is what convinced the politicians to do it the way we did it.

Interviewer: Now describe design, build, or fast track, what is that?

VH: Well, the traditional way is design the project completely. Design it to the point of preparing plans and specifications so that unknown qualified contractors can bid on it competitively. The lowest responsible bidder is then assigned the contract, and he goes to work. You are literally designing for, you kind of know who is going to bid it because of the size of the project; but you do not know who the bidder is going to be. Under design, build, you develop the concept to the point where you can make relatively good estimates of what the ultimate cost is going to be. You do not complete all the details. You do not dot every “T”. You do not show every formwork and show every size bolt that is going to be screwed together. Things like that. You then go to a bidding process with an incomplete set of plans. You select a contractor based upon their qualifications to complete the design with you and start building it as soon as...build parts of it even...that is the fast track part of it. That is not necessarily the same thing. Design, build is where you have the contractor’s team; work with the owner. As in the case of the Alameda Corridor Authority to take that concept, develop the details, and so that their own people and their sub-

contractors can build the end product. The goal becomes to deliver the end product, which meets the criteria established during the conceptual stage.

Interviewer: What's the advantage...

VH: In fast tracking means...

Interviewer: Let us start again, if I am talking....

VH: Ok, I am sorry. In fast tracking project, you could do design, build but all that means is you can build parts of it while you are still designing other parts of it; and we use both.

Interviewer: What is that advantage of design, build? It sounds to me like you do not have any plans and you would get a lot of big surprises down the road.

VH: Well, the advantages, again, there would not be many surprises because it would take you quite a ways before you go out to the design, build. The advantage being the one I mentioned which is saving time. Time in a big project means a lot of money. Particularly when the project is being funded by the two ports, literally. As you may know there was a large Federal Grant, excuse me, a large Federal Loan there was no grants at all. That loan is being paid back by the revenues from the two ports and the corridor. The overriding advantage was saving six to nine months of time and the attended cost of money associated with that.

Interviewer: Let us talk about this other concept, which is not part of the School of Engineering. The idea of mitigation. Your involvement with that.

VH: We are talking about mitigation. One of the things that need to be mitigated when you do any project, not by law but ethically and morally responsible, to be responsible you should mitigate the impact of your work on the people. The big issues right now facing the staff of all the harbors. The issue of air quality, traffic impacts and so forth. The impacts on the people who have to breathe the air, including myself. The operations and developments associated with the port. When the environmental movement of the early seventies, when NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] and CEQA [California Environmental Quality Act] were passed and the Clean Water Act were passed, the emphasis was entirely on the impacts of the environment, the fishes, the birdies, the biodata, and the ecosystems. People were not, they were there but not that important. Alameda Corridor was a mitigation of human impacts. It became...

Interviewer: Hold on (background talking, noise, and resetting the tape) OK. OK we are set.

VH: Today the port executives and others are faced with a wide range of environmental issues, including rightfully human impacts. Again, the Alameda Corridor was a human impact mitigation project that ultimately became a very large complex. Infrastructure project, which improved the ability of moving cargo efficiently through the congested LA basin. It was a good thing both ways. It started out as mitigation, ended up as an improved infrastructure. However the early...as we were planning the 2020 Plan, one of the aspects of it was to continue a process that started in the early seventies. Actually started for the whole career of the port to continue to expand this man made thing called the Port Complex. To do that you dredged up material from the bottom and placed it behind rock containment structures and created new land. Well, creating new land in a

fixed geographical location, eventually you are going to run out of room to mitigate. Because the fish and bird people, to be polite, the National Fishery, the U.S. Department...excuse me the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service all had representatives watching, working with the port over time. At the time new laws: CEQA, California Environmental Quality Act, Clean Water Act, Fish and Wildlife Act they came in during the early seventies. The issue became, how do we mitigate the loss of water area, which is a biologically productive for Biodata. Biologically for the marine birds, because they feed off the fish that spawn and hatch in these waters of the outer harbor of the port. We said, "OK that is good, we have this old lake that used to be called Bixby Slough, now it called Harbor Park. We would like to fix that up. We would love to send our money there. They said that is fine but that would not work. Why would it not work? Because you are impacting a salt-water environment, you cannot mitigate it by restoring or improving a freshwater environment. They say, "Okay." When I became the project manager I said, "We cannot keep building land in our seventy-two hundred acres...is that the right number? Thirty-seven hundred, whatever it is. We cannot continue to build new land, wiping out habitat and restoring habitat in the same fixed geographic box, Okay.

Interviewer: Try not to hit your leg.

VH: OK [Laughs] Sorry. So give us some opportunities somewhere else where you, Environmental Scientists, would find it acceptable so we can go off site and restore something or spend some money somewhere to mitigate to offset the loss of this habitat in LA harbor. We worked with these three groups for a number of months and they gave us a shopping list of area that we could restore. The one that popped to the surface is the best suitable was called Batiquitos Lagoon in the City of Carlsbad, about 90 miles south of the Port of LA. Putting my environmental science hat on, in the same ecosystem. We limited our search for acceptable mitigation projects to point conception on the north and the Mexican border on the south. Because it was a macro ecosystem where the same types of fish, bird, and biodata lived. That was one of the criteria. That started a lengthy process of convincing a lot of people that we should spend Port of LA money to restore a very deteriorated coastal habitat called Batiquitos Lagoon to a condition to where it will be once again a functioning, providing all kinds of habitats: subtidal, intertidal, and right (pierian) habitat for a wide range of beneficial activities. Interestingly enough I just attended a conference a couple of weeks ago. It happened to be something called Acosta Country Club, which drains into, when it rains, Batiquitos Lagoon. The first thing I did was drive around the lagoon and son-of-a-gun it is working just like we planned.

Interviewer: [Coughs]

VH: There are bird everywhere, fish everywhere, people fishing, people surfing. I mean it is wonderful. It was money well spent.

Interviewer: One of the things we want to talk about too, we are sort of skipping ahead here. We can speak all day and all night if we needed to.

VH: [Laughs] Let's not. [Laughter]

Interviewer: I have a note here that engineering really was a male profession and you recall the first women engineers in the 1970's. How did that impact and change things?

Background person: You do not remember telling me about that?

VH: Not really, I could talk about it.

Background person and Interviewer: Oh well, no is it...Is it not true or was it not interesting or what?

VH: Yes it is true, but I do not want talk...well, I would get into sensitive areas like sexual harassment and things like that.

Interviewer: Right I get it.

VH: I do not want to go there. I do not want to go there. [laughs]

Background person: In audible speaking behind the laughter.

Interviewer: Talk about the history, revolution, and the present relationship between Long Beach and LA ports. How has that worked over time and what is it now? How did it seem over your career and how has it changed?

VH: Well in my career, the question about the relationship between Long Beach and Los Angeles is one of two factors. One is state law and the other is regional politics. The environment, the transportation system, the Federal Government, the labor force, the shipping industry all those factors that are associated with the operations of a major port do not really care that there is a Port of LA and a Port of Long Beach. To them they are one. They are the port complex of San Pedro Bay. However, local politicians see a dividing line there. This is the City of LA and this is the City of Long Beach. Why I mention the state because the state as you may know is responsible by the laws of the state of California for all public properties known as tidelands properties. Basically, lands and waters seaward of the line of mean high tide. The state legislature, over time, has assigned control of those properties to municipalities under a tideland's grant. We here by grant the City of LA certain properties, certain tideland properties, to manage for the State of California...for the benefit of the citizens of the State of California, sorry, for the purpose of commerce, navigation, and fisheries. The time they did that, 1907, I guess. The hundred-year anniversary, right. The Port of LA was born. A few years later, for whatever reason they did a similar thing to the City of Long Beach and the Port of Long Beach was born. Again, it is the same water. It is the same air, the same railroads. Ultimately, later it was the same highway systems, the same state freeways that interconnect the two ports. The difference is one of politics. City Council and the City of LA's political structure wants to maintain the Port of LA. Likewise, we are all doing it for the benefit of the city, the citizens of the State of California. That is common law of the United States, when California became a state at use. Spanish law says there should be no private ownership of Tidelands. That is why all the beaches are public and so forth. Now...

Interviewer: Have you noticed because the long term leases have been signed, does that change the...

VH: Now, let us except that there are two ports. Now is there competition between them, certainly. The competition is one because both ports are...create positive net revenues, if you will profits. You cannot call profits for a public agency, but net revenues. The financial operation of the port is a very important factor in the day-to-day operations. The competition, particularly, as the container era hit became one of attracting to a long-term lease with my port as certain shipping line or a certain terminal operator. You compete based either on, as any business, on price. You compete on a better service or a better facility. That led to the back and forth competition between the two ports. In reality, there has always been cooperation. Certainly, at the level I worked at, as an engineer, at any level. I always dealt with my peers and my counter parts at the Port of Long Beach. Our mutual interest in seismic design, mutual interest in dredging, mutual interest in protecting the environment was always there. As you know, there has always been a history of people crossing back-and-forth between the lines. Probably the most prevalent one being, two of them comes to mind being obviously was the gentleman I mentioned earlier, Larry Whiteneck, who was the Chief Harbor Engineer when I came onboard in 1970. He was an ex-Port of Long Beach guy. Now of course, Geraldine Knatz, who used to work at the Port of LA, went over to the Port of Long Beach for a number of years and came back as the Executive Director of the Port of LA. There has always been, at the working level, and at the interface with the Federal government, there has always been tremendous cooperation. Then you look at projects like the 2020 Planning and the Alameda Corridor, the day-to-day cooperation became reality because we became partners in those very large enterprises.

Interviewer: [Coughs] Sort of the final question. Looking back from when you first got involved here in 1970.

VH: Um Hm.

Interviewer: Through your careers, and looking at the present. How was San Pedro, how was the Port, what are the changes you have seen? What has happened in those, you know, thirty almost forty years?

VH: What has happened [laughs] in forty years. Well obviously the port continues to dominate directly and indirectly San Pedro. You cannot escape that. It is there. The jobs either directly or indirectly, many are associated with the port. My family in particular. One of my son-in-laws is full-time long shore man. Another one is a casual long shore man. My neighbors are long shore man [laughs] or Shipping Executives. You cannot escape it. That is not a bad thing. It is a good thing. It is a tremendous economic force but also, as I mentioned earlier, it is every increasingly we understand that the impacts of the port are negative. I live in a coastal environment in San Pedro where I can look out, see the Catalina Channel, and see those nice ships. Quaint, not quaint, but big container ships and cruise ships cruising through between here and Catalina. Up to a few years ago, I did not realize I am also breathing particular matter from those diesel engines. Even though I live in a supposedly a clean environment, I am not. There are many stories about the carcinogenic. When I first got involved in the community activism, so to speak, the issue was the impacts of diesel pollution on lung disease, emphysema, things like that. As we got into the studies and started applying...as we forced the port and others to start applying today's science, we find out that is all serious matters. Most serious matters are cancer causing,

are the carcinogenic effects of the ports operation. I think one of the things that has changed is a greater awareness of the people who are living around the ports and the impacts of the port. I say that only a few, not a few people that does not apply to everybody because some people just do not care. To them the jobs are more important. I do not care the container cranes block my view. I got a nice job and that is all that is important to me. So that has not changed. The port is the economic engine that is why people come here. Why families settle here. It will always be the truth unless there is a radical change in the whole world. San Pedro has deteriorated dramatically from my youth. I do not shop at San Pedro anymore, except the grocery stores. What was the commercial center of San Pedro, downtown San Pedro, has gravitated toward Western Avenue, up the hill a ways. The makeup, the ethnic makeup of the people has transitioned into primarily Hispanic dominated. The residential areas just north of where we are sitting, which used to be the home of the Slav fisherman and the Italians are homes for basically all Hispanic now. I am sure you will not put this on tape, but also the center of all the crime in San Pedro. The gang activity. That did not exist when I was a kid. The economy has moved out up the hill out of LA into Orange County and into other places. The kids I grew up, very few of them live in San Pedro anymore. I am kind of looked at, "Why are you still living in San Pedro?" Now I cannot move. My roots are here so [laughs] sorry.

Interviewer: [Coughs]

VH: As you are aware, it is also now going through a maybe long overdue transition. Maybe applying the new model of mixed-use half a dozen condos, mixed-use loft projects under construction as we speak. Some of which will be opening soon. With them, new businesses are coming in. Old storefronts are converting into artists' facilities or into ice cream parlors. There maybe even a Starbucks in downtown San Pedro someday. Now there, if I might, give you a side the fact that there is no Starbucks in downtown San Pedro. What does that tell you? There are Starbucks everywhere but not in downtown San Pedro.

Interviewer: Some say that is a good thing. [Laughter in the background].

Unknown person: But it is a sign.

VH: I agree by the way, by the way. It is a sign that something is wrong. What no Starbucks in any area, in any population, there is no Starbucks. Why?

Interviewer: It sounds to me like...

VH: But anyway, it is coming back. I wish everybody great luck. I hope long enough to see the renaissance. I am planning on it, who knows. It is still going to...even though...I am following all the marketing. I am a member of the Chamber of Commerce, so I get all the literature. I go to all the mixtures and things. It is not going to homogenize itself into an old town Pasadena or a Santa Monica. It is still going to have the impact of the harbor. That is how they are marketing it. The one across the street, the view...their whole marketing is focused on the harbor. It is a fascinating place. I mean, I have had many meetings, technical society meetings up at the Ports of Call restaurant, in the upper dining rooms where they have...I will be in the middle of a high powered engineering presentation and a ship will go by, about fifty feet away. We are all these

sophisticated, educated audience and they would stop what they are doing and watch the ship go by. It is fascinating. There are very few, and I have been to a lot of ports around the world, there are very few ports where you can sit in a restaurant, have your private yacht there, or stroll along and watch the ships of the world go by. Literally feet away from you. Much nicer developments than Ports of Call. In Miami, Long Beach, marinas all over the country, and river ports all over the country maybe you are seeing some sailing boats, fishing boats, or whatever that is going by. You are not seeing ships that are now huge. Far larger than the aircraft carrier I served under. Just reading the other day that they are building a cruise ship that is a hundred and eighty thousand dead weight tons. The carrier that I was on was forty thousand dead weight tons. Four times, not necessarily smaller, but in weights four times smaller. These things are gigantic. I love cruising by the way. Yeah, San Pedro will come back. I hope, but it will still be San Pedro. Like, I said, I hope I am around long enough to see it come back.

Interviewer: Terrific, great! I will take a still picture you.